

**QUIET TIME GUIDE**  
**FOR Thursday 8/21/08**  
**FROM JACK MILLWOOD**

**Greeting:**

As I write this, the world is focused on the Olympic games in Beijing, China. There have been some very dramatic moments in the games. World records have been set and older ones have been shattered. The biggest sports story from the summer games has been the record setting accomplishments of the American swimmer, Michael Phelps. He has won 8 gold medals in one Olympics. No man in all of history has ever accomplished that. He now holds more gold medals for a lifetime than any other athletic in Olympic history. I remember seeing in one of his swim meets the President of the United States in the grandstands standing and cheering him on to victory. Can you image, politics aside, being an athlete in a world competition and having the most powerful political figure alive standing and cheering for you? The leader of the free world and the most powerful nation on earth is cheering you on the victory. I actually saw one of his victories as I was coming out of a restaurant. Going from my table to the door I saw on the over head televisions that he was about to jump into the water. I stopped and watched it along with everyone else in the restaurant. This was not a sports bar. This was an upscale classy restaurant my wife and I had gone to for our anniversary. Yet the restaurant came to a stand still when he jumped into the water. If you saw this particular race you will not forget it. It was the closest finish I have ever seen. Literally he won by his finger tips. Can you imagine being on that kind of stage? The whole world is watching. Thousands are in the stands, and millions are glued to television sets. I read yesterday that he stands to make over \$50 million in endorsements after the Olympics are over. What a stage to perform on! I thought about him and all those other athletes for a while today. For about a two week period the whole sports world is glued in on their performances. They stand before millions on a platform and have their national anthem played and are celebrated for their accomplishments. However, what I began to think about was all the preparation that these athletes have had to go through. Yes, right now when Phelps swims the world is watching. But they say he has swum thousands and thousands of hours virtually alone. It was him and his coach swimming over and over in isolation so that when he steps on the stage he is ready. The gymnasts who perform before a coliseum full of spectators have spent hundreds of hours over years of time alone in a gym trying new techniques and failing over and over again as they try to perfect their craft. Think of the hours the track stars have spent on an isolated track honing their skills. It is true with every athlete. The time they spend in front of an adoring crowd is miniscule compared to the agonizing hours they have spent in isolation preparing for their moment in the sun. I looked into the eyes of some of these athletes and saw their concentration as their moment was about to happen. This is it! Years and years of preparation have gone into getting ready for a ten second race. It did not matter how well they had done in the past. They had to do it now! One race. One time. They had to be prepared. Life is not really so different. If we want to be successful in life we can not just walk into the arena and think we will just excel. We have to be prepared. I am amazed at how people think that their spiritual life will just happen. They assume that their marriage will just work. Their kids will just automatically grow up to live the American dream. Yet we spend so little time getting prepared. That is

what your time alone with God is all about. You are getting before God every day, alone, preparing, and honing your walk and your life before your coach. It is in the solitude of those hours spent with God that spiritual champions are made. The Psalmist knew the value of spending time before God in his written word, to learn how to live. He had to have it. Listen to what he says in Psalm 119.

**Scripture for today:**

***Psalm 119: 97” Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. 98 Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. 99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. 100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts. 101 I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word. 102 I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me. 103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.”***

**Life Application:**

In some ways athletes have to come to love the preparation. They know that is where victory is won or lost. We have to come to learn to love our time alone with God. The Psalmist said, ***“Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.”*** We can not expect to face the challenges in life and be successful if we have not spent time with God and his word preparing our hearts for each battle we will face. This time with God makes us ***“wiser”*** and we gain ***“insight”*** as we ***“meditate”*** on his teachings. It is here that we gain ***“understanding.”*** It is in our time before God that we grow steady and we keep our ***“feet from every evil path...”*** We have grown to love his teaching so much that we can say, ***“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”*** We can say that because we know that is the place and those are the times where we ***“gain understanding”*** in life.

**Spiritual exercise:**

We can not just turn it on when we need it. We must be prepared. If you want to be a great father and meet the challenges of fatherhood you must search for understanding in God’s word and guidance from his teaching on what it takes to be a great father. The same is true if you want to be a great mother. What does God say I need to do to be a husband or a wife that achieves the desires we had when we started our walk together as a couple? What does the Bible have to say about how I go about my vocation and my job? How do I treat people at work? Every day we face situations that call for actions and reactions on our part. Our decisions and responses to life often determine how our life ends up. Do we just jump out of bed and head into those events without any preparation? I challenge you to take time to listen and to learn from God. Over and over in this passage he uses the word ***“mediate.”*** Meditation is not a quick performance. It requires time. It requires thought. It means you have to reflect, analyze. You have to be willing to make changes that God reveals. Are you doing that? Are you rushing through your quiet time, or are you pondering, thinking, evaluating your life as it is exposed to the truth? It is here that character and success are built.

**Thought for the day.**

You will never be more successful in life than you are in your solitude with God.