

Genesis 39

“God’s Training Program”

February 18, 2018 – Rev. Rick Lyon

Intro

There are 2,952 athletes competing at the Winter Olympics. Kelly Clark is one of them.

Kelsey Straeter: About the time the rest of us were learning how to jump rope at recess, 7-year-old Kelly Clark was already mastering the sport of snowboarding. The Rhode Island native started competing in 1999 and became an Olympic gold medalist for the women’s halfpipe in the 2002 Winter Olympics. 16 years later, Clark heads into the 2018 Winter Games as snowboarding’s most decorated Olympian.

The 34-year-old’s long list of accomplishments include 5-time World Snowboard Tour season champion, 8-time Burton U.S. Open halfpipe champion, 7-time X Games halfpipe gold medalist, and 2-time Olympic halfpipe medalist. She’s basically the Michael Phelps of snowboarding.

Clark recalls her Olympic victory in 2002. *“I hit the peak, the pinnacle,”* said Clark. *“It was unbelievable.”* But just a few months later, after the interviews, parades, and worldwide praise died down, she found herself feeling empty once again. *“In all those external successes, I was really looking for that sense of significance. I think our greatest need as humans is to be significant, and we’ll look for that everywhere. That’s just what I did with my snowboarding.”*

The following year, she began asking herself an unsettling question: *“Now what?”* Clark felt herself crumbling under the weight of her own expectation and the gold-standard she’d set for herself. Feeling incredibly depressed before her first event of the season that year, Clark wrote in her journal: *“I don’t care if I wake up tomorrow, and I don’t think anybody else cares.”*

Even in her despair, she managed to qualify for the finals, but it just didn’t carry the same meaning it did before. It was during this low point that Clark overheard something that would change the course of her [life]. After one girl failed to qualify, she heard another high-profile snowboarder whisper these words to her: *“It’s all right. God still loves you...”*

Those words sank deep into Clark’s soul. Outside of seeing the occasional “Jesus loves you” plastered on billboards and bumper stickers, she really didn’t know what this Christianity thing was all about—but she had a newfound burning desire to find out. That night, she dug a Bible out of her hotel room drawer and began to seek out answers for herself. *“I was like, ‘I don’t even know how to read this,’”* admitted Clark.

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Lucky for her, her competitor who was disqualified from the finals just so happened to be in the same hotel. In a leap of faith, Clark knocked on her door and said, *“I think you might be a Christian, and I think you need to tell me about God.”* Nearly 15 years later, Clark is still grateful for that encounter *clearly orchestrated by the hand of God.* *“I knocked on the right door,”* she said. *“I gave my heart to the Lord that day.”*

Through diving into Scripture, getting support from other Christian snowboarders, and reading Rick Warren’s *Purpose Driven Life*, Clark came to the unshakeable conclusion that Jesus Christ is Lord—and her life has been radically changed ever since. Now, the snowboarding legend rides with a 6-word message boldly stamped on the topside of her board: *“Jesus, I cannot hide my love.”*

Genesis 45:6-9 - "This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. So it was God who sent me here, not you! And He is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh--the *manager of his entire palace* and the *governor of all Egypt...* God has made me *master over all the land of Egypt.*"

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Luke 16:10 - "Unless you're *faithful in small matters*, you won't be faithful in large ones."

Lionel Messi: *"I start early and I stay late. Day after day, year after year. It took me 17 years and 114 days to become an overnight success."*

Genesis 12:3 - "I will bless those who bless you."

Romans 8:28-29 - All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose... to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Matthew 28:20 - "Behold, I am with you *always*."
