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July 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

One of my favorite sports to watch is track & field—particularly hurdles. As I watched the U.S. Olympic trials for the 400m hurdles recently, I couldn't help but think about 2 Timothy 4:7--"I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith." As I watched the race unfold, I felt it wasn't so much about the competing against others but of pushing oneself and "giving it all one has" to get the job done. Extending oneself and engaging one's gifts, talents and mental fortitude to finish what one set out to accomplish will yield unbelievable results.

Sydney McLaughlin broke a world record for 400m hurdles as she crossed the line. When the commentator shared that Sydney began the race running alongside the current world record holder, he intimated it was like iron sharpening iron as Sydney pushed herself instead of worrying about whether or not she could beat another. In a way, they were encouraging each other as they were reaching, stretching toward the same goal...all the way to the finish line. After the race...Sydney said it was "her faith and trusting the process" that allowed her to run the race in such excellent fashion.

This event reminded me of family and friends whom God has put in different seasons of my life to run alongside me so that we can encourage one another in the Lord. Finding God in all things surfaces when we are accompanied by people who are running the same race we are and doing so with a spirit of solidarity, love and encouragement. I've witnessed this accompaniment in the LIS community.

My prayer is that we can each find ourselves in God's loving gaze while recognizing the dignity and love in others. July is when we invite others to experience this loving solidarity as we feature our offerings and share our gifts with others. When you come, do bring your loved ones along with you as you discover together, God's love for you in such an individual way!

In peace and lots of love,

Lori