

mercEmail

"He delights in mercy" (Micah 7:18)

Energetic Drowners by Steve Higginbotham

Every Olympic games have their dramatic victories as well as defeats. In 1984, there was the perfect vault of Mary Lou Retton that gave her the gold medal. In 1988 there were the heart-wrenching struggles of speed-skater, Dan Jansen. In 1992, there was Jim Redmond who fell in the 400-meter race, only to be helped across the finish line by his father who came out of the stands. In 1996 there was Kerri Strug nailing a vault on a badly injured foot to give the USA the gold medal. And now there is Eric Moussambani.

You don't know who Eric Moussambani is? You're not alone. Nobody knew anything about Eric until the 2000 Olympic games in Sydney. But now, he is the talk of the Olympics. Eric's fame was not spawned by a medal winning performance, but by the ineptitude of his performance.

Eric Moussambani, from Equatorial Guinea, was invited to perform in the 100-meter freestyle. Amazingly, Eric only learned to swim nine months earlier in crocodile infested waters. Prior to the Olympics, he had never even swum in a 50-meter pool before. In fact, before this race, he had never swum 100-meters without having to stop and take a breath. Eric finished the race in 1 minute and 52 seconds, more than a minute over the Olympic record! Trying desperately to finish the race, swimming all alone in the pool, one commentator said he was not so much a swimmer as he was an energetic drowner who reached and kicked but made no headway.

As Eric finally finished the race, he was given an ovation by the crowd matching that of the swimmer who won the gold medal. No, it wasn't his talent they were applauding, but his perseverance. Afterwards, Eric said that it was the cheering of the crowd that kept him going.

I wonder if this doesn't parallel our experience. Far from being worthy of a medal for our performance in life, we must look more like energetic drowners to God. Yet, God does not turn his back on our ineptness, but applauds our perseverance and our efforts. We may all long to be able to swim through life with the grace and speed of a gold medalists, but reality often finds us struggling simply to stay afloat. If this is your story, don't get discouraged. Whatever you do, don't quit. Not everyone has left the stadium. God is still watching and applauding your efforts.