



"Fall down seven times and get up eight."
—Japanese Proverb

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Determination (Part One)

The 22nd Winter Olympics were held this February 7-23 in Sochi, Russia. Today, March 7, the 11th Winter Paralympics will open there as well, continuing until March 16. Hundreds of disabled athletes will compete in dozens of events for Olympic glory.

Webster's American Dictionary defines *determination* as "a fixed purpose or intention." We can see a living example of this word by studying the life of one particular Paralympic athlete and learning some valuable lessons that we can apply to our Christian lives.

Russian-born Tatyana McFadden will be competing in her first Winter Paralympics as a member of Team USA's ski team, but she could hardly be called a novice. Using a specially designed wheelchair, Tatyana has already won ten bronze, silver, and gold medals in Summer Paralympic track-and-field races, ranging in distance from 100 to 1500 meters. She has also won many other medals, awards, and accolades while setting numerous records in championships in many different venues.

Miss McFadden is an incredible woman with an incredible story. When she was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in April 1989, she was [afflicted](#) with

spina bifida, a congenital condition that paralyzed the infant from the waist down. She was so sick at birth that the doctors withheld an operation to save her life for three weeks, predicting that she would soon die.

Her mother, unable to care for her, left her in an orphanage, a place known only as "Orphanage 13." However, the orphanage was so poor that it could not even afford to buy crayons for the children, much less to purchase a wheelchair for sick little Tatyana. Dragging her non-working legs behind her, Tatyana literally walked on her hands for the first six years of her life.

Fortunately for Tatyana, doctors are not always correct in their prognoses. In 1994, Deborah McFadden, in Russia with a delegation from the U.S. Health Department, stopped by to visit the orphanage. Here she met a precocious child who climbed up on her lap to inspect her camera.

She had not been looking to adopt, but Ms. McFadden felt drawn to the child. "I just had a good time with her. I went back to my hotel that night and couldn't get her off my mind," she told the *Chicago Tribune*. As a young woman, the elder McFadden had been afflicted with Guillain-Barre syndrome, a condition that left her paralyzed. It took her a decade to recover and learn to walk again, but she never forgot the emotional and physical pain that she had endured. With some trepidation, she adopted Tatyana, taking her home to Baltimore, Maryland.

An article in the *Baltimore Sun* explains: "Deborah McFadden said that transition—and Tatyana's road to becoming a world-class athlete—started with her thinking of ways she could keep her young daughter healthy. She turned to sports: swimming, gymnastics, track, anything and everything." The results were more than anyone could have dreamed, and less than ten years after coming to America, 14-year-old Tatyana McFadden represented the U.S. at the 2004 Paralympics games in Athens, Greece, where she won both silver and bronze medals in the 100- and 200-meter track-and-field races using her wheelchair.

Since then, Tatyana has won additional bronze, silver, and even gold medals when she again competed in the track-and-field category of the Paralympics in 2008 and 2012. In 2013, she raced in the IPC Athletics World Championships in Lyon, France, where she obtained gold medals in events

ranging from 100 to 5000 meters. In accomplishing this, she became the first athlete ever to win six gold medals! Competing in her wheelchair, she has also participated in several marathons, even winning the Boston, Chicago, London, and New York marathons in 2013, making her the first athlete, disabled or not, to win four major marathons in one year!

This year is an extra-special one for Tatyana. When she travels to Sochi for this year's Paralympics, she will be meeting with her birth-mother, an aunt, some cousins, and the orphanage director who cared for her, who will be travelling 1,400 miles from St. Petersburg to Sochi to cheer her on. Although she is really looking forward to winning a gold medal, Tatyana says that competing before her family will be even more important. She admits, "Winning in front of my whole family, it would be a dream."

Tatyana and her birth-mother were reunited for the first time in 2011. It would only be natural for her to feel some bitterness toward her mother, but she says, "Since I was a young child, I knew I was adopted. I was never mad. [My mother] was able to give me life twice, not only through birth, but through adoption."

The Bible contains many references to competitive sports. For example, in [Hebrews 12:1](#), Paul exhorts us to "run with endurance the race that is set before us," and in [I Corinthians 9:24](#), he again encourages us to work hard and run to obtain the prize. In fact, [OpenBible.info](#) lists 49 different references to sports, and although some are easier to see than others, the parallels that we can learn from Tatyana's dedication to athletics and our Christian duties are very clear.

While not a sports-related parallel, we can begin with Tatyana's adoptive mother, Deborah McFadden, who learned to have real compassion for the disabled through the suffering of a disease that left her temporarily paralyzed. Ms. McFadden said that she never forgot her struggles while dealing with paralysis and the hurt of prejudice that she experienced due to her infirmity.

Paul writes in [Philippians 2:6-7](#): "Although [[Jesus](#)] was in the form of [God](#) and equal with God, he did not take advantage of this equality. Instead, he emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant, by becoming like other

humans . . ." (*God's WORD Translation*). So, just as Tatyana's adoptive-mother's infirmity taught her to feel for those suffering affliction, Christ learned during His human lifetime how to empathize with the limitations of human beings. This provides a wonderful benefit for us, as [Hebrews 4:15](#) reads, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses."

In Part Two, we will see more parallels between Tatyana's hard work and dedication and the Christian life.

- John Reiss

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Motivation to Endure](#)

by John O. Reid

There are four factors that will boost a person's resolve to endure sore trials such as being a prisoner of war: (1) Hope (that the war would end) (2) Faith (in the ability to tough it out) (3) Vision (of being able to escape), leading to a (4) Determination (or mindset not to give in.) We can profitably apply these four factors to our Christian lives. Hope consists of the expectation of good. Faith consists of holding fast to the body of beliefs we have been given. Vision (prophetic understanding of our future role in the Kingdom of God) derives from keeping God's Law. Without daily contact with God in prayer and Bible study, and without continual contact and encouragement from our brethren, we run the risk of losing the determination to persevere or never giving up. God has already assured us that He has all the factors of our present and future trials under His control.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Spiritual Hard Hat Zone](#)

by David F. Maas

We may not realize it, but our Christian lives are constantly under construction. It is this point of view that will make it easier for us to deal with both spiritual setbacks and progress.

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