

PUSHING FOR PERFECTION

BY SHANA WALSTON

Want to be better at anything you do? Here are five tips taken from a seminar given by Madeline Manning Mims, Olympic Gold Medalist.

What do you think being perfect means?

Maybe you think it's being wealthy, beautiful, intelligent, and so on. But *true* perfection is found only in Jesus Christ.

Recently at the National Christian Youth Congress at Estes Park, Colorado, Madeline Manning Mims, Olympic Gold Medalist, spoke on the topic "Pushing for Perfection." In her talk she gave several guidelines for Christians to follow.

1. Be obedient. Don't decide to knowingly sin and *then* ask God to help you out. He has told you not to sin in 1 Peter 1:15-16. According to God, your attitude should be the same as Jesus Christ's—not *wanting* to sin at all.

2. Submit to God. Madeline believes that part of submitting to God is accepting the fact the he *does* give talents. Your talent and the ability to develop it is from God. But the *desire* to develop that talent has to come from you. For example, you can teach a child right from wrong, but that doesn't insure that the child will want to do what's right.

I would love to be a professional basketball player, but I haven't come to the point of really working toward that goal. God gave me talent at playing basketball, but I have to want to develop that talent—and work at it.

3. Be a servant. In Hebrews 9:28 the Bible says: "So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people . . ." To me this means Jesus had to die on the cross to fulfill the perfect reason he came to Earth.

In her lecture, Madeline spoke about herself, saying she had to use her failures and difficulties as stepping stones instead of stumbling blocks. You have to be willing to become a servant and serve before you can lead. That's what Jesus did.

4. Count the cost and be willing to pay it. In pushing for perfection you have to be willing to pay the price, whatever it is you want. First look at the difficult parts, then look at the greatness you

will have after you reach your goal. A baby has to crawl before it can walk; no matter how many times it falls and hurts itself, it gets back up and tries again.

Madeline speaks of her training for the Olympics, saying she worked seven days a week, rain or shine. She gave it her all. And sometimes the pain was so bad she couldn't cry, because even that hurt. This is what it took for Madeline to become an Olympic Gold Medalist in the 800-meter run. But she strove for perfection and succeeded.

5. Be a good steward of your successes. I feel some people couldn't handle success, so they don't succeed. In handling success, I mean you have to come back after you achieve your goal and tell others they can also achieve their goals if they set their minds to it.

A good example is my cousin Brad Hughes, who is talented in football. He'll be a senior in high school this fall, and he's already achieved many awards, such as all-district, all-state, outstanding back and many more. Now this may not sound like much, but in our small town of Dierks, Arkansas, this means a lot. Most seniors at our high school don't achieve half of what Brad did in his junior year. But Brad's success hasn't hindered him in his sport or personal life because he still strives for perfection and encourages others to, too.

I hope the guidelines in this article will be helpful as you strive for perfection. I know they will help in my life. I am 15 years old and I will be a sophomore this fall. I hope to play on the senior high basketball team. This is a big challenge since I have to start at the bottom.

One last point: Never speak of yourself as defeated. You're never defeated until you've given something your all. Then if you fail, so what? Just use that experience as a stepping stone, not a stumbling block. Look over your shoulder, find your mistake and keep striving for perfection. ☐