

THE BOLICK REPORT



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I have an aversion to sports illustrations in sermons, maybe because I heard so many of them growing up in Texas. But it's a conviction I hold lightly. I could see talking about baseball, that perfect game, because it is about getting home, after all. And now that I've witnessed a triathlon, I could abandon the conviction altogether. Certainly the apostle Paul used athletic metaphors to talk about the disciplines and practices of the Christian life.

Barbara trained for about eight months last year for a mini-triathlon. She was invited to participate in a YMCA program by a good friend, and they formed a circle of close friends with two more women. She trained in swimming, bicycling, and running several nights a week, with the goal of doing their first triathlon that included swimming in a lake by the end of the year.



Watching this event was such an inspiring experience, I'd like to share with you several observations. None of them are anything unusually profound or something you don't already know. They simply put in bold relief some truths about the Christian life we may

neglect to our own peril, squandering a tremendous grace. So I won't draw out the obvious parallels or lessons.

- The training and the event itself were never about being better than anyone else. The idea is to reach your own personal best. Everyone in the program trained hard, and encouraged the others, without running over them to get ahead. Fellowship and friendship was sweet.
- The diversity of ages, shapes, conditions, and personalities of the participants is amazing. If you saw some of them on the street, you would never imagine that they were actually serious athletes in training for the event of a lifetime.
- Along the route, spectators would shout out encouragement, or applaud, for people they did not even know, but who maybe looked like they could use some support. The race inspires solidarity when you see people who are giving it their all.
- On the final leg of the event, running, another friend from the Y program who was not participating that day, saw Barb struggling, and she jogged alongside her for a block, encouraging her.
- About two-thirds of the way into the open water lake swim, Barb started to lag. Then when she glanced at the still great distance to the shore, she began to panic. She raised her hand and the lifeguards in kayaks were at her side. She rested, got her breathing right, and set off again.
- At the lake and at the finish line, people waited to applaud the last person, no matter how long it took.



Do you ever imagine all the people who are cheering, rooting for you, interceding? There are more than you might think.

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