

“Coming Together for God’s Glory”

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One of the really cool things about the Olympics, even with the individual sports, is seeing athletes compete not for themselves alone, but for something bigger, broader…their countries. When athletes stand on the medal podium, they stand proudly representing their countries. Filled with overwhelming passion and pride, they stand as flags are raised and national anthems played…smiles, tears, hands over hearts…a devotion that makes all the sacrifice, hours and years of preparation worth it. Playing for something greater than oneself gives meaning, a greater significance, especially in today's "me-centered", narcissistic world. There is something to be said about athletes of individual sports where the weight of performance and success rests squarely on their shoulders alone. Indeed, huge pressure! The cheers and support of these athletes’ “inner circles” speak volumes. When their competition is completed, who comes to cheer or console them? Their inner circle of coaches and their personal “teams”. Athletes of individual sports risk becoming myopic…shortsighted, seeing the competition only from their view, experience, success and goals. Golf is an “individual” sport with only a few competitions where players compete as a team for their countries. Golf was reintroduced as an individual sport in the 2016 Olympics after a 112 year absence. Though competing individually, Olympian golfers seemed to enjoy and be inspired by the camaraderie with other athletes, even across sports. They were in the crowds cheering at the swimming, volleyball, basketball and many other competitions. Each sport has it’s own focus, rules, practice regimes, goals, etc., yet over and over I heard comments like “though different, what we shared as athletes was so much more.” Athletes were pumped by the presence, excellence, passion of others competing, even in totally different sports requiring different talents, mindsets, preparations. Isn't this true for the Body of Christ? Paul writes about the Body of Christ in I Corinthians 12. We know these verses, but sometimes it is good to read the chapter again because even in sports ministries, we sometimes become myopic and miss out on the joy of seeing how God is using and blessing other sports ministries, as well as miss the encouragement and insights we can gain from other ministries. As Paul said, “There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.” (I Corinthians 12:4-6). Then he brings all the different gifts, service and activities together… “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” (I Corinthians 12:12). During the Olympic closing ceremonies, the athletes celebrated together from different sports, different cultures, different countries what they shared in common…the pursuit of a medal, a record, the joy of passion, commitment, the pursuit of excellence. I hope you will join in a 2016 Power Up Sports Ministry conference! It is a place of like minded people …a place to celebrate what God is doing in and through a diversity of sports…and a place to be encouraged, gleaning insights from other members of the Body of Christ. Sign up today for the November 9 conference in Indianapolis, IN or the November 29 conference in Lansing, MI.