

Motivated by Gratefulness

By

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About the most common question asked of John and me is, "What motivated you to train for 16 years and 10 years of international competition?" The honest answer is – there were several motivating factors. The medals, the trophies, the congratulations, the satisfaction of a job well done, being on top of the victory stand were all significant motivators. BUT, the greatest motivation was to say thank you!

I feel so blessed. Yes, there are others I have known who have had great advantages, opportunities and skills that have caused envy and jealousy to raise their ugly heads. But when I am honest and realistic, the truth is that many opportunities and blessings have been mine to enjoy. From my parents, brothers and sister, teachers, coaches and teammates and many more, I have received countless encouragements, words of wisdom and expressions of love. How could I not be grateful?

Just recently, I heard of my boyhood pastor's death after 84 years of living for Christ and telling others of Him. The memory of him and his family is still a positive encouraging thing to me. Pastor Bruce Stokka's patience, gentleness and consistency were real and decades later the joy of his family was still an encouragement to my sister, Becky, and me in a recent conversation. Pastor and his family lived the Gospel of Jesus Christ in front of us. The more I think of it, the more I realize the stability that was added to my family also. He led my family through a serious car accident, the salvation of several of us children and the baptism of several of us. How could we not be grateful?

In sports it is so easy to feel envy toward someone else that is winning or doing better than we are. May I suggest the following responses:

1. Be Happy for Others:

Be happy for those who have it better than we do or are doing better than we are. This may be difficult at times, but with God's help even this is possible and I believe a true evidence of maturity. Remember they are creatures that God made as well and they are living out the grandeur of using skills in a positive way.

2. Rejoice with others:

It is good to simply rejoice with others who have won, even if we have not. Often this happens in wrestling. Our Teammate may win the tournament or place higher than us. We may be greatly disappointed with our lose. But now is the time to celebrate with the teammate, friend, acquaintance or even our opponent that has finished in a significant way. As hard as it might be after our disappointment, I encourage you to rejoice with others who have won. Remember that they have used their God given abilities to a high level. Maybe next time you will be in their shoes.

3. Be Inspired by others:

The success of others can be used to motivate us to new heights also. Russ Hellickson understood this when others were claiming that Dan Gable's domination at U. of Iowa was not good for wrestling. Coaching at rival Big 10 schools (U. Wisconsin & Ohio State U.), Russ stated that Gable was setting the standard and the rest needed to aspire to surpass it.

To compete against the Soviet Union and now Russian wrestlers must be inspired by what they have done. They have set a high standard. If they can do it why should we not be able to learn the same or more? I urge each reader to strive for the best in all aspects of life.

4. Help Others:

When we recall how many have helped us in so many ways, it is only natural that we also are motivated to do the same for others. May God save us from thinking we did it all on our own! As Junior High boys, John and I understood our sin brings death and separation from God, but we also understood that Jesus paid for our sin on the cross. That confidence motivated us to say thank you to Him.

The motivation behind Camp of Champs and our work today comes from Gratitude. *John & I were fortunate to have parents, coaches, teammates & others who provided opportunities, guidance and inspiration. How could we not keep progressing as athletes, and now help other young athletes in a similar fashion?*

Take time to think about all the ways you have been helped. From life itself, to skills, to opportunities, to material things, to acquaintances, we all have much to be thankful for and therefore we each can possess the greatest motivation – the desire to say thanks. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express these thoughts.

You can find other articles by Ben, John & Andy at their web site. Today The Petersons run Camp of Champs Wrestling Camps. Contact them at: Camp of Champs, PO Box 222, Watertown, WI 53094; Phone: 800-505-5099; E-mail: info@campofchamps.org; Web: www.campofchamps.org