

# WEEKLY CHRISTIAN FOCUS

## Mental Strength

July 31, 2022

SWAGGER, CONFIDENCE, MENTAL STRENGTH, PRESSURE, BREAKINGS, MOULDINGS, REFININGS, AND BEING FILLED WITH GOD! LESSONS FROM THE RECENT WORLD ATHLETIC CHAMPIONSHIPS IN EUGENE, OREGON, USA.

Number 60



SCRIPTURE  
BASED OUT-  
LOOK ON A  
VARIETY OF  
TOPICS



Lunch atop a Skyscraper, 1932

God bless you. This will be a blessing to write a few things in my heart about the topic of Mental Strength and Pressure and how these are vital to us as servants of Jesus Christ. Please pray and bear with me and I will probably need to do at least two issues on this wonderful subject.

I have been watching the World athletics championships in Eugene, Oregon (USA) this afternoon. I had been alone at home the last 4 days unusually, so I did a lot of office, ministry and other work, so while I was finishing up today, I saw some final races of the 100 metres (no Usain Bolt anymore) both the men's final and the women's 100m heats. I also watched the men's long jump and the women's shot put.

I know a little what it takes to be a 'successful' athlete of sorts. First you must have latent ability or God-given potential in your physical body that can be developed, then

you must have desire and determination, then you must have (or acquire) more desire and determination and ability than anyone else you are competing against. Fourthly you must have confidence, mental strength and belief in both God and yourself, and the ability God has given you. Finally, I think we must hate to lose as much as a gardener is supposed to hate weeds.

### What I learned

Going back to the world athletics in Oregon it became apparent that there was a difference in the mental strengths of some athletes especially when their abilities and achievements were only separated by the tiniest fractions of either millimetres, or milliseconds etc.

Here are a few examples:

Wang Jianan

- the men's long jump was won by a Chinese athlete called 'Wang' who beat the defending champion with his very

last jump. That's pressure to come up with a season's and personal best jump to go from the middle of the group to gold. I can't trace his history well at the moment, but my feeling is that this man may be a Christian. How was he able to produce a much superior jump with practically the last jump of the competition.? -Training, mental strength, the ability to handle pressure, and self and possibly God belief.

[On final attempt, China's Jianan Wang wins gold medal in men's long jump at World](#)



[Athletics Championships - oregonlive.com](#)

China's Wang grabs world

long jump gold with final leap | Reuters

- **Fred Kerley**

[Fred Kerley wins gold, U.S. sweeps men's 100 medals at World Athletics Championships - oregonlive.com](#)

Fred Kerley from the USA won the gold in the 100m final by a fraction of a second from his two compatriots. Kerley had gotten silver in the last Olympics, and this, he said, had affected his mind and bothered him. He believed he should have won and was going to win today. **He proclaimed to all and sundry he was going to win this race.**

Of course, another factor we need for mental strength is support from someone who believes in us, usually our family or close friends or a coach. Belief and positivity can be transmitted into our brains and hearts, praise God.

### **The most important person in Kerley's life is his aunt Virginia.**

In a write-up for the [Spikes](#), the Texan shared how he moved in with his aunt - also known as 'Meme' - when he was a toddler after his dad was jailed and his mother 'took wrong turns in life'.

Kerley grew up in the same house with 12 other cousins - his other uncle's children who were also raised by Aunt Virginia along with her own children.

"Aunt Virginia, the woman who raised me. The woman who made me who I am."

"She also brought up the two or three generations after me, and she's still raising them now - 25 children in total.

"An amazing woman, with the best personality you could ever

have. Kind and caring, tough but fair."

"I know I've got all kinds of blessings coming my way from above."

[Fred Kerley's family reacts to Olympic silver medal - YouTube](#)

GettyImages-1178345421



Picture by 2019 Getty Images

### **Deeply religious**

Growing up Kerley spent most of his days after training in church which further deepened his faith.

"We practically grew up in church. Every Wednesday, every Sunday, we were going to church no matter what. After football practice, after basketball practice, we were in the church the very next hour," he said.

"Even today, religion means so much to me. I don't pray a specific prayer because there's nothing in the world God hasn't given to me already, but I just ask Him to give me strength every day, to keep on pushing."

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### **Comments:**

One key thing that came up when a commentator was giving his expert opinion about how things were going very much the USA's way; the 8-time gold medal winner Michael Johnson, who knows a thing or two about Mental Strength, said

that the Americans had more of a 'swagger' and a genuine belief and 'can-do attitude' that they **actually believe** and **fully expect** they are going to win. Whereas he said, with the only exception of the British athlete Dina Asher-Smith, he had not seen this attitude manifested in British athletes for a very long time. ("Decades, in fact" he said).

I agree very much with his opinion; as ex athlete from school days, and someone who lived in China 10 years, it is easy to discern that British athletes cannot even hope to attain this attitude, as things stand today, despite the government or lottery funding spending a fortune on sports psychology experts and trainers. I have seen it time and again.

The difference is that British athletes are not fully expecting or making the sacrifices necessary to be top of their field. Sure, they will deny that, and say they work 'really hard' and its gruelling, but if I compare them with athletes from China or Ethiopia and Kenya for example and the USA in this instance, it's very easy to see the sacrifices people make are greater than here (in the UK). This is partly the fault and influence of the debilitating and weak culture, which here will always excuse you or commiserate with you and say, 'never mind you did your best'. There are many other factors, but in China for example, you only have one shot to make it before you are replaced, second in China is anathema in every sphere of society.

People in the western world believe they know what pressure is; they have not experienced much pressure. They believe that because they just have

nothing to scale it with!

My best pastor friend from Nigeria used to sell stuff on the street to passing cars when he was a very small boy to help feed his brothers and sisters and mum, and then get himself off to school. Poverty and hardship are often the melting pots and refining process for every kind of greatness. **The same is true in the Lord's service, which we will go into further below.**

Whenever I see athletes begin to clap their hands to get the stadium crowd on their side as they are about to jump or throw usually, I always have that feeling that 'this not going to end well!' And in fact, that is usually the case. Maykel Masso from Cuba did that on his last long jump; he was up or around the medal position, so he needed a phenomenal jump to get there, but I could see his mind panic and he resorted to that 'man is going to help me' clap routine and sure enough he failed with the commentator saying he did just about everything wrong this time. He allowed his mind to be distracted by this process instead of drawing on his training and knowledge.

**Mental strength.** I need a lot more of it to get through this life and to help get my family and others through this life. To get that strength I believe I need to do a few things:

- **Allow God** to purge me, break me and refine me as He sees fit so I can be a better vessel for Him.
- **See each seeming defeat as a steppingstone** to a future victory and not be discouraged about my own failures or mistakes. If they are sins, I should confess them and if they are just discouragements I should look to God and His Word to pull me through them.

- **Put my life in perspective** and see that I have a great deal to thank God for. I should start praising Him for all the blessings He has given me.

- **Look to God first before I look to man.**

**Remember the examples in the Bible of Mental Strength. Ask God to give this to you.** Think about Daniel, Job (!) Abraham giving up Isaac, David in the wilderness for 18 years, Jesus Christ and all the twelve Apostles, Joseph, and many more.

Psalm 105: 17 He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant:

18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:

19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.

These three verses seem to me to sum up the process of God building you and preparing you for the work He has for you. First you will be sold as a slave. Few people will believe in you or recognise you for the worth God has put in you, like He did in Joseph. Then you will experience an ongoing series of trials and difficulties God wants you to overcome. He tests you and your faith, patience, humility and many other things. This is a lifelong process. Finally, the Word of God tests you and you make a choice to choose either God or the world, to trust in God no matter what has happened to you. Believe he still loves you and that His thoughts to you are good and not evil.

I'd like to close in prayer:

"Lord, I love you. I thank you that I am weak so You can be strong. Without You I can do nothing. Forgive me for my lacks and weaknesses and make me mentally strong in You. **Fill me with**

**that Might** that you promised to make me strong in my inner man. Help me to yield to your blessings and allow You to mould me into a vessel of usefulness for your glory so that You and I and others in the end can rejoice and shout the Victory! In Jesus' Name, amen!"

Ephesians 3: 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; (see verses 17 to end also)

Definition of MOULD (verb): give something a particular shape or form; influence someone strongly to have certain qualities.



What do you think, and what has the Lord showed you about mental strength? Please share it with us and we can produce a special edition of your collective lessons. God bless you.

### **The First World War Mental Strength.**

Assuming command, France's Marshall Foch moved his men into a gap between the German Fourth and Fifth Armies. Taking part in the First Battle of the Marne, Foch's troops halted several German attacks. During the fighting, he famously reported, "Hard pressed on my right. My centre is collapsing. Impossible to manoeuvre. Situation excellent. I attack."

Counterattacking, Foch pushed

the Germans back across the Marne and liberated Châlons on September 12.



[Diamonds Are Made Under Pressure. I'm sure you've heard the quote before: | by Joe Scaglione | Medium](#)

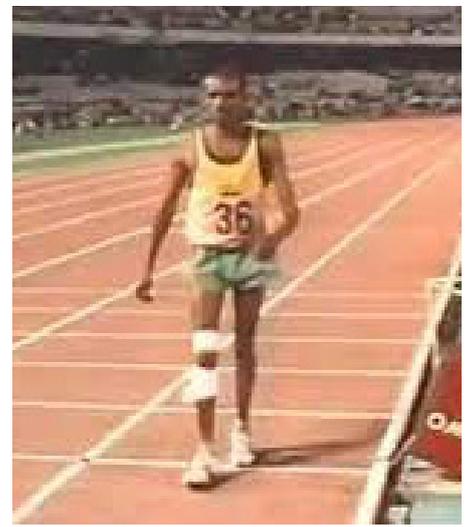
[How is God Shaping You? \(ttb.org\) excellent points!](#)

[How-God-Shapes-Us-Through-Our-Experiences.pdf \(phbcweb.com\) yes. Real experiences in this article. God bless this man.](#)

[Jeremiah and the Potter | Bible Story | LifeKids - YouTube yes, good for kids and adults.](#)

## [Finish the Race ~ personal story of courage with John Stephen Akhwari](#)

"It was almost 7pm in Mexico City, 1968. One hour earlier the winners of the 26 mile Olympic marathon had crossed the finish line. It had been a grueling hot day as the high altitude affected all the athletes. The sky was beginning to darken and most of the stadium was empty. As the last few spectators were preparing to leave, police sirens and flashing lights caught their attention. A lone runner, wearing the colours of Tanzania had just emerged through the stadium gate. Limping, with his leg bandaged he found the last of his endurance to step up his pace and finish the race. His name was John Stephen Akhwari."



## Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always.

1 CHRONICLES 16:11

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