

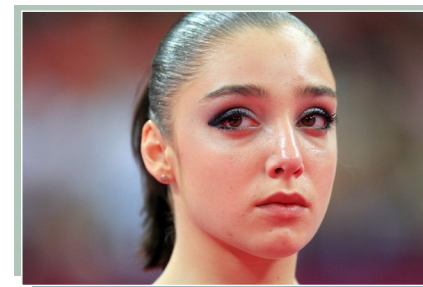
Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

Romans 12:15-16

# a Generous spirit

APPARENTLY THE WOMEN'S GYMNASTIC COACHES IN RUSSIA use up all their training time on physical athleticism, and leave no time for teaching sportsmanship.

Aliya Mustafina of Russia considers herself to be the best; she is supposed to win. But now she was just a pouting little princess with troweled-on eye shadow. In the Women's Individual All-Around competition of gymnastics, in the London Olympics, she came up third, bested by—of all things—an *American*. She huffed off the stage, angrily pushing away her consoling teammates and coaches—a disgruntled, petulant prima donna fuming over not winning the event. She was supposed to win *gold*—not settle for bronze. *Bronze!* How humiliating.



A few days later a fresh-faced, smiling young man from California performed on the vault. Sam Mikulak's first run was not that great, but his expression afterward said, *Hey, that wasn't too bad. It was fun, but I think I can do better. Lemme at it.* As he stuck the landing of his second

vault a huge grin spread across his face and he was exultant. He received a good score for his effort, and for a few moments he was in contention for a medal. Earlier in the day he had posted on the internet...

No matter where I end up today, I'm blessed to have the opportunity to represent my country and I'll enjoy every moment of it.



As he stood off to the side, watching and waiting while subsequent gymnasts performed, the smile never left his face—even when their superior performances knocked him off the medal podium. As each of them finished their vault and passed near him he greeted and embraced them cheerfully. It was obvious that he really wanted every one of them to do well, and was personally delighting in their individual triumphs.



A sure mark of the Holy Spirit at work in a life is a believer's spirit of humility. It's full flowering does not occur at the moment of regeneration, but, much as an athlete develops his or her muscles, is developed over time with practice, exercise, and commitment. If a full spirit of generosity toward others occurred automatically, without effort, it would not have been necessary for the apostle Paul to so charge the church in Philippi.

**Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.**

*Philippians 2:3-4*

For a blessed few this quality comes naturally, but for most of us it is one that must be developed, practiced, nurtured. For the natural bent of flesh is in opposition to this. We are born as squalling tyrants insisting on having our own way, and many of us continue studiously on that path well into adulthood. But Christ Jesus showed us a better way.

**Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard**

equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

*Philippians 2:5-8*

This is why God sent His Son into the world, and this is why He leaves in the world every one who calls upon His name. We are to be salt and light to a hurting world. We are to be a friend to the friendless, comfort to those needing comfort. And when a brother or sister

triumphs, we are to rejoice *with* them. This God honors—just as He honored it in His own Son.

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

*Philippians 2:9-11*