



ASSEMBLIES *of* GOD

THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

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The Rest of the Story **February 2006**

We are currently being inundated with media coverage of the 2006 Winter Olympics. I carefully select my viewing of the events because I have a genetic aversion to figure skating. I acknowledge the grace and sheer athleticism expressed in figure skating. My question is, in the spirit of the Olympics and the joy of competition, can't we see some biathlon competition or even some curling? How about covering the one athlete from San Marino or the luge team from Bermuda? I acknowledge I am in the minority, so I will move on.

The story of Toby Dawson, U.S. bronze medal winner in the men's mogul competition is one that deserves attention. Toby was abandoned on the streets of Seoul, Korea when he was three. He was "chosen" by a couple in Vail, Colorado who were ski instructors. His love of skiing is understandable, given his parents. His perseverance to excel as a child when all around him was a sea of blond, blue-eyed kids is obvious. His sheer grit to fly off mountains and expose his knees to the jack hammer effect of the mogul venue is a testimony to a support system from two parents who gave him life when those who birthed him left him on the street to be disposed of.

The sight of his middle-aged mom screaming in the stands as her Toby flew down the mogul route is priceless. Imagine what is going through this proud mom's heart and mind. Not only is she proud of her son, but in those 25 seconds as he hurdles down that mogul route, might she be seeing a child sitting on a street in Seoul, three years old, abandoned and defenseless? Might she be

celebrating the “grace” that connected that little boy to a caring family and salvaged him from the garbage heap of throw-away children that is pandemic in our world? For all the tragedy yet to be addressed in our world, that young man, her son, hurdling down hill at break neck speed, is one who has been rescued, has survived and thrived. This mom won’t quit cheering even when her son is done with his run and is waiting for the judges to score his effort. No, she jumps and waves her American flag and screams at the top of her lungs her love, adoration, sheer joy and affection. It’s her son, once abandoned, now genuinely loved, soon to be an American hero.

There’s another person whose story has shone forth in the sports world this February. Tony Dungy is the head coach of the Indianapolis Colts. In late December, they were undefeated and being picked to go to the Super Bowl. Then tragedy struck and Coach Dungy’s 18-year old son was found dead, seemingly a victim of suicide. This father’s world came crashing down. One can only image the sheer horror that Coach Dungy and his family were facing. The days that followed were covered closely by the media. Tony Dungy’s personal faith in Christ is respected in the NFL not because he is verbose about it, but because it obviously makes a difference in the way he lives his life. His public statements about this tragedy and particularly following his son’s funeral, gave clear testimony that Coach Dungy’s only refuge during this time was a firm belief in Jesus Christ. This story does not end in a team victory. Coach Dungy returned to the Colts and brought the team into the playoffs, only to be knocked out of Super Bowl contention by the eventual champion Pittsburgh Steelers. Not only did Tony Dungy lose a son, his team that was so close to a perfect season ended up eliminated from the race for the ultimate prize in football. Coach Dungy and his team ended the season in sheer frustration as a loser.

Two parents, one filled with unspeakable joy and the other bearing unimaginable pain provide for us a picture of the realities of this world. The triumphs of life sometimes are stories of winning against incredible odds. Those moments should be filled with joyful celebration that unabashedly shouts “THAT’S my son, that’s MY son, that’s my SON” over and over and over……! But what about those days where anticipated victory is snatched from your hands at the last moment and the pain of the loss is not just corporate and tax deductible, but personal and that personal loss is the horrific task of burying your own child?

It is on those days that the faith exemplified in the biblical record of everyday people comes to mind. For example, the father who welcomes his son who has squandered his personal fortune is not only the story of a prodigal son, but an ever-loving Father (Luke 15:11-32). The story of Job is one of a person who had everything, lost it all and still said in his deepest moments of despair that despite the outcome of his life He remained committed to God as His Redeemer. (Job 19:25)

Two D's—Dawson and Dungy, provide us insight into the woof and warp of life. Sometimes you win and sometimes your loss is unthinkable, but the team standings in life are not the final judge. An old hymn, rarely sung these days, summarizes it best for me: "My faith has found a resting place not in device nor creed. I trust the every living God, His wounds for me doth plead! I need no other argument, I need no other plea, It is enough that Jesus died and that he died for me."

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March 17, 2006

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*Pastor, First Assembly of God
Fort Myers, Florida*

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