

Take a Risk!

A monthly publication from Risk Takers for Christ

In this issue...

Listening to the Father's Heart

A devotional
message from Os
Hillman.

- page 2

Proximity to God

A devotional
message from
Alistair Begg.

- page 3

Living H2O Initiative Photos

- page 4

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A One-Legged Pitcher and a One-Armed Outfielder

by Rev. Dale Glading, President

"Prayer helps us secure the power and assistance of Omnipotence so that our lives achieve more than we could have achieved ordinarily." - William F. Kumuyi

On a recent Monday evening, I was privileged to speak at halftime during our Living H2O Initiative. In case you're not familiar with our program, it is a weekly basketball outreach for at-risk youth in our community.

Since our program has been going on for 13 years and many of these young men have heard me speak dozens - if not hundreds - of times before, I always try to come up with a topic that will capture their interest. Once I have their attention, I then transition to a spiritual application, and ultimately to an invitation to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

That Monday's topic was four men - Jim Abbott, Pete Gray, Billy Hoy, and Monty Stratton - and what they had in common. I offered a free Chick-fil-A sandwich card to anyone who could make the connection, but no one could.

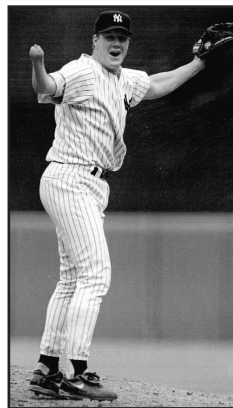
Could you?

All four men played professional baseball...

and overcame serious physical disabilities to do so. Jim Abbott was born without a right arm and yet, he became a star pitcher and quarterback in high school. In fact, he was such a gifted pitcher that he earned a baseball scholarship to the University of Michigan and won a gold medal at the 1988 Olympic Games. Abbott was then drafted sixth overall by the California Angels and went on to have a successful 10-year career in the Major Leagues, winning 18 games in 1991 and throwing a no-hitter in 1993.

Unlike Jim Abbott, Pete Gray was born with all four limbs but had his right arm amputated above the elbow when he was seven following an accident. Undaunted, Pete became a standout baseball player, teaching himself to catch the ball with his gloved left hand and then throw it with the same hand after tucking the glove under his stump. After batting .333 and stealing 63 bases in 1944, Pete was named MVP of the Southern Association, which earned him a contract the following year with the St. Louis Browns. Pete batted .218 that season with a .958 fielding percentage.

A bout with meningitis left Billy Hoy deaf and dumb at the age of three. However, Hoy overcame his disabilities to forge a very successful 14-year MLB career during which he recorded 2,048 hits, scored 1,429 runs, and stole 596 bases.



continued on page 2

A One-Legged Pitcher and a One-Armed Outfielder

continued from page 1

Monty Stratton had no physical handicaps until - after the 1938 season - he tripped while rabbit hunting and accidentally shot himself in the leg. The injury was so bad that doctors had to amputate his right leg and fit him with a prothesis. That ended Stratton's promising MLB career, but not his professional one because he taught himself to pitch with a wooden leg well enough to play in the minors for another eight years. In 1949, a movie was made about Monty's courageous comeback titled, *The Stratton Story*, starring Jimmy Stewart and June Allyson.

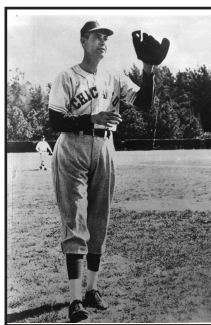
As I told the young men in the gym on Monday night, the Bible says that "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37) and "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (Genesis 18:14). I then shared with them how they each have unlimited God-given potential and with God's help, they can overcome any obstacle just like Jim Abbott, Pete Gray, Billy Hoy, and Monty Stratton. "But the key is," I added, "you must turn your life over to God, trust Jesus as your Savior, and allow Him to unlock that unlimited potential that lies within you,"

When I was finished, one of the most talented basketball players in the gym came up to me and wanted to know more about Pete Gray, whose story had inspired him the most. "I can't believe he batted .333 swinging with just one arm," Eddie said. "That's incredible!"



I gave Eddie a printout about Pete that I had used as my notes and he gladly accepted, shaking his head in amazement as he walked away to start the second half.

My friend, you may not have been in the gym on that Monday night, but the same lesson - and the same offer - applies to YOU! God created you with a special plan in mind and filled you to overflowing with unlimited potential. Try turning every area of your life over to Him and watch what happens!



"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11

(BSB)

Editor's Note: To their everlasting credit, when WWII broke out, both Pete Gray and Monty Stratton tried to enlist in the Armed Forces, but both men were turned down because of their disabilities. Gray responded to being rejected by the Army by saying, "If I could teach myself to play baseball with one arm, I sure as heck could handle a rifle."

Listening to the Father's Heart

by Os Hillman

Son, I want you to be at peace with not seeing or understanding the entire picture. Only occasionally do I allow glimpses of future events, as I did with Abraham. "Why" questions are never answered on earth; only in heaven. There was a point in time when Abraham needed to know my plans (Gen 15:13-15). I do answer "what" questions. But I give you only what you need to know. You would not be able to handle knowing your entire picture. I know you understand this, son. Life has many unexpected twists and turns that make up your journey. I give my grace at the time of need, not before. That is why I rarely reveal the future to you unless I know it is needed to encourage you. Just keep seeking me with all your heart day by day. It all turns out good in the end. You must believe this.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. 1 Corinthians 13:12

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Proximity to God

by Alistair Begg

"... For the people of Israel who are near to him."
- Psalm 148:14

Distance and separation were marks of the old covenant. When God appeared even to His servant Moses, He said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet"; and when He revealed Himself on Mount Sinai to His own chosen and separated people, one of the first commands was, "You shall set limits for the people all around." In the sacred worship of the tabernacle and the temple, the thought of distance was always prominent. The majority of the people did not even enter the outer court. Into the inner court none but the priests might dare to intrude, while into the innermost place, or the holy of holies, the high priest entered but only once in the year. It was as if the Lord in those early ages was teaching man that sin was so utterly loathsome to Him that He must treat men as lepers put outside the camp; and when He came closest to them, He still made them feel the extent of the separation between a holy God and an impure sinner.

When the Gospel came, we were placed on quite another footing. The word "Go" was replaced with "Come"; distance was replaced with nearness, and we who previously were far away were brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ. Incarnate Deity has no fire wall around it. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" is the joyful proclamation of God as He appears in human flesh. He no longer teaches the leper his leprosy by setting him at a distance, but by Himself suffering the penalty of the leper's defilement.

What a state of safety and privilege is this proximity to God through Jesus! Do you know it by experience? If you know it, are you living in the power of it? This closeness is wonderful, and yet it is to be followed by a greater nearness still, when it shall be said, "The dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people." Lord, haste the day!

Devotional material is taken from "Morning and Evening," written by C.H. Spurgeon, revised and updated by Alistair Begg. Copyright © 2003, Good News Publishers

Mr. Consistency

by Rev. Dale Glading, President

"What the Lord has done He will do again, for He does not change. He is faithful to His promises and gracious to His saints; He will not turn away from His people."
- C.H. Spurgeon

When I think of consistency, the name Greg Maddux comes to my mind.

Greg Maddux was a pitcher who spent 23 years in the Major Leagues, primarily with the Chicago Cubs (10 seasons) and the Atlanta Braves (11 seasons). He also pitched for the San Diego Padres and the LA Dodgers at the tail end of his career.



During those 23 seasons, Maddux accumulated 355 wins against just 227 losses for a .610 winning percentage with a 3.16 ERA. He also completed 109 games over his storied career including 35 shutouts while striking out 3,371 batters in 5,008 innings.

However, the most remarkable aspect of Maddux's career was his consistency. He is the only pitcher in MLB history to win 15 or more games for 17 consecutive seasons.

That's simply mind-boggling! Maddux also won four straight Cy Young awards (1992-1995) and finished in the top 5 in the Cy Young balloting nine times, including eight times in nine years (1992-2000).

Maddux's consistency also showed in the field where he won a record 18 Gold Glove awards, including 13 in a row and 18 in a 19-season span.

Known as a control artist, Maddux is the only pitcher to record more than 300 wins, more than 3,000 strikeouts, and fewer than 1,000 walks (exactly 999 walks overall). During his career, Maddux faced 20,421 batters and only went to a 3-0 count on 310 of them... and 177 of those were intentional walks. That means that Maddux only fell behind a hitter 3-0 by mistake 133 times in his entire career!

And yet, I know Someone far more consistent than Greg Maddux and his name is Jesus Christ. He has never lied, sinned, or broken a single promise. And so, when He says that He will never leave you nor forsake you and that He is coming back soon... you can take it to the bank!

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."
Hebrews 13:8 (NKJV)

Living H2O Initiative Photos

Young men from our Living H2O Initiative scrimmaged the Court Kingz traveling Christian all-star team at Sebastian River High School on September 19th, representing FCA of Indian River County. Despite playing against a team comprised of former college and professional players - several of whom were 6'8" and above, including two former members of the Harlem Globetrotters - our talented young men battled to a final score of 131-122. Best of all, the gospel was proclaimed to the crowd of 500 spectators!



RTC Prison Ministry Basketball Team Schedule



- November 6 & 7 - Charlotte CI, Punta Gorda FL; Avon Park CI, Avon Park FL; & DeSoto CI, Arcadia FL

You can donate to our basketball team by visiting:
<https://www.risktakersforchrist.org/partner--donate/>

Living H2O Initiative



Mondays from 6-8 p.m.
 First Baptist Church of Vero

Join us for some Bible &
 Basketball
Free Snacks Provided

We Have a QR Code

Everyone can use a spiritual lift in the morning, especially on weekdays when work, school, and other demands vie for our time and attention... and sap our strength. Risk Takers for Christ wants to help by offering a free weekday devotional message that will challenge and encourage you in your daily walk.



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