

The Measure Of Achievement

The longest Olympic track event is the 10,000-meter (6.2137 miles) race. The record was set during the 2005 Summer Olympics by Kenenisa Bekele from Ethiopia, with a time of 26 minutes and 17.53 seconds. There is only one American listed in the top 25 all-time records for this race – Galen Rupp from Portland, Oregon – who in the 2014 Summer Olympics ran the race in 26 minutes and 44.36 seconds. It is an incredible feat of athleticism to run over six miles while maintaining a four to five-minute mile pace.

In contrast to the record-setting speeds and distances mentioned above, I remember a conversation I had with a friend who told me about the tremendous effort it took for him to walk just one or two steps after a traumatic car accident. At the time, the thought of running at any speed was daunting. He had to push himself and make great exertions to simply walk a few steps each day. My friend is now fully recovered from his accident and can not only walk, but also run ... although he would say he does not plan on competing in the Olympics any time soon!



Mr. Stephen Novotny
Executive Director

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Which of these individuals – the Olympic athletes or my friend – attained the higher level of achievement? While some efforts and actions can be compared, there are many things in life that cannot be rightfully compared to each other but instead can only be correctly measured in their own context.

The Olympic runners should rightfully be credited for their record-breaking achievements resulting from months of discipline, training and effort. My friend should also be credited for the months of discipline and effort he made with his injured body to achieve the victory of simply walking again.

Many challenges and achievements have components that go beyond the physical. For example, two individuals may speak out on an important issue to the same group of people, but it may take a vastly different amount of personal bravery to do so if one is naturally outgoing and the other is very shy. While we might be able to rank and rate their eloquence or effectiveness, only God can accurately assess the amount of courage required of each. Luke 21 tells the story of Jesus' observance of the rich and poor leaving gifts at the temple. Jesus pointed out to his disciples that it means more when we give out of our scarcity than when we give out of our abundance. The nobleness and personal sacrifice of the impoverished widow in the story was far greater in ultimate value than the offering of money brought by the wealthy.

Each one of us is placed in a different time, family and geographic location, with a unique combination of personal and physical attributes. Each one of us will face a unique set of circumstances, opportunities and difficulties in life. Each will be given different talents (Matt. 25:15). Therefore, the true measure of our achievement cannot and will not be found by comparisons with others. Instead, our achievement is determined by God as He judges how much we did with what we were given under the conditions we were placed. Like the Olympic athlete who is provided health and a field of competition, or like my friend who woke up from an accident to find himself seriously injured and staring at the four walls of a hospital room, each one of us is called to make the most of what we have, the circumstances we are in, and the life we have been given. We can be confident that, in the end, our God will rightly measure and reward our achievements.