

“I Failed Every Year”

Years ago, when I was just a boy, my high school, Leadore High School, would conduct the Presidential Physical Fitness trials. As I recall, it was done in the fall and again in the spring. Coaches would gather all of us up and we would compete in different categories to demonstrate our physical fitness—push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups, climb up a rope, run, all kinds of stuff to show that we were in good physical condition. There were three categories, three levels. There was the bronze, the silver and the gold. If you were a really good athlete in great physical condition, then you would earn the gold medal. Every year, I would compete, along with all of my classmates. I would excel in every category except one, the softball throw. I would earn a gold medal rating in every category of fitness—running, push-ups, rope climb, etc, all except throwing a softball. I could not throw a softball worth beans. Year after year, I would be knocked out of the gold ranking because I could not throw a softball far enough. I tried everything.



I remember standing on the bluff near our home that overlooked the headwaters of the Lemhi River and there I would stand on that bluff throwing rocks for hours in an attempt to improve my ability. I would throw, and throw, and throw until my arm ached and the sun went down, but, to no avail. Every year, every trial, I failed the softball throw and missed the satisfaction of being an honored gold medal athlete. For a boy who wanted friends and recognition that was hard. I worked on the ranch, bucked hay and swung a shovel. I knew

how to work. I was a tough, lean, well-muscled kid but I couldn't throw a softball to save my life—no matter how much I practiced.

I learned then that practice doesn't always make perfect. Without a coach, a teacher, a mentor, someone to help us, we tend to keep repeating the same defeating behaviors. If

we don't practice well, we don't become better. If we keep practicing the same bad technique we still come up with the same bad outcome. To perfect any skill generally requires the help of someone smarter and more skilled than we are.

Well, all these decades later, I still can't throw a softball, but now I don't care. I've given up perfecting my throwing arm for perfecting my character. I've traded in medals of gold in high school for those streets of gold in eternity where my Heavenly Parents live. I want me and my family to be with them—like them in every way. It is their honor and glory that matters to me now.

Don't get me wrong, I'm still practicing, harder and more consistently in fact, than I ever did back in high school, but now I have a skilled coach—a teacher fully invested in me. It is as if I am His only student. I am engraven on the palms of his hands, so devoted is He. He is the author and finisher of my faith—the Lord, Jesus Christ. He is just as devoted to you. Given enough time and the power of His love and others, perfection is not only possible, it is inevitable, if we are willing.



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