

## 1 **The Bislett Effect**

- Helping Champions to be even Better

## 2 **Introduction**

- Each year, over a thousand members of the media show up to cover one of the largest single-day sporting events in the world.
- Some of the biggest events include the Super Bowl, Indianapolis 500, and the Kentucky Derby.
- But right up there in the rankings is the Boston Marathon, where 20,000 runners travel from all of the world to compete.

## 3 **The Bislett Effect**

- Every single runner, from the fastest to the slowest, receives a tremendous boost from the fans along the way.
- They benefit from is called, The Bislett Effect.
- The Bislett Effect is a phenomenon that has implications for us all, whether we are practicing our running or practicing our religion.

## 4 **Bislett Stadium**

- The name comes from the Bislett Stadium in Oslo, Norway, a place where 65 nordic, and track-and-field records have been broken over the years.
- We're not talking about one broken record, or two, or 10, or even 20, but a full 65 records.
- No other track can boast of such a record for record-breaking achievements.
- In 1999, Sports Illustrated declared that the Bislett Stadium was one of the top 20 sports venues of the 20th Century.

## 5 **No Place Like Bislett Stadium**

- According to an article in Runner's World (November 2003), the British runner Sebastian Coe set several records at Bislett, including a series of stunning miles.
- Another accomplished British miler, Steve Cram, who shattered Coe's record for the mile, said, "If you can't run well at Bislett, you can't run well anywhere."
- So then, what is the secret of the Bislett Stadium?
- In other words, what makes this little stadium in Oslo, Norway such a venue for world records?

## 6 **The Secret of Bislett**

- The secret of Bislett is the crowd.
- The track is narrow, with only six lanes, and the grandstand is so steep that the fans are practically on top of you.
- "The sound of 21,000 screaming maniacs rakes your reflexes," writes Kenny Moore, "forcing you to keep your rhythm, the crowd's rhythm, for one more stretch, one more turn. The frenzied fans keep you going."

## 7 Olympian Kenny Moore

- Again, according to Kenny Moore,
  - “We run faster in front of great crowds because we are inspired by community — we run not only for ourselves but for the team, the family, the congregation, the tribe, the party, the nation.”
  - “Our deepest nature,” concludes Moore, “is that we are at our most majestic when we do it for others.”

## 8 Running the Race

- In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul uses the race-track, race-running metaphor on several occasions.
  - Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. (1 Cor 9:24 NIV)
  - I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Tim 4:7 NIV)
  - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Heb 12:1 NIV)
- So what would happen, if we apply the Bislett Effect to our race of perseverance?
- Would encouragement and cheering from the community of faith help us as we run the race of faith?

## 9 Living Stones

- Peter uses a construction metaphor in these words to the Christians who were scattered across five provinces in Asia Minor: . . .
  - . . . like living stones, [We all together] are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet 2:5 NIV)
- Peter here is talking about the church that is one body, but with many members, which according to 1 Peter 2:9, is to function by declaring the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.
- So how do we declare the praises of God?
- I interpret this to mean, showing forth the faithfulness and power He gives to those who carry out the Words of His Son Jesus Christ and in so doing provide evidence for others to believe and put their trust in the living God.

## 10 Church Health

- So then, what would happen, if the community faith would so cheer on each other as the crowd does at the Bislett Stadium?
- It's critical to the health of the ChristBody, as well as to our mission in the world, to see ourselves as a community that empowers and enables each other thereby allowing us to set all sorts of records.
- That is, enabling us to do much more than we had ever dreamed possible.

## 11 **The Cornerstone**

- This is not to say, however, that the church is merely a gathering of frenzied fans.
- No, as living stones we are cemented to the cornerstone that is “chosen and precious,” according to Peter (2:6).
- Paul’s metaphor is that Jesus Christ is “the “prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:14).
- Our faith is the mortar that connects us to Jesus, and our belief in him is what keeps us anchored, strong, and secure.
- Without a good cornerstone in Jesus Christ, we cannot remain standing as a solid spiritual house.

## 12 **Keep Our Eyes on Jesus**

- In fact, if we don’t keep our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, we’re going to end up flat on our faces.
- Peter tells us that for those who do not believe, Jesus becomes a “stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.” (v. 8).
- That’s an awful position to be in when we’re trying to “run with perseverance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

## 13 **The Cheering Fans**

- Yet, the crowd is crucial.
- And as such, we ourselves are runners, contestants, both on the track and in the “stands.”
- We’re cheering on, helping, assisting, empowering,
  - those who are facing some particular challenge, obstacle, trial or test, and
  - in a position to yell and scream and cheer and urge our sisters and brothers onward.

## 14 **Stand Together**

- Nevertheless, we have to stay close to one another.
- If we’re going to have any chance of proclaiming the mighty acts of God to a faith starved world, then we’re going to have to hang together as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (2:9).
- Benjamin Franklin’s warning is apt: “We must all hang together,” he said, “or assuredly we shall all hang separately.”
- We are at our most majestic when we work for the good of the body — when we do for others instead of ourselves.

## 15 **Chicago Marathon**

- In 2004, Henry Brinton set out to run the Chicago Marathon with 40,000 other runners.

- The weather was cool and clear, perfect for running.
- As he took off his warmup jacket, you could see he was wearing a T-shirt with the Bible reference of Matthew 25:40.
- “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’” (Matt 25:40 NIV)

#### 16 **The Race of perseverance**

- The gun goes off, and Brinton moves slowly forward, breaking into a run at the starting line.
- The course is lined with frenzied fans, screaming encouragement to everyone in the race, and musical groups appear every few blocks, playing everything from hip-hop to salsa to “The Star Spangled Banner”.
- The enthusiasm of fans along the route is contagious — it’s a powerful expression of The Bislett Effect.

#### 17 **The Race of perseverance**

- As the miles drop behind him, Brinton says he thought of the many pledges that church members had made to 25:40 in connection with his run.
- Their pledges of a dollar a mile, two dollars a mile, five dollars a mile all kept him going, because he knew that his steps would be translated into lifesaving assistance for the children of Africa.
- Sure, he’s working hard as he runs across the city, but not nearly as hard as the people who are fighting AIDS in Africa every single day.

#### 18 **The Race of perseverance**

- By mile 16, he’s starting to feel some leg pain, and pops a couple of Tylenol.
- By mile 20, real fatigue was setting in, and this is where images of the children in Africa really began to help him.
- Whenever he feels like giving up, he thinks of their perseverance.
- Whenever he’s about to quit, he thinks of what they have to endure.
- In the end, he runs across the finish line at mile 26.2 . . . thinking of the children his run will help.

#### 19 **Don’t Run Alone**

- This plodding pastor, supported by his congregation and a Chicago crowd, succeeded in raising \$5,000 to help a struggling group of orphans in Africa.
- Together, they knew that whenever we help one of the least of our brothers and sisters, we are really helping Jesus, and they discovered that we are at our most majestic when we work for the good of the body — when we do for others instead of ourselves.
- Brinton was a winner that day, because of the irresistible power of The Bislett Effect.
- He achieved what he did because he did not run alone — instead, he was part of “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (2:9).

## 20 **How To Encourage Others**

- We come along side and invest time with them and show them that we support, love, and appreciate them.
- We display and maintain a positive attitude.
  - Show we want them to win.
  - Look for the best in people and extend grace to the worst.
- We instill faith in others.
  - People will achieve great heights, if they know we believe in them.
  - People will achieve great heights, if they know God believes in them.

## 21 **Life Challenges**

- Life can be very challenging.
- As we live our lives, we need a lot of help along the way.
- So then, it is very important for us to have people around who support us—not because they want something from us, but because they are genuinely good people and want us to succeed and fulfill God’s calling.
- It is equally very important too, that we ourselves come along side others and cheer them on to spiritual excellence and be that person in the body of Christ who faithfully fulfills their role and function.
- The body of Christ is only successful as the success of each of its members.
- Therefore, let us encourage each other that the church of Jesus Christ can be that light of revelation and that city on a hill that shows what God can do through those who believe.

## 22 **Trustworthy Saying**

- William Arthur Ward once said,
  - “Flatter me, and I may not believe you.”
  - “Criticize me, and I may not like you.”
  - “Ignore me, and I may not forgive you.”
  - “But encourage me, and I will never forget you.”

## 23