

By Donna Douglass
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Lessons for the Race of Life

"Father, keep us safe today as we race in this triathlon, and let us be lights for You in all we do and say. Amen."

The athletes in our little circle raise their head at the end of the prayer and refocus on the race about to begin. Our yellow Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) jerseys melt back into the crowd. My husband and I share one more kiss then split to join separate groups of racers according to their age and gender.

In the early dawn light, I'm cold, wearing just swim gear. Adrenaline brings a modicum of warmth. But I also feel the arms of God wrap around me. I'm nervous, wanting so much to win – that I might stand on the victor's platform as a bright yellow banner for FCA, but more importantly, as a banner for God.

I don't know if this moment could be called prayer, but I have a vague image of God holding me. If I were to put words to my heart's desires as I press into His chest, I would say, "I want to win for You." He might reply, "Whatever you do, do as unto My Son." I'd add, "Whatever happens in this race today, let it bring You glory." He'd calm me with, "I work all things together for good."

The words have been only shadows of thoughts, yet I am comforted. He alone controls the outcome, yet I'm impassioned to race for Him today, to let all my

actions, all my striving, and all my effort, be filled with grace and selflessness. A talent for triathlon

is His gift to me; each race is my offering to Him.

A horn sounds. I'm splashing through the shallow water, then diving in and swimming hard, trying to get beyond the flail of arms and legs. I focus on each stroke. My lungs burn for air. I rehearse the transition to my bike in my mind, then move through it deliberately. I make each pedal stroke as efficiently as possible. My legs cry out for mercy.

I transition to the run quickly, but carefully. Twila Paris' lyrics, "For the glory of the Lord, I have been created," echo in my head to the beat of my pounding footsteps. Everything hurts by now. "For the glory of the Lord," is my prayer as the finish line approaches with painful slowness.

Suddenly the race is over. The pain is past. I have endured. I have even been victorious. For the glory of the Lord.

On some days, I ponder the struggle of this life and I remember the wonder of finishing the race for the glory of God. I find strength in the confidence that someday, I'll feel that joy infinitely stronger, as I



Donna Douglass and her husband Richard after a competition. Like his wife, Richard also competes in triathlons with FCA, serves in the Air Force, and is a CIU seminary student.

cross the finish line into heaven. Jesus will slip that medal over my head and it will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." ■

About the author

Donna Douglass is currently the top female amateur triathlete in South Carolina, and uses triathlon as a platform for ministry through Fellowship of Christian Athletes – Endurance. Prior to enrolling in seminary, Douglass was an active duty Air Force captain, where she became the first woman to fly the F-117 Stealth Fighter. She is also a freelance writer whose tales of the front lines have been published in the National Endowment for the Arts' books "Operation Homecoming" (2004) and "Grace Under Fire" (2007), in Officer Christian Fellowship's "Command" magazine (2003) and online at PCAnews.com (2003).

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