

## Thursday Evening Devotions

### Morgan Cooper, Hampshire Regional YMCA Dolphins

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and fellow swimmers.

I would like to dedicate this devotion to Andrew Boynton and Brittany Pavolko who are the two seniors on our Y Nationals team.

Swimming is unlike any other sport. It's an individual sport, yet it's very much a team sport. With YMCA swimming you swim year round, so your swim team becomes more than just the people you swim endless amounts of laps with and the crazy coach on the side of the pool yelling at you to go faster. Your team becomes your family and in a family, you love, encourage, support, and build each other up. There have been so many times at practice and meets where I have gotten down on myself and felt like I just couldn't do it. And every time that's happened, my coach and my teammates have been there to pick me back up and encourage me to do my best.

Like a family, a team will do anything for you to help you succeed and achieve your goals and dreams. I'll always remember one thing that my teammate Stephanie Dill said to me after a hard practice. I said to Stephanie, "How do you always manage to get through a hard workout like that?" And she said, "Morgan, if I knew the answer to that, I would write a book and sell it." But, I've realized that we as swimmers get through those tough practices because of the encouragement and motivation we receive from our teammates and coaches. Over the years, my teammates have said some very memorable things to me, such as "Don't think. Just swim." And "Just swim your race. Who cares about what the person in the lane next to you is doing? Swim for you." These words of wisdom will stay with me forever because they came from people whom I love and will never forget.

In a family, a person's actions may speak louder than their words. There are people on my team, such as Nick Lashway and Josh Cotugno, whose abilities and attitudes motivate me and encourage me to try my hardest and live up to my potential.

Swimming for a YMCA team has taught me that a family isn't just the people who live with or eat dinner with every night. A family is also the people who help you to succeed, encourage you, support you, and love you for you. I would like to leave you with the wise words of my swim coach, Jim Hirtle. "Just have confidence in yourself. Go after it. You are strong and capable of anything. I believe in you, now you just have to believe in yourself."

Now if you would bow your heads and join me in prayer.

*Father God,*

*We come to You this evening to thank You for this week at Y Nationals. We pray that You bless our time here and that everything we do to glorify Your name. We want to thank You for all the swimmers who were able to qualify and for everyone who helped make this meet possible including the officials, timers, volunteers, parents, and spectators. We want to thank You for giving us a sport where we can grow as both athletes and individuals. Please help us to remember that as members of the YMCA we need to demonstrate caring, honesty, responsibility, and respect in all that we do and say. We pray that our actions and our words reflect You, Lord. Now we ask that You give strength and confidence to all the swimmers who are competing here at finals tonight.*

*In Your Precious Name we pray,*

*Amen.*