

What being an Ironman has taught me...

One aspect of coaching is to share your experience with athletes, in order to help them better understand what they might encounter in their own sporting endeavors. One aspect of being a Christian leader is to try to share your life's experiences, both the successes and failures, to be a living example of someone trying to truly live like Christ. To being willing to humble myself before all people and say here are my mistakes, here is where I failed, here is how I hope to change and mature... not to make myself a better person, but to better glorify God. Simply, to be more like Christ.

Because, humbly, I claim the title of worse sinner of all; ok, worse sinner of all minus one. That one being Paul who claimed this title before me and out of my respect for his accomplishments for the kingdom, I will give him that privilege. In my life, there have been countless times when I have murdered, when I have coveted, when I have even denied Christ. You see, every time we hate another person... Jesus tells us that we have indeed murdered them. When we lust after anything we have coveted. When faced with opportunities to clearly claim my faith, I have in the past, failed to speak up. Failed to be willing to risk my life for Christ. So you see, I am indeed the worse sinner of all. Minus one, Paul... Minus two, the person I was yesterday and the yesterdays before that. And yet, God sees fit to use me to lead others to Him. And through Christ's love I am redeemed.

This is my attempt to share, in both ways (coach and Christian leader), the past few months leading up to Ironman Arizona. I first feel I need to share some background to help some of you understand the bigger picture...

Quite honestly my Ironman quest started years ago, almost as soon as I started the sport of triathlon, I fixed "Ironman" as the top prize. In my mid 20s, I had enjoyed success playing soccer and hockey in the San Jose, CA area at the top local amateur levels. IE: I was playing on teams with and against former college soccer stars and IHL and AHL players. With a move back to Sacramento, a new job and 18 hour work days... all that changed. I quickly put on 30+ pounds and was pitifully out of shape in 8 months. With a new job came an opportunity to get back in shape with a program called "basic training".

Inside of me, I felt a calling to serve... and not yet having surrendered my life to God, I thought I was called to serve in the US Military. I became fascinated with the concept of finding my limits, and thought that I might try to find a way to become a US Navy Seal. However, by the time I got in contact with the right people, I was a few weeks too old to start that training. In my quest to serve, I continued to look at the military, but always (funny how that works out) stopped me. The last time, I was selected by the direct commission board, but somehow a copy of my medical record (showing my shoulder surgery) was missing and I had to be passed over. In my attempt to find my personal limits, ironman became my outlet.

Those of you, who are not hockey fans, let me explain the athletic demands. It is a sport of: go 100% effort for 45-50 seconds then recover for 2-3 minutes. Not really a great cross over for iron man. So unknowingly, I put myself into a sport that was completely unlike most of my previous sporting ventures. Now with the knowledge of a USAT coach, I realize; I had no base... my long endurance work outs were some 4-5 mile jogs. So while I experienced some success, I do say some because I was the worst swimmer, at my first sprint distance triathlons. I soon hit the wall of being unable to perform, at even the Olympic distance races. Did that stop me? No, ever time I suffered... I just redoubled my efforts and pressed on. Definitely training harder, not smarter. (It took going through coaching certification to understand how the body can be adapted and changed... Suddenly, I understood why I was failing at these longer races).

As some of you know, my first ½ Ironman experience ended with me dehydrated and pulling out after mile 2 of the run. My first full Ironman also left me dehydrated and in the medical tent at mile 77 on the bike. So these longer races have not come easier.

More importantly, with my mountain top experience... I have quite honestly lost the need to “find my personal limits”. Quite simply, I know I have them. I know I hit them over and over... but what makes me go on. What makes me over come them is not anything I do, but rather, it is because I have put my life in God’s hands and, as Paul once said, whether I rise or whether I fall I will never walk alone. The work I do for God’s kingdom is so much more than anything else... it just doesn’t matter. But I’ll get back to that in a moment.

As some of you also know, I started coaching a gentleman (Ben) last summer who was looking to do Ironman Arizona, in the 70-74 age group. Can you imagine doing an ironman at 70? After failing at Ironman Wisconsin, and knowing I would want to be there for this athlete in Tempe anyways... I decided to sign up for IM Arizona, if it was not already sold out. Luckily, it wasn’t; was that so lucky?

For those wanting to know more about my Ironman Wisconsin experience check out: http://www.teaminfaith.org/IM_Wisconsin.pdf

Given Ben’s age, current physical abilities and the nature of the Ironman... we started on a base building journey last fall... We put in the work through many cold and wintery days. Days where the thought of a warm shower was all that kept my legs turning, days when only the very fact that the only way to get home was to get back on the bike and start riding, and days where we were so cold and wet that an ironman seemed like an easing of our suffering.

Not longer before leaving for Ironman California I had a falling out with a friend. I became very disappointed in a decision they made and honestly I lashed out at them. I wish I could say I handle it gracefully, I did not. I was hurt. I was stressed. I was disappointed. I was not Christ-like. Only through God’s strength was I able to overcome my own weakness and let go... and ask this person to forgive me. Not that I agree with

their decisions, but rather, that I was willing to focus on Jesus and not on the problem. It was not the emotional state I would recommend for a taper situation. I felt so drained and tired... bruised and battered on the flight down. At least, I was able to sleep well in my hotel room. ☺

When I got to Oceanside, I was able to focus on helping Ben. To the best of my ability... that is what I did.

Race day began cold and dreary, as Ben and I rode our bikes down a few miles to the transition area. As we were standing around, a cold shower came through and we joined many others in a tent nearby. Although this was a "M dot" event, this ½ Ironman has wave starts, and a 200 yard swim to the start line. So, as I huddled on shore waiting for my wave I made the critical mistake of taking my time into the water and getting to the starting line... because as was about 100 yards from the starting line, I thought, what was that noise... As I saw the other guys in my group swimming away, it dawned on me that it was the starting gun. Opps, not a great way to start the day. For what ever reason, I simply never got comfortable in the water. I never found my swim stroke and I struggled to see the bouys on a course with a lot of extra things to distract your eye (it being in the harbor with numerous boats and the fact the course changes direction often.).

Finally, I made it out of the water and on the bike (which is a strong event for me). As some of you know. Last year at Wildflower on the long course (1/2 IM distance) I suffered through 3 flat tires, and 1 extra hour, right out of T1. At a road race, I also had a flat front and had to get the SAG wagon back to my car. And just before IM CA, in a road another road bike race, both of my water bottle holders broke. So I had a bit of a rough time with my bikes over the recent time.

I started out and felt a little sick to my stomach. So, I had to ride fairly easily... as I started to feel a little better a friend of mine rode by and say hello to me... well, I though.. I can ride with Mike... so I picked up the pace and kept him within sight. Just as we rounded a corner to head down a hill, I felt my front wheel flat. As I tried to control the bike to a stop down the hill, I thought, I hope the Co2 pump I bought works. Well, unfortunately, it simply would not engage on the valve stem extender. So after a few minutes, I realized my best choice was to roll down to the next aid station and wait there for the SAG wagon home. After about 5 minutes, I reached that aid station set my bike down and started cheering for my fellow competitors; quite simply, it was the brightest part of my day. ☺ After a few minutes, a tech support arrived. It seemed he was looking for someone else with a problem, but since they were not there... he would help me. Great! You see I was running my race wheels, which are tubulars. Lighter, faster... yes. Easier to change a flat? No. At first he offered me a wheel switch. Unfortunately, all he had was a rear. We tried sealant. That didn't work. So he ripped my old tired off, while I went for some Gatorade, and stuck a new tired (not glued) on my wheel. Suddenly, I was back in the race and off to face 3 hills. After the last hill (and down hill... which were spooky on a non-glued tubular)... I started feeling good and really cooked back into T2 and passed a number of other riders fighting a head wind home.

As I got to the run the biggest thing on my mind was “where’s Ben”? I thought for sure he would pass me while I waited with the flat on the bike... but I did not see him. So I started out and prayed for him to be having a great race. I spent much of the run looking at everyone... trying to spot Ben and just taking it as a rather easy pace. I finally saw Ben after I reached the turn around point on lap 2... and it was good to see he was safely on his way. I picked up the pace on the push home and finished with a respectable time considering the trials of the day.

I felt good by finishing strong on both the bike and run... and hoped it would be enough for Arizona.

After IM CA, I spent some time trying to reconcile with my friend and in trying to prepare for IM AZ. I decided to give myself a good test and try a hilly road race. I headed down to just South of Fresno and drove the course the Friday before the race. Wow, I knew the profile said 2000’ of climbing for each 30 mile lap... but it was pretty impressive. Saturday morning dawn overcast, but not raining.... By the time the race started, however, it was a full on cold rain that might have been worrisome if my bike hadn’t developed the definite sound of a frozen link in my chain on the neutral 3 mile roll out at the start of the line... sure enough as we hit the first of the slope I had no choice but to stop and try to fix it. I knew it would be hard for me to keep up with other riders in my category on such a day. I knew it would be twice as hard to play catch up, with a chain that was skipping. Basically, for every 3 pedal strokes I took I only got only 2 getting me up the hill as the other was lost in the skip. So although I pushed as hard as I could... I simply could not bridge the gap and had to back off or risk blowing up on the climb. I rode alone through the rain, trying to remain graceful and not get frustrated; Praying for God to give me that grace and strength... as it became harder and harder to remain calm. At one point, the chain actually became unstuck only to freeze again a few minutes later (that was the hardest thing to deal with... the return of the freezing... it was like, oh, come on!).

I was faced with a very tough situation. You see, one of the important things I felt I needed to prove was not to give up, to finish the race no matter what. After DNFing some previous races... I had a battle of integrity with myself. How could I hope to not just finish an Ironman, but more importantly, to finish the work God has given me to do. For honestly, my ultimate goal is to on my deathbed honestly be able to say to God simply, “it is done”. I have finished the race. So how can I expect to do that, when that work is so much harder than a stuck chain or a little rain? I also knew that I was running the risk of truly beating myself up emotionally and decided... that I would finish one lap and then fix everything and go out on a grueling hilly training ride Monday. So after lap 1, I made the long trek back to my truck and loaded up for the ride home.

The next week, I forced myself to ride a very difficult local hill called Slug gulch twice. It is legendary, part of a century ride, this hill features a series of 17+% grades that seem to go on forever (it is in fact a few miles long). Not being a climber, it was a mental and physical challenge... and it made me feel good to complete it twice in 1 weeks’ time.

I also meet with my spiritual director who proceeded to tell me that I needed to move away and that I should spend time reflecting on all the losses I had suffered lately. It was kind of an emotional bomb. I then received 2 piece of disturbing news. One of which was that a friend of mine from San Diego, the person who actually did all the art work for Team in Faith, had been found to have a cancerous tumor in his kidney and would have to have the kidney removed. The other piece of news was about a family member who made a very poor decision that would have long lasting effects. With that, and a little packing, I headed to Phoenix.

I was kind of nervous driving a 33' RV. I had driven a trailer to our Tuesday night triathlons all summer long, but it was only 18'. Besides, the trailer was the Team's, but the RV was my parents. So with 1 test ride with my dad over to camping world, off I went. One thing I can say is that California has the worst roads I've ever seen. After 7 hours on CA roads I was a wreck and was so happy to have arrived a dirt parking lot next to Wal-Mart, which I had heard was a great place to stop off at. I was staying at the same RV park as Ben... and was glad someone would be there to help me with the ever difficult task of backing up that RV. When I arrived, the RV park had one of their staff members guide me into my spot... and before long I was busily trying to remember everything my dad said about which hoses went to what plug and about what switches should be on and so forth. After that, and the long drive... I decided to get in a little bike ride. Ben had graciously carried my tri bike on his motor home to IM CA and on to IM AZ... but I had my mountain bike with me... so off I went. Man, my legs felt good and I was quickly hammering around Tempe. Everything was great, until, the electronic lock out on my front fork quit working. It wouldn't be that big of a deal, except, I had signed up for Wildflower's mountain bike sprint triathlon... and would need that bike to be good to go.

The next day I dragged Ben over to Tribe multi-sport as we both needed a few things.. and Kevin set us up! As I was paying for my stuff, I noticed an ad for a local criterium series for each Wednesday night. I always wanted to try a crit... I've done mtn bike and road races, but never a crit. Being a non-climber... I thought this might be fun, especially since it was cheap \$10 for 1 race and \$5 for a 2nd race and low key. I made the comment of "I should have brought my road bike" so I could have done this crit to Ben and Kevin over heard. Kevin then graciously offered me the use of his own road bike. I told him I'd think about it. I didn't think too long before saying... let's do it. I meet Kevin later that night and we made a few measurements from my tri bike and he got the road bike all ready for me the next day.

Crit night arrived and with Ben and his wife as my cheering squad... I pedaled out to the line up for race number 1. I prayed I wouldn't crash and get hurt just a few days before IM AZ. No, I would never let one of my athletes do this before their own races. As the race started, I thought... just stay loose and run wide into corner number 1. The course was a typical 4 corner clock-wise box, with a strong head wind on the backside and tail wind finish. Some one took off quickly and leaped ahead, obviously trying to check out early. I wasn't sure if I should chase or sit on, so I sat on for a lap and then started an

attack. I realized I hadn't opened enough of a gap and allowed myself to go back into the group. As the leader kept getting farther away, I realized, if I wanted to catch him I would have to try to get away again. So the next time we hit the head wind, I push hard into the pedals and got the jump on the other riders, I heard a couple groans and knew I was away and proceeded to try to reel in the leader. Now, I thought the race was 15 minutes... but it turned out to be 15 laps... , which I think was less than 15 minutes. Either way, as I closed on the leader I got the feeling someone was with me. There was, either he came with me or bridged to me, but I was not going to do all the work so I slowed and hoped he would choose to work with me... Well, that didn't work. So I finally pulled over and forced him through. It was a good plan, except, he was fresh from sitting on and he decided to shake me... Around a corner, I let my attention wane and he opened up a gap. I should have closed it and let him pull me to the leader... but I didn't. I settled in and closed over the next couple laps to the 2 leaders, but finished 3rd. Happy and a little spent. I rolled over to Ben and told him I would see him soon as I figured I'd get dropped quickly in race number 2. The pace in race #2 was faster and after a couple laps (out of 20), I was indeed on the back. I started working on turning tight around the corners and cutting the distance of the racecourse down instead of simply following. Suddenly, as we headed into the wind, 3-4 guys blew up at once in front of me and a gap opened... I instinctively accelerated and closed the gap. In fact, on each lap as we headed into the wind atleast 1 person in front of me blew up and a gap would open. I kept closing it down. As we headed to the last lap, I realized there was only 8 guys left in the bunch. I figured I had nothing to lose, so as we headed into the wind, I push hard on the pedals and flew around most of that group. Closing on the 3rd place guy I tried to cut the last corner tight, I went too tight and was unable to get by him and so took 4th. Happily, I beat both the 1st and 2nd place finishers from race number 1. It was good to have a race go well, with no bike problems and with better than expected results. Emotionally, mentally it really was a bright spot in my race prep. I hadn't realized how beaten I had been feeling with all those mechanicals and DNFs...

I was very thankful to Kevin for the use of his bike... and as I thought of it. I thought, I should have him go through my tri bike to make sure it would have the best chance of making it through the ironman with no mechanical issues. He agreed to look it over and I left it with him. There wasn't much wrong with it, but Kevin found a few things that need wrenching... and fixed it up for me. By the way, the guy charged me so little that I have to say to everyone out there... Please, go to Tribe multi-sport if you are in Phoenix and spend money at Kevin's shop! We need people like this to remain in business!

Friday meant Iron prayer! After hosting 2 Iron prayers last summer, in 6 days time. I was thankful to just have an opportunity to be a part of the crowd at this one. Especially, in trying to prepare for the race and to prepare Ben for his race. How awesome it was to see so many faces I had met at the ICTN tri camp back in January. It was like coming home. The songs and messages simply filled me up and helped me to refocus solely on God. Before I left that room, I took the time to say to God. I surrender my race to you. I put it in your hands. Whether I win, simply finish or DNF... It is yours and solely yours Lord.

Saturday we check our bikes in and got ready for the race. Now, when I arrived a week earlier... the predicted temperature was 80 degrees for race day. It turned out to be 90+. One of the best decisions I made was to purchase some arm coolers. Much like arm warmers keep you warm, these are suppose to keep you cool. I wasn't sure if they'd work, but I thought atleast they would keep the sun off me arms and keep me from burning (something that has happened too often in the past... especially with my Team in Faith tri top). With my dehydration problems, and knowing that I have a sweat rate over 100ml per hour (average is 40-60)... I decided to attach my never reach hydration systems. I ran into some slight problems with straw length and splashing, but a quick trip to the local REI and some engineering fixed that right up.

Race morning arrived and Ben and I headed to the transition area. We dropped off some stuff and somehow I lost him. Eventually I found him sitting on some concrete near his bike. We sat and talked and waited as the start time started to get closer and closer. At some point I heard the message... I will honor he who honors me. I thought about the palm leaves I had carefully packed and arranged on my bike and in my run bag... and I knew that it was a good thing to have made the effort to remember and honor God. I knew at that moment, I would finish IM Arizona.

Earlier that week, I looked at the swim course and noticed the buoy line basically made an "s", and if you were on the far right, it was actually straighter than following the buoy line. If you read my IM Wisconsin description of the swim... then you know I was not a happy camper in the water there. I thought I'd hang by the far right, near the shore and out of the way... Ah, bad choice as a number of people were hanging out there. You could sit along the shoreline just in the water. I knew I needed to get out of the way of the swimmers behind me... so I decided to join the group on the shoreline and found a place to sit for the last few minutes before the gun sounded. As I sat there, I wished a lady good luck who was shivering like crazy! She wished me good luck and then said may God bless you. It was amazing. I told her that He just did with her saying that to me and the gun sounded. I sat there and let most of my competitors go by and then jumped in at the back of the pack. I started swimming along the shore and suddenly, I started swimming good. Out of know where my pool swimming form came to me and I started moving through the pack. Before I knew it, I was at the bridge a mile away and almost to the turn to head back. My good form came and went, but I felt strong through out the swim and time past quickly as I reached the swim finish. After fighting off volunteers who wanted to strip my wetsuit, you see I had lost the string to my tri shorts and didn't want to risk having more than my wetsuit come off... So I took it off myself. I looked at the clock... it said 1:42. 1 hour and 42 minutes. No way, it was so much faster than IM Wisconsin. While sitting in T1 it hit me, it was 15 minutes off... as the pros had started 15 minutes earlier than us. So it was really 1:27. I was really happy with breaking 1:30!

I took my time in T1. Putting on bike shorts and jerseys over my tri shorts and tri top (I'd recommend changing out of the wet tri shorts for next time – chaffing is a factor), Putting on lots of sun screen (those sprays are awesome), and my arm coolers. Hey, I didn't burn all day!

I got my bike and was rolling away before too long! I was counting on the bike portion to set me up for a finish... I figured if I had enough time, I could simply walk the run if I had too. With all the bike work, I started passing people quickly. I didn't feel great, my legs were not all there after the swim... and so I stayed in my small chain ring through most of the first lap. With 2 bottles and the hydration system... I thought I was good with fluids and followed advice by not drinking or eating for 30 minutes on the bike. SO I past bike aid #1 without picking up anything. I had just started drinking when I hit aid station #2, but I grabbed a Gatorade (I spent all winter training on endurance formula Gatorade in lemon lime – exactly what they had on race day). One thing I learned from IM Wisconsin, was make eating and drinking simple. I eat cliff shot bloks in lemon lime and drank Gatorade. Every time I drank some Gatorade, my stomach hurt. Not good. We've got a problem here. I forced down bloks and sips of Gatorade. Just after pouring the Gatorade I took from aid station #2 into my hydration system, I hit some bumps and felt something wet hit me on the legs... it didn't stop. I realized my hydration system had sprung a leak and was pouring out all my fluids on to my legs!! Really not good!! I was able to slow and get the leak stopped, but most if not all of the fluid was now gone and I was a good 10 miles from aid station #3. A recipe for disaster, so much so that I'm not too proud to tell you that when I spotted an unused Gatorade bottle obviously dropped by a competitor on the roadside... I stopped and picked it up, and yes, I used it.

Even with the stomach problems, the leaking and not feeling too good... I was passing people at a pretty high rate. I knew I would pay for not drinking enough through mile 30... and made the decision to slow at aid station #3 to make sure I got 2 gatorades and 1 water bottle. I drank most of the water bottle before getting to the "last trash drop" and let it go there. Amazingly, my stomach stopped hurting and I started to feel good. Maybe water is the answer! I spent the rest of the bike going through periods of flying past people and thinking... I better take it easy or I might not finish this thing. I tried to drink as much as possible, but it wasn't enough. The whole week I was in Tempe, the wind had been out of the Southwest (which made it a tailwind up the only climb in the race). On race day, it started out from the Northeast... a head wind climb. ☹ Half way through the race, it switch back to the southwest, which meant on lap #2 I had a head wind climb and a head wind decent. Bummer! The time passed very quickly and I kept hoping I would be in T2 before it got too late! I tried to figure out what time it was... I knew they were stopping people from starting lap #3 at 3pm... so as long as people we still heading out on lap #3 (as I headed home)... I knew it was before 3. As it turned out, I got to T2 right before 3. I felt really good in general and had even picked up the pace on the way home on that lap.

I took time in T2 to change into a dry top that wouldn't chaff on the run. Put on clean dry socks. And to grab a bottle to run with. Yes, aid stations are only a mile apart... but I thought... I should carry a bottle with me. I hit the 1st aid station, which was run by some ICTN folks and it was great. Got my bottled filled with Gatorade and felt not too bad running. I did feel a blister coming on... but well, that happens! I ran to aid station #2, walk through it, got more Gatorade and ran on... then the wheels just started soming off. I realized, you know, I haven't gone to the rest room since the race started. A bad sign for dehydration. Suddenly, I could not will myself to run. I think God was holding

me back as walking was the only way for me to have any hope of finishing. So walk I did, which actually made my blisters worse! I walked almost all the 1st lap. And 1/3 of the way through the 2nd. I was talking to God when the song Indescribable by Chris Tomlin came into my mind and I started singing... and then I was completely choked up when I sang "you are Amazing God." I mean I almost had to stop; I was so overcome with emotion. It was definitely a God moment.

When I ran into a guy who would become my Iron Buddy. Somehow, we were in about the same sad shape, going the same pace and feeling like we might not be finishing this thing anytime too soon. We walked and talked and he decided to try to run. After he ran a bit, I thought I better run too. So I caught up to him. Before we knew it, we were run/walking together. He gave me the great advice of chicken broth and that perked me up. At some point, I felt one of my blisters pop, but what can you do but go on? After filling up my bottle (20 ounces) at every aid station, taking on cola and chicken broth, too. I felt I needed to visit the port-o-potty. I was happy to go, but concerned with the color... which meant I was indeed under-hydrated. Through out lap 2 we stuck together and I drank like a camel. Lap 1 by myself took 2 hours and 15 minutes to go just over 8.5 miles. Together we did lap 2 in right on 2 hours.

Now something about my mountain top moment has changed me so much, that I always do much better when I am helping someone over doing something for myself. I would be the perfect domestic in the Tour de France, as I find myself burying myself over and over allowing people to draft off me (as I in my mind draft off Christ). When I am serving others, I feel this is what I was born to do. Call me coach, call me pastor, call me crazy... it is who I am.

Suddenly, my race was not about me finishing... but about helping someone else to reach their goal. During lap #3, I started sweating, and the port-o-potty showed that drinking fluids had finally paid off. My Iron buddy could see I was feeling better as he was feeling worse. Still, I refused to leave him. I was the one say.. Let's run to that tree. Let's run 2 light poles. And he kept right on doing it with me. Now, he had done the math... and felt that finishing in the 14 hour range was impossible. He said, if he could finish in 14:30 he would be so happy. Knew 14:30 would be tough... we pressed on. Near the ½ way of lap 3 I saw someone in a FCA tri top go by and wondered if it was Stan Smith, someone I had met at the ICTN camp in January who was doing his first IM distance race. I called out, is that Stan up there? And it was (another God moment)! It really made me feel great to see Stan... so close to the finish and doing so well! We talked a bit and separated as I stayed with my iron buddy. We past each other a couple more times and share encouragement... and we talked about how God was the reason we were still going forward... It was awesome! Stan ran ahead, and my iron buddy finally told me to go on ahead at mile 24 and ½. So I ran up to Stan, gave him a squeeze on the shoulder and ran off to find the finish line.

As it turned out, pastor Scott from New Mexico (another ICTN camp attendee) finished 5 minutes before me, my iron buddy finish just 4 minutes behind me and Stan just 2 minutes after that! BTW, my iron buddy did finish right on 14:30! In that 10 minutes I was able to share a huge God moment with those 3 people. It was then again I heard the message I will honor he who honors me. God, you are an amazing God. To care whether I finished something as silly as an ironman race. To use it to use me... You simply are more awesome than I can imagine. A little over an hour later, as I sat with his wife and 2 friends, I watched Ben cross the line. Second in his age group, healthy and injury-free!
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The drive home Tuesday left me singing many Christian tunes... and with tears streaming down my cheeks. God has only given me His best. In everything, His best... I am doing everything I can to give Him ALL of my best. My best years, my best talents, my best life (which is my only life); To focus on Him, to serve Him, to worship and to praise Him. To call others to see that in giving All their best to Him, you actually gain not lose. That the fear you have in what you might have to live without, money, material possessions, worry about health, about family, about life in general.... You will be free. You can let that all go by accepting the yoke of Christ in trade. Don't settle for status quo. The way it's been is no longer good enough. It's time to go all in. Time to quit living for ourselves... to take it to the next level.

Make no mistake about it, I have been the worse sinner of all... minus 1: Paul minus 2: myself yesterday. And still, God loves me. And still, God has called me. To remind all of us, to focus on things of His kingdom and not of this world; to give your best to Him in all that you do.

Who among us cannot give more to God? Who among us can do with out more of God's love? Who among us can live without God? Give your best to God. That is what Ironman has taught me.

We can all do more for God. All of us!