

Reaching the Endurance Athlete:

An Ethnography of North American and European Triathletes

for

The Fellowship of Christian Athletes Endurance Ministry

(FCA Endurance)

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Richard and Donna Douglass
Columbia International University - Seminary
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To get into the Ironman World Championships at Kona, Hawaii, triathletes must either qualify through one of the qualifier races or be selected in the lottery. Triathletes will train hard, race hard, and spend a great deal of money on gear in an effort to earn their way into “Kona.” They will also fill out the necessary forms and pay the fees to enter themselves in the lottery. Then they wait and hope. There is no certainty in either of these methods. Whether one person wins the Kona spot or another might be as random as a piece of glass on the road that gives one a flat on the bike, allowing the spot to go to another racer.

The only assured way to get in is to go to the race director himself, ask for a spot, and have him grant us one. It is his prerogative to do this if he desires. He can base his decision on our qualifications, our looks, or our bank account, whatever he chooses. In the case of Heaven, God bases our acceptance on our faith in His Son’s death and resurrection for our sins. There is no amount of “goodness in the race of life” or random drawing that will get us entry to the “race” of Heaven. It is simply the prerogative of the Race Director according to the stipulations He has set forth in His Word.

TARGET GROUP AND METHODOLOGY

Endurance racers in the United States and abroad have coalesced into one of the many culture groups of our modern world. These racers share many commonalities, most important of which is their choosing to allow their life to revolve around their sport. This choice is a result of the significant time commitments required to train and compete in endurance racing. While not all racers are “sold out” to training and competing, most have allowed their sport to slowly choke off other activities, and religion is among the first of these left behind. Additionally, many endurance racers are isolated from the outside world and subsequently not exposed to traditional outreach ministries. To combat this, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes’ endurance ministry, FCA Endurance (FCA-E), has organized in an effort to reach the non-Christian endurance athlete. To facilitate the achievement of FCA-E’s goals, this ethnography has researched the worldview / demographics of the non-Christian endurance athlete and the typical outreach strategies of FCA-E in an effort to determine how FCA-E can tailor their evangelistic efforts in order to get the best “bang for their buck”. This research has focused on the triathlete subset of endurance racers, one of the most time constrained, “worse case” of endurance racer athletes. Regardless of the race type/distance in which a triathlete participates, most people view triathlon

as daunting, and subsequently the field of participants is a very select group of the general population.

Many triathlons are on Sundays, which tends to draw racers away from traditional Sunday church participation. Additionally, many training plans specify Saturday as a “rest day” and Sunday as the “long workout day”. Even when they are not on a specific training plan, many triathletes will rest from their work week on Saturday and use Sunday for a long bike ride or long run, since “normal” work schedules often prevent such a workout during the week.

The Sunday race / training day dynamic subdivides people into numerous categories: non-Christians, Christians who prioritize racing over church, Christians who choose only to race on Saturdays (eliminating themselves from many opportunities to race and almost all of the Ironman distance events) and Christians who somehow incorporate church into the racing schedule. Regardless, racing becomes a hurdle to overcome and often prevents both non-Christians and Christians from participating in classic Sunday morning worship services.

Finally, triathlon is considered a “lifestyle sport”. The amount of time required to train and race usually limits people to triathlon as their only extra-curricular activity. There are barely enough hours in the day to work, sleep, and train; and so triathlon becomes “their life”. Consequently meeting these people during training or at races may be the only opportunity to reach these people for Christ.

Many triathlete and endurance racers who do not know Christ find identity in being a “triathlete”. They try to fulfill an innate desire for purpose, belonging, and relationship with the illusion of being a member of a unique / elite group of society. They are trying to fulfill their unrecognized desire to belong among the Christian “elect” with an earthly / temporal pastime.

Since its inception in 2005, FCA-E has organized a national network of Christian triathletes and endurance racers in an effort to reach non-Christian, endurance athletes for Christ.

Their ministry objectives are the following:

1. Minister to the endurance sports world, demonstrating Christ's love to others and inviting them into a saving relationship with Christ
2. Unite Christian endurance athletes, creating a national team of strong, active individuals and local "huddles" (chapters), partnered in our mission
3. Let people know about FCA and get them plugged in

To reach these objectives, FCA Endurance has outlined "strategies" that can be categorized as prayer, relationship building, and witnessing (www.fcaendurance.com):

"GO" Strategies:

- *"Go" Strategies build relationships with athletes where they are so you may do "Come" Strategies (see below)*
- *Pray for others, for opportunities, and for strength*
- *Look for opportunities to train with others (individuals and groups)*
 - *Be "salt and light", share and answer questions when possible*
 - *Wear our gear while training*
- *Serve others through clubs and at events*
 - *Set-up/tear-down a course, run an aid station, stuff packets, etc.*
- *Offer race-related events*
 - *Onsite pre-/post- race prayer service*
 - *Onsite or church praise and prayer service*
- *Race with our gear on, observing the Competitor's Creed*

"COME" Strategies:

- *"Come" Strategies further build relationships so you "earn" the right to share Christ with them*
- *Pray about how to be used, for opportunities, for people to reach*

- *Invite people:*

- *To train with you individually*
- *To train with your local huddle*
- *Offer a non-training social time (BBQ, watch an event together, picnic, etc.)*
- *Offer a Bible study*
- *To come to church with you*
- *To serve with you*

Prayer emphasis listed above (for salvation, openness to gospel, opportunities to witness, specific people and their needs, etc) will sufficiently meet FCA-E's goals. Subsequently, our goal is to provide information that will help FCA-E teammates tailor their other activities (witnessing and relationship building) to more effectively reach non-believing triathletes.

Who are the people?

Triathletes are typically middle or upper-middle class. They don't come from a specific ethnic group, social background, or any specific region of the world. They live in rural, suburban and urban areas. Ironically, they are like the Church in that they live in "normal" communities, yet are unique from the people around them.

What are they like?

Often triathletes are the successful, driven people. They tend to be self-motivated, self-disciplined, and very confident. They are often vulnerable to being vain about their accomplishments and appearance, and frequently are leaders and "control-freaks".

How can they be reached?

One possible route to witness is through volunteer service opportunities at triathlons. Unfortunately these can be attributed to either secular *or* Christian motivation; spouses and community groups often help with race support. Simply performing these traditional service activities may not necessarily "show" Christ to triathletes as much as they provide an expected

service. Our goal is to determine what service would strike athletes as *extra-ordinary*, motivate them to ask “why?” and thereby open a door to the Gospel.

Building relationships outside of racing can be divided into social events and training events. Outside of the limited number of triathlon training clubs, social events are basically non-existent in the secular racing community. Training events are challenging due to the disparity between athletes’ abilities. Additionally, it is challenging to find time to train individually, let alone find a time when several athletes are available together, especially if a commute to the event is required. Our goal is to determine what social events and training events would have an *extra-ordinary* impact that motivates people to participate, thereby creating an opportunity to share the Gospel.

HISTORY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Triathlon began in San Diego, CA when training partners who specialized in swimming, biking, and running started to compete with each other. They set up the first race, the Mission Bay Triathlon, in 1974 with 46 participants.

In 1978, an argument in Hawaii arose about which discipline (swimming, biking, or running) required the most endurance. Three Hawaiian endurance events were combined into one, and Ironman Triathlon was born. It combined the Waikiki Rough Water Swim, the Oahu Bike Race, and the Honolulu Marathon into one event, consisting of a 2.4 mile swim, a 112 mile bike ride, and a marathon. The Hawaii Ironman moved to Kona on the Big Island of Hawaii in 1981 and became the esteemed world championships (iron distance) of triathlon, which it still is today.

Triathlon remained in relative obscurity until ABC's Wild World of Sports televised the Hawaiian Ironman in 1982. The image of Julie Moss literally crawling across the finish line stirred people's interest across the world, and since then, triathlon and other multi-sport events have grown exponentially.

USA Triathlon (USAT), the primary governing body of triathlon in the United States, lists its 2004 membership as more than 53,000, up from about 16,000 in 1993. USAT's website estimates that "between 150,000-250,000 people try a multi-sport event in the United States each year. This includes triathlons (swim, bike run), duathlons (run, bike, run) and aquathlons (swim and bike)." (www.usatriathlon.org)

Age: Triathletes range from under 16 to over 80 years old. Most (68-74%), however, are between 30 and 50 years of age with the average age being 38.

Gender: 68-71% of triathletes are men. In recent years, however, the number of women participating has dramatically increased. Since the late 1990's, the number of women racing in triathlons has doubled, while the number of men has increased only by one third.

(slowtwitch.com) There is also a highly successful "women only" triathlon series across the US with more than 2,000 participants in each of its five largest races. (usatriathlon.com)

Education: Statistics report that between 73 and 87% of triathletes have 4-year degrees, while 37 to 43% have earned advanced degrees beyond a bachelor's degree. (usatriathlon.com)

Occupations: USAT reports that 75% of triathletes are in managerial or professional careers, 10% are in sales, 6% are in technical fields, and 4% are in the service industry.

Ethnic background: USAT does not publish information on the ethnic background of triathletes, but from personal experience in hundreds of races throughout the US, most participants have appeared to be "white".

Family / marital status: Websites report that 59-74% of triathletes are married while 26-41% are "single". Little other data is available on the family structure of triathletes.

Geographical data: Just shy of half the population of triathletes live in suburban areas. The remaining half is split between rural and urban areas, slightly favoring the urban areas.

Income: According to USAT's most recent poll, the average income among triathletes is \$100,000 per year. Income may be the single most relevant triathlete demographic. The sport demands substantial investment in equipment and race-associated costs. For example, one survey found that 35% of multi-sport athletes value their bikes at \$2,000-4,000. Another quarter of people surveyed reported spending \$1,000-3,000 on bike equipment (in addition to the bike itself), \$300-500 on running gear, and up to 300 dollars on a triathlon wetsuit and swim goggles. Race entry fees vary from \$40-\$80 for small local races to several hundred dollars for Ironman

racers. A normal Ironman triathlon costs about \$300-400 to enter. In addition to the race itself, travel costs such as hotel rooms, airline fees, rental cars or multiple tanks of gas take an even greater toll on the athlete's bank account.

Therefore, the people who can afford triathlon are mainly well-educated people who are likely to have well-paying jobs. They tend to be motivated and successful at work (documented on the demographic breakdowns presented on numerous websites), balancing triathlon with work and family. They are busy and driven by time, which was a consistent sentiment expressed during our interviews.

ETHNOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

Worldview can be defined as a set of assumptions held consciously or unconsciously about the make-up of the world and how the world works. They encompass frameworks of thought that relate belief systems and the way people see reality. (ICS 5030 Understanding Cultures and Worldviews Glossary, Columbia International University, 2007)

In general, triathletes tend to have a very amorphous worldview. Their responses to questions about worldview consistently resulted in disjointed and even contradictory answers. This seems to indicate either the lack of a cohesive worldview or one that lacks serious consideration. The answers provided also seemed to infer discomfort with the material. Some of the athlete's responses were defensive, as though they were reacting to the unfamiliar terrain into which these questions took them.

Social structures: While triathlon becomes a way of life due to its many demands, it does not seem to give rise to any specific social structure besides isolation from society. A triathlete usually has time for work, training, and a minimal home and family life, but little else. Thus they tend to live in the "small castle" of their immediate family, who may not see much of them between their work, training, and racing activities.

There is also a very strong sense among these athletes of belonging to an elite group called "triathletes". An example of an often-expressed sentiment in Inside Triathlon Magazine comes from an article about a woman just finishing her first triathlon: "I thought, 'I'll go through the motions, but that's just not who I am.' But standing there after [I crossed the finish line], I thought, 'No, this is who I am. I'm a triathlete.'" (May 2007, page 68)

Ontology (what can be known): Triathletes do not share a consistent ontological perspective. Interview results ranged from total denial of anything spiritual to belief in many

spirits. Some people professed a “Christian” belief, while others denied the existence of God altogether. Some believe that God created the world then left it alone to fend for itself. Some people believe in Heaven and Hell, others assert that man will be re-incarnated, and still others believe man reverts to being “mere carbon atoms”. Still others admit that they just don’t know what happens after death. Some deny the spiritual world altogether, while others believe in a host of spirits both personal and distant. Another belief is that there is some sort of spirit that “you don’t see, that you just feel and it gives your life meaning” although that meaning is not known and consequently never articulated.

The most common perception of God is that He is distant. After the world was created, God either keeps it running or leaves it alone to be run by mankind. Either way, to many triathletes, God is not personal or involved with people.

As for worship rituals, many triathletes will say that their workouts and racing *is* their worship. “Sharing The Victory Magazine” captured this sentiment in their interview with Fellowship of Christian Athlete’s New England Regional Director, Fouad Faris:

“Many people in the running community really see running as their worship,’ [said Fouad Faris]. ‘That is what they do – that is their Sunday, their weekend. They go from race to race. It is really where they live their lives, and many of them haven’t been around people of faith in a very real way.’” (April 2007, p. 17)

Many find spiritual power in some form: some pray to “God”, some find it from within (go to quiet places to find it), and some look to externals (books or an unnamed source).

As triathletes travel from race to race, they tend to find their purpose within their racing and their specific race goals. The fact that triathletes have a sense of purpose for their training and their lives is apparent from several interview answers, but many can not clearly articulate what that purpose is. Thus the ontological beliefs of triathletes are generally vague, varied, and often not completely understood by the person holding them.

Epistemology (how “what can be known” can be known): Having been highly educated, triathletes typically place a great deal of confidence in linear logic and empirical proof, which is why science tends to hold great credibility for them. Remarkably most triathletes agree that science cannot answer the issue of the universe’s origin, presumably because origin cannot be empirically proven.

Triathletes are much divided on the issue of what has authority to define truth. Some profess a “Christian belief”, where God is the ultimate authority. Others look to themselves and their own hearts and minds.

I think this paragraph (or a version of it) could be put back in? Your call.

Axiology (ethics and morals): The issue of right and wrong was unique in our interviews for two reasons: (1) people answered it passionately with more than just a few glib words, and (2) people were very consistent in their answers. Oddly, they disagreed whether or not there was an absolute right or wrong, but they generally agreed in their reasoning. They all cast the responsibility to define ethics on the individual or on the individual’s culture. The standard of right and wrong was defined as, “whether or not you can sleep at night”, or “the golden rule”. Another view was, “who am I to define such a thing?” adding that such authority rested with one’s culture.

Summary: Although triathletes answered with a myriad of varied thoughts, they found common ground in three areas: that time is a huge driving factor in life, that science, while important, cannot explain the origin of all things, and that right and wrong are relative.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

Cultural exegesis: Triathletes are a unique group of people set apart by their passion for the sport. They are highly motivated, both in sport and in life, and thus typically successful in their profession. Because of their commitment to work and training, in addition to family if they have one, they tend to be very busy. Their focus is on work, training and family, which leaves little time to consider deeper issues of the heart like religion or worldview. From their perspective, they “have it made” or are at least on their way there. Thus they have little or no “felt need” for God. Because they are “upwardly mobile” and successful at work, their financial situation likewise provides ample provision, and they consequently do not have a “felt need” for God; they are far from being in *need* of anything.

There is often a sense that training and racing provides them purpose, although what the purpose is remains undefined. Rather than attending church, many triathletes will dedicate Sunday to racing or to long workouts. Thus in effect, triathlon becomes their substitute for worship; it becomes their “religion”.

The typical triathlete tends to dismiss a person they meet until that person has established credibility with them. This helps them protect their time by being selective about forming relationships, but it is also rooted in their successful, driven nature. Triathletes tend to surround themselves with people who will help them reach their goals and simply do not have time to participate in relationships that are not going to get them down the road of where they are trying to go.

Because of a triathlete’s general protection of time and personal relationships, new and old, it is a significant challenge to reach them for Christ. Relationships with people are essential

to spreading the Good News, but in order to form relationships with triathletes, a person must first establish sufficient credibility with them and this is not an easy task.

Application:

How can one communicate the Biblical message through the receptor culture's world view? In order to communicate to triathletes, as with people from any culture, it is helpful to find an image or a situation to which they can relate. For example, triathletes are very familiar with prestigious races that require qualification to enter. The most desired race of this sort is the Ironman in Kona, Hawaii, which is now the World Championship of iron-distance triathlon. Participation has taken on an almost mythic quality, and it is commonly regarded as the pinnacle triathlon experience.

Like all analogies, this one is not perfect, but one might equate Kona with Heaven. To get into Kona, triathletes must either qualify through one of the qualifier races or they must be selected in the lottery. Triathletes will train hard, race hard, and spend a great deal of money on gear in an effort to earn their way into Kona. They will also fill out the necessary forms and pay the fees to enter themselves in the lottery. Then they'll wait and hope. There is no certainty in either of these methods, however. Whether one person wins the Kona spot or another might be as random as a piece of glass on the road that gives one a flat tire on the bike, allowing another to win the spot.

The only assured way to get in is to go to the race director himself, ask for a spot, and have him grant us one. It is his prerogative to do this if he desires. He can base it on our qualifications, our looks, or our bank account, whatever he chooses. In the case of Heaven, God bases our acceptance on our faith in His Son's death and resurrection for our sins. There is no amount of "goodness in the race of life" or random drawing that will get us entry to the "race" of

Heaven. It is simply the prerogative of the Race Director according to the stipulations He has set forth in His Word.

While this may not be accurate in all of the details, it would give a triathlete the general picture of Heaven as something highly desirable, of God as the One who sets the standard for entry, and of the fact that there is a way to be sure one will get in.

How must one correct those aspects of the receptor culture's world view, which contradict Scripture and are thereby judged by the Bible to be false? Triathletes are very familiar with the concepts of focused effort toward a goal. Discipline and commitment are a way of life to them, but the goal for which they strive is temporal, whether it is their next race or their "A-priority" race for the season. Once that race is over or the goal is met (or not), they simply find another one or modify their training plan for a reprieve so that their body will be ready for the next intense training period. Whichever they choose, the focus remains on temporal things.

1 Timothy 4:8 addresses this directly. Beginning by addressing the physical training athletes are familiar with, Paul says that there is value in physical training, but when juxtaposed with the pursuit of godly things, it has only "little profit". Godliness, on the other hand, has not only value in this life, like physical training, but also has value in the next life and is therefore the more profitable pursuit.

For bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.
(1 Timothy 4:8)

Jesus also spoke of this concept in His parable of the rich farmer whose life was taken from him unexpectedly. Jesus concludes:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

(Matthew 6:19-21, NASB)

Triathletes spend large amounts of time, effort, and money on training their bodies, which are susceptible not to thieves as in Jesus words, but to injury, accident, age and disease. All the investment in an athlete's body could be taken in a moment, but investment in one's spiritual life can never be taken away by anything on Earth. Therefore it is wiser to invest in the eternal as opposed to the temporal.

How is the Biblical message significant "good news" for the receptor culture in the world view perspective and values it introduces? The gospel's message holds two obvious points that are "good news" for triathletes. First, there is more to life than the "big race". This is good news because it offers purpose and promise beyond temporary, mortal life; there is an eternal goal worth striving for. In an image that might be understandable to triathletes, Paul writes to the church in Philippi, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14) A Christian triathlete's goal is not only the next race or a faster time; it is ultimately the prize that results from the call of God. Paul further writes to the Corinthians that "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." (1 Corinthians 9:25) The time, effort, and money spent seeking God will never be taken away by time or happenstance because it has eternal value.

Second, there is certainty in the goal we seek. It is not necessary to train passionately and to enter all the lotteries in order to get into the "race" of Heaven. God offers assurance of Heaven: "This is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son...I write these things to you who believe in the Name of the Son of God that you might *know* that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:11, 13) Jesus Himself also offered this assurance in John 5:24:

“Whoever hears my Word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

Not only has He given assurance here on Earth that we have been selected for that great “race” of Heaven, but He also offers a more abundant life here on Earth. Jesus said in John 10:10, “I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.”

Is it helpful or necessary to introduce new concepts from either the Christian heritage or indigenous creativity to deal with the issue? Because triathletes are very self-sufficient and have few “felt needs”, one must be creative in finding concepts that will penetrate beyond the many layers of busyness and self-confidence in order to reach their conscious minds. Finding analogies like the Kona-Heaven allegory is one way, while offering a larger purpose beyond simply the “big race” is another. Basically, a new concept will fall flat and be ignored unless presented in a way with which triathletes can identify. In a world filled with creative advertising, this presents a very real challenge.

How will you persuasively communicate this biblical message to the non-Christian within this culture? A basic necessity for one who desires to reach triathletes is personal credibility. The typical triathlete will spend their precious time listening to someone only after they have shown that the speaker has accomplished some significant achievement. This may include a respectable profession or a significant accomplishment in sport, like becoming a professional triathlete.

A corollary to the necessity of credibility is the image a person presents. Since triathletes are normally lean and muscular, and work hard to get and stay that way, they tend to have little respect for someone who does not conform to that image. While being extremely fit will not establish credibility on its own, being out of shape will definitely hinder personal credibility.

Thus there is a level of personal excellence that opens the door for a person to witness to triathletes. That excellence includes both achievement and physical appearance. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 apply to this situation in that Paul is willing to become like people in order to win them over. In order to witness to triathletes, it is important that one be like them. Thus, FCA-E has a very unique opportunity to reach endurance athletes, as those who take part in FCA-E are already endurance athletes and well on their way to having the required excellence of credibility and image.

The next step is to engage triathletes "where they are". Because the most effective way to witness to people, including triathletes, is to form a relationship with them, one must find a way to spend time with them. However, due to busyness and self-sufficiency, these people typically do not have time or interest in stepping out of their tight schedule to attend additional functions. Typically they are not seeking God, but are content with their lives. Because of this, we must go to them.

Perhaps the most practical way to spend time with them, developing relationships, is to train with them. Since training is normally the only time that is not spent either at work or at home, this may be the only opportunity that this person has to spend with a friend. Long bike rides and runs, and the time between "sets" during a swim workout offer an occasion to establish a relationship. Once the relationship is established, then one can seek the opportune moment to share one's faith. Of course, to train with a typical triathlete, one will need to have sufficient skill and speed to keep pace with them. This harkens back to the need for personal excellence in the arena of sport, and thus the best people to reach triathletes are triathletes themselves.

Additionally, there is a symbiotic relationship in that the evangelistic triathlete gets to combine their ministry with their own training thereby "killing two birds with one stone".

Maybe there is a better way to put this, but this is actually an important consideration. Because the evangelistic triathlete has the same time constraints as any other triathlete, being efficient with time and balancing life's obligations, perceived or real, is vital to them being useful in endurance ministry.

Another opportunity to reach triathletes is when they are racing. There is a great deal of time during races (especially the longer ones) where the body is working, but the mind is relatively unoccupied. Encouraging quotes or verses on brightly colored signs can distract a racer's mind from the drone of the race. Carefully chosen words can linger in a racer's mind, encouraging them to ponder the meaning. Additionally, signs along the race course can have quite an impact if they are displayed in the most challenging places like prolonged hill climbs.

When producing signs for the purpose of ministry, it is important to follow a few recommended guidelines. In a sense, signs are like commercials that everyone "watching the show" will view. Successful commercials are aesthetically pleasing (or at least catchy) and hit where people are vulnerable. If signs are not up to the quality of a standard TV commercial, athletes are likely to dismiss them as posted by just another club, friend or fans. Hand-written or unprofessional looking signs also tend to blend in to the myriad of such ad hoc signs friends and fans post along a course. As with personal credibility and appearance, a high standard of excellence is important to the image of any media or presentation to a triathlete.

A third way to reach triathletes is at the "expo" area at races. Many companies send representatives to national level races where they display their products before and during the race events. Nearly all triathletes competing in a race will stroll around the expo at some point during the weekend. This presents another opportunity to reach them outside of their busy daily routine. A booth in a prominent location with banners and materials of the same professional

level of the other represented companies is a minimum. Finding unique ways to attract wandering triathletes is also crucial to a booth's outreach success. One way to do this is through offering free foot massages, taking a slight spin on Christ's washing of the disciple's feet at the Lord's Supper. Another idea may be hosting a chin up bar challenge. Other ideas can be found in Appendix B.

APOLOGETIC ISSUES

There are three issues that appeared consistently in interviews with triathletes, and one must have a good understanding of how to address each of these. These issues were: the authority to determine right and wrong, the inability of science to empirically prove the origin of the universe, and the lack of time for anything aside from what they were already involved in (training, work, and family).

The issue of right and wrong might be addressed by using race rules as an analogy. The Bible states, and triathletes would agree, that “if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.” (2 Timothy 2:5) Triathlon race rules are in place for a purpose, which is listed in section 1.2 of the official “USA Triathlon (USAT) Competitive Rules”:

These Rules are designed to set forth a standard set of parameters within which athletes can participate in triathlons and compete in a positive atmosphere of equal opportunity. These Rules are intended:

- a. to promote and maintain sportsmanship, equal opportunity and fair play;
- b. to encourage and reward individual performance and initiative;
- c. to protect the health, safety, and well being of participants;
- d. to promote the integrity of sport and triathlon as a positive cultural force in modern day society; and
- e. to foster the foregoing ideals through the establishment and enforcement of punitive rules.

In the same manner as USAT, God establishes rules for our protection, so that order may be maintained in accordance with His character. He establishes rules for our own good, like USAT establishes rules for the overall good of triathletes.

For example, USAT prohibits “drafting”. This is both for safety and for fairness. Prohibiting drafting ensures individuals use only their own strength to compete. In addition, many racers consider drafting unfair. Also, the fact that triathletes typically have to move their

hands from their aero-bars in order to reach the brakes means that in the event of a sudden deceleration, the competitor in back might roll into an accident before having time to stop. Bottom line: drafting while riding a triathlon bike in the normal aero-position is dangerous. For these reasons, USAT has a rule prohibiting it.

Similarly, God has put restrictions on humanity for its own good. For example, the seventh commandment is “do not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). Even if it is never disclosed, adultery undermines the foundations of trust upon which a marriage is founded. Once the foundation is cracked, the building of the marriage itself is in grave danger. Adultery also puts all involved at risk for sexually transmitted disease and thereby can have physical ramifications as well. Thus, when God forbids adultery, He does it for our own good. He does it so that we might enjoy solid marriages that reflect His love for us, as marriage was designed to do.

The second issue that appeared repeatedly in interviews with triathletes concerned the origin of the universe. While it would not hurt to be familiar with the work of such Christian apologetists such as Lee Stroebel and Kent Hoven, there are other approaches to this argument. For example, whether one chooses to believe in “intelligent design”, the “Big Bang”, or any other theory, one must place their faith in an unproven concept. The simple fact is that since human beings are confined to time, no one will be able to logically “prove” how the universe came to be. Those who believe in “intelligent design” place their faith in God; whereas those who believe in the “Big Bang” theory place their faith in scientists. Regardless of what one chooses to believe about the origin, faith is involved.

The alternative is simply to withhold judgment and admit humans cannot know everything. Some triathletes choose this route as well. In this case, one can point out that God

does not reveal all things to humans. For example, God does not reveal the future to mankind for our own good. If a person knew all the challenges they would face during their day or week, they would likely be too overwhelmed to get out of bed and face them. A triathlete might likewise identify with a race course so steep, over roads so rough, in winds so strong, or a day plagued with mechanical problems or injuries that if they knew about all of the challenges, they might choose not to race.

The final consistent issue that our research yielded was the lack of sufficient time to consider many deeper life issues. Many answers to interview questions yielded one-word answers, but the question of time consistently stuck a nerve, resulting in longer answers riddled with words like, “driven by time”, “very limited in time” and “tight schedule”. Jesus’s question to the Rich Farmer who decided to build barns to store his abundant harvest is directly applicable: “This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?”(Luke 12:20) For triathletes, time and talent are in question, rather than material possessions as in the parable, but the issue remains the same: if one’s life ended tonight, for what would all that training count? This ties in well with both 1 Timothy 4:8 and 1 Corinthians 9:25, which parallel each other in asserting that as Christians, we “compete in the games” for an imperishable crown and for “godliness [which] is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” (1 Tim. 4:8).

While Christianity cannot offer triathletes more time, it can offer them purpose for how they spend their time. For example, most triathletes would say that racing is fulfilling and gives them purpose, but to a Christian there is more than just this temporal, nondescript meaning. Christians race to glorify God with their bodies and talents by giving Him the credit for the gifts that enable them to race successfully. They also have the unique opportunity to promote the

timeless cause of Christ among a small niche of talented athletes, which gives the Christian athlete a specific, higher purpose for their own racing.

Conclusion and Application Recommendations

In taking these observations and conclusions back to the realm of FCA-E, there are a few ways to fine-tune outreach to triathletes. FCA-E has three basic focuses: prayer, relationship building and witnessing. Prayer is covered as the foundation for all of FCA-E's ministry. Specific targeting towards triathletes does not differ significantly from any other ministry and is therefore not addressed as an area needing refinement.

Relationship building: FCA-E's second focus area is relationship building. There are several ways to accomplish this with triathletes: through events like training camps, local clubs, and one-on-one training. While it takes the most time and personal dedication, the most effective way to reach triathletes for Christ is through one-on-one training. In answer to interview questions, most athletes said they prefer doing the long runs and rides in groups. Since triathletes are a relatively rare breed of people; most tend to train alone or with family members or close friends in the unusual case that they are racers also. Thus if one finds another triathlete of comparable ability in one's local area, training with that person offers the best opportunity to establish a relationship with them.

Interviews reveal that triathletes are divided on the value of triathlon clubs, with most people being in favor of them. Clubs offer camaraderie, motivation, a place to gather, and a forum in which one can exchange information. Most triathletes prefer clubs that are non-competitive and present opportunities to ride, run and swim with other triathletes. FCA-E's template of a traditional "huddle" could easily be modified into a triathlon club of sorts. A few groups (FCA-E Huddles) across the US have already done this with success.

The final method of building relationships that would work well for FCA-E is training camp-type events. The International Christian Triathlete Network (ICTN) hosts a training camp

in Phoenix each January, and according to responses from triathletes, such a forum would be of interest to many of them. It offers both an opportunity to learn from professional and very experienced triathletes and a chance to spend time with people who share their interest in triathlon. This event and others like it provide an excellent opportunity for FCA-E members to invite and reach out to non-Christian triathletes.

Witnessing: Witnessing takes place primarily at race events and involves contact with many triathletes on a less personal level than “relationship building”. Before discussing suggestions for focusing FCA-E’s efforts in this arena, it is important to discuss some additional interview results regarding what is *not* effective at reaching triathletes.

The most common method of becoming involved at races is volunteering. According to interview results, volunteers do not have a significant impact on triathletes. Most triathletes understand the importance of volunteers and may appreciate them, but many do not really notice volunteers at all. Regardless of which category triathletes fall into, what organization a volunteer belongs to or why a person chooses to volunteer is almost never noticed by a competitor. The only consistent exception was “enthusiastic volunteers” who actively and energetically cheered for racers at critical portions on the race course or through aid stations that had a very unique service (live music, etc). Those people are noticed. Hence, while volunteering at races may impress race directors, it does little to reach the triathletes themselves. That said, there are several ways that triathletes can be reached at races.

First, brightly colored signs prominently and consistently displayed at strategic places along the race course draw athlete’s attention to the words posted. Since a triathlete’s body is gainfully employed in a well-practiced, repetitious activity, their minds are relatively free to entertain stray thoughts. Using signs containing Christian quotes and Bible verses to encourage

and entertain athletes definitely impacts them. With no input to the mind except the road or trail before them, the words they read seem to make it into their conscious minds. The active, living Word does the rest. Numerous triathletes commented on FCA-E's signs along the run course at Wildflower 2007, one of the largest triathlons in the US, with nearly 8,000 competitors. THIS INFO COULD BE INCLUDED? Scripture quotes that are likely to work well are listed in the Appendix A at the back of this paper.

Second, people cheering enthusiastically and accurately for competitors at strategic places along the race course can have a significant impact. For example, numerous racers were motivated to reach for that last scrap of energy, allowing them to run the final hill instead of walking simply because of the energy of those cheering on the sidelines. Many triathletes thanked those who cheered them on, and one even commented "only because of you" as she began to run. Practical investigation and interview results agree that enthusiastic cheering is a sure way to both encourage triathletes and be noticed. However, information from the sidelines must be accurate.

Athletes are often suspect of spectators who promise that "the top of the hill is just around the corner", because many spectators misadvise racers. It is imperative that all information be absolutely correct while cheering and giving out facts like "water in 200 yards". Should someone misinform a triathlete during a race, their organization could be branded in that racer's mind as inaccurate. Thus cheering for racers in strategic places along the run has a significant impact, but it must be completely correct.

A third way to reach triathletes is by hosting a booth at the race expo. There are several keys necessary for a successful booth though. The booth should be as centrally located as possible. It must also present a professional image comparable to booths surrounding it. This is

the level of excellence triathletes expect from booths at expos. If at first glance a booth portrays an unprofessional or uninviting appearance, they continue on past it. As a corollary, if that first glance reveals a professional, unique and interesting booth, they might pause for a closer look. Once an athlete steps into the booth, there must be credible, well-prepared FCA-E Teammates available to speak with him/her. So the goal of FCA-E should be to present a professional-looking and inviting booth. Suggestions for booths are listed in the appendix B at the end of this paper.

The fourth suggestion for FCA-E to minister to triathletes at races is a central stage worship service with quality, amplified music and an engaging speaker. Since many races occur on Sundays, FCA-E may offer to host a worship service. This can be done using folks involved with FCA-E, FCA, or in conjunction with a local church or Christian college group (for example Cal-Poly Campus Crusade for Christ had a praise band at Wildflower 2007). Prayer services the night before a race and possibly in conjunction with the pre-race expo may also offer an opportunity to reach athletes and their families.

Lastly, food is a very strong motivator for triathletes. Every single interviewee spoke highly of races offering pre-race and post-race, hot meals. Often these meals are hosted by volunteer or non-profit organizations. Offering to provide such a meal at no or low cost, either by FCA-E alone or in conjunction with a local Christian group, would offer an opportunity to reach many racers, as well as their friends and families. In an effort to further the Gospel, FCA-E may be able to say a blessing before the meal, serve the meal on plates with a Christian message or with napkins along the same line, hand out fliers/cards, or mingle among guests in effort to establish relationships and discuss spiritual topics. Regardless of the details, hot meals are a way

to offer triathletes something they appreciate while presenting an opportunity to speak with them as they sit still for a rare few moments.

Summary: There are many specific ways FCA-E can tailor its existing programs. However, all are founded on prayer and on the basic quality of excellence. As Paul advises in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” It is God whom FCA-E represents and all that the FCA-E team does in effort to reach triathletes should reflect the high standard of which Paul speaks.

Additionally, FCA-E might consider adopting a theme verse for race events such as 1 Tim 4:8 “For bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” or 1 Cor 9:25: “Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.” Both of these highlight the “purpose” Christianity has to offer endurance athletes.

Finally, while the focus of this paper has been triathletes, the concepts herein are not specific to triathletes alone. What is essential is building relationships by coming alongside these athletes in their established schedules. Details of relationship building and witnessing at competitive events will differ between triathlons and other endurance races, but the basis of excellence remains the same. Any person involved in a sport that demands so much time and intensity will have a great deal in common with triathletes.

Appendix A: Guidelines for signs along a race course.

Race course signs are very visible and must therefore be “excellent” along with the other aspects of FCA-E’s ministry. To impact athletes, the signs must be readable, taking into account course placement and design. In order to be read, a sign must be in a position where the athlete is going relatively slow, along terrain that doesn’t require a downward focus of the eyes. Straight up-hills along paved roads with sufficient visibility from a distance work best. Series of up to three signs are permissible along long hills.

Sign placement relative to the course is also important. Signs placed too close to the edge of the race course tend to be kicked or knocked over by people who object to them, so 2-3 feet from the edge of the course works well. Also, a height of 1-2 feet above the ground provides a good combination of stability in wind and legibility to the racer.

Readability is also determined by sign design. For run course signs letters of about two inches in height are sufficient. Bike course signs require bigger letters due to the higher speeds, probably starting at three-inches in height.

Professionally printed signs will not only further enhance legibility but also present a positive image of FCA-E. Bright signs obviously attract more attention, thus a yellow background with black writing works well. Course signs with FCA-E’s logo on them, in combination with a prominent booth at the expo, allows racers to read the signs and know where to go to find the people who stand behind them.

What signs say is also very important. While truth and honesty are essential, the more creative, humorous, or catchy they are the better. Some appropriate verses or quotes are listed below.

- I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

- Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1
- Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28
- Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength...
They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired...
They will walk and not become weary. Isaiah 40:31
- The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; Exodus 15:2
- In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:6
- In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

Proverbs 16:9
- Why do you race?
- Could suggest others if you would like?

Appendix B: Suggestions for successful FCA-E booths.

Key qualities for a successful booth are: central location, professional appearance, credible, well-prepared FCA-E Teammates available to speak with people, and something to draw people's attention. The first three issues were discussed above. Ideas for attention-grabbers are as unlimited as the organizer's imagination and as varied as the people who will make them succeed. Different personalities will make different ideas succeed, so it is important that ideas are tailored to the persons who will staff the booth. Below are suggestions that might work, subject to logistics and availability of people who are willing and able to perform various tasks:

- A living room setting in the shade with couches and a coffee table with literature.
- Chocolate cookies or other foods to give away. Food is a proven draw.
- A foot wash and foot massage station would not only be very unusual, but it would also afford an opportunity to explain the reasons for our actions and discuss spiritual topics while the person is a fairly captive audience. This service also imitates Christ's washing of the Disciples' feet.
- Music, especially live.
- Bike tuning / work station or tools and pumps available for use.
- Chin-up bar challenge with "*Headsweats*" brand hats with "Why do you race?" embroidered on them as awards if you do 15 chin/pull ups.
- Hot chocolate or ice cream, depending on the weather (would have been a homerun at Alcatraz 2007...it was freezing!) NO DOUBT! ☺

Appendix C: Contextualization of 1 Timothy 4:6-12

Biblical exegesis:

1 Tim. 4:6-12 “In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. [7] But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; [8] for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. [9] It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. [10] For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”

Historical-Cultural analysis: Paul wrote this letter to Timothy as part of the “pastoral epistles” in about A.D.64, after his fourth missionary journey. His purpose for writing was to develop the commands he’d given to his assistant Timothy, to counter false teaching, to give guidance to the growing Ephesian church, and to advise regarding qualifications of ministers (Zondervan Study Bible Introduction to 1 Tim). The passage in question was written to a young church leader, and it drew from a common practice of the day (young men disciplining their bodies in a gymnasium) and contrasted the temporal nature of the practice with the eternal nature of a Christian’s pursuits.

Athletic ability was highly esteemed in Paul’s day. There were gymnasiums in nearly every town, and they were the focus of Greeks between 16 and 18 years old. John MacArthur notes in his sermon Qualities of an Excellent Servant – Part I, “the cultic exaltation of the body resulted in a preoccupation with exercise and athletic training and competition, not dissimilar to our own day.” The type of exercise Paul refers to in verses 7 and 8 implies a “rigorous, self-sacrificing” kind of training with which triathletes are familiar. Based on this understanding of Paul’s culture, it is apparent that intense physical training gives us a picture of the passion with which Christians should pursue godliness.

Literary Analysis-Word study: There are two key words in the passage: train/physical training and godliness, both of which appear in verses 7 and 8.

The verb “train” or “exercise” (Strong’s 1128) stems from the Greek *gumnazō* which means “to exercise, to train the body or mind” and from which stems the English word “gymnastics”, according to Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary. It also appears in Hebrews 5:14, “But solid food is for the mature, who because of *practice* have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” Hebrews 12:11 contains the word as well: “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been *trained* by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.” All these references use the word in a positive sense. 2 Peter 2:13b-14 displays the result of negative training: “They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart *trained* in greed...”

The noun associated with *gumnazō* is *gymnasia* (Strong’s 1129). Vines states that it “primarily denotes ‘gymnastic exercise’”, adding that “the immediate reference [in 1 Timothy 4:8] is probably not to mere physical training or games but to discipline of the body such as that to which the apostle refers in 1 Corinthians 9:27”. The Corinthians verse reads, “but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”

Thus the meaning of training in both verses 7 and 8 refers to a disciplined sort of exercise and practice that produces results. It appears that Paul is drawing a parallel between the amount of discipline required for physical training and exercise, which can produce a “crown that will

not last” (1 Cor 9:25 NIV) and “godliness”, which “holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” (1 Tim 4:8).

“Godliness”, therefore, is the second word that must be defined clearly. The Greek word used in both verses 7 and 8 is *eusebeia* which can be translated “godliness” or “holiness”.

According to Vine’s, it “denotes that piety which, characterized by a Godward attitude, does that which is well-pleasing to Him.” The word appears only in the pastoral epistles, Acts and Peter’s second letter. In each of these uses, “godliness” denotes a broad overview. It is listed with such qualities as righteousness, faith, perseverance, gentleness, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, brotherly kindness, and love (1 Tim 6:11, 1 Pet 2:5-7 and 2 Pet 3:11). In 2 Peter 1:3, godliness is used in parallel with the expansive concept of “life”. Moreover, it is listed as something granted to us by God’s power and attained through true knowledge of God: “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and *godliness*, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.” Thus godliness denotes a devoutness in which a person focuses on all things of and about God.

2 Peter 3:11-13 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.

1 Tim. 2:1-2 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, [2] for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

1 Tim. 3:14-16 I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; [15] but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. [16] And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, beheld by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

1 Tim. 6:3-7 If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, [4] he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language,

evil suspicions, [5] and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. [6] But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. [7] For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.

1 Tim. 6:10-11 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. [11] But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

2 Tim. 3:2-5 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, [4] treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; [5] holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.

2 Peter 1:2-7 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; [3] seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. [4] For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. [5] Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; [6] and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; [7] and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

2 Peter 3:11-13 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, [12] looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the Heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! [13] But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Putting these two words back into the central verses in the passage, it appears that Paul was exhorting Timothy to actively and intensely put into practice the things of God, applying the same dedication and consistency an athlete would demonstrate in the gym. John Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible states it more eloquently: "Like those who were to contend in the Grecian games, exercise thyself unto godliness - Train thyself up in holiness of heart and life, with the utmost labor, vigor, and diligence."

Synthesis-the Passage: The passage urges Timothy to continually remind the brothers to forsake the lies of the world and to zealously pursue the things of God as an athlete pursues training, for godliness has eternal value while physical training is temporal. Endurance athletes understand the concept of rigorous training. Over the course of time and race after race, they may blind themselves to the temporal nature of their efforts, despite their ability to understand how fleeting their efforts may be. When the issue is raised for them to consider, it is likely to strike a chord with them unless they have closed their hearts and minds to things of God.

Synthesis-the Book: In the flow of the letter, this passage falls into the “Methods of false teaching” section (Zondervan Study Bible). Verses 1-5 immediately before the passage describe examples of false teaching. Verses 11-16 follow the passage and repeatedly exhort Timothy to keep on teaching, preaching, and setting an example for the brothers.

The passage in question instructs Timothy in how to deal with the false teachings mentioned in verses 1-5. In verses 4 and 5, Paul states that all God made is good if it is received with gratitude. He then goes on to exhort Timothy to keep reminding people of this (v. 6) and to not be diverted by “worldly fables” (v. 7). He comments on physical training, then continues to build on the idea that a Christian’s training and pursuit should be focused on the eternal hope of the living God (v. 9-10). His comment on physical training seems to hearken back to the false teachings in the first verses of the chapter, as if it were one of the false teachings. Given the cultural focus on physical training in Paul’s day, it is possible that he does consider it to be a form of false teaching. If not a false teaching, he certainly denounces it as a misplaced priority.

Synthesis-the Bible: Paul consistently uses images of physical training and running for a prize throughout his letters in order to shed light on the Christian life. The clearest parallel with 1 Timothy 4:6-10 is 1 Corinthians 9:24-25, which reads, “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. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.” In this paragraph, Paul urges the Corinthians to continue in the faith in the same manner as runners in the athletic games. He then contrasts the result of physical training with the result of pursuing godly things: the former “will not last” while the latter will “last forever”.

Interpretation: The passage urges Timothy to continually remind the brothers to forsake the lies of the world and to zealously pursue the things of God as an athlete pursues training, for godliness has eternal value while physical training is temporal. Paul uses images of running, prizes, athletic games, and training often throughout his epistles. In verses 1-5 Paul delineates the lies / false teachings that he urges Timothy to reject. In verse 7 Paul continues this thought and encourages Timothy to remind the believers to reject all worldly teachings. The exhortations that Paul presents are similar in construction and method to those presented throughout the epistle letters.

INTERVIEW RESULTS

Much of the information herein results from the authors' twenty cumulative years of competing in triathlon and other multi-sport events. This is supplemented by one season of active participant observation with a focus on this study. Observations also come from 10+ years of Inside Triathlon, Runners' World and Outside magazine articles not specifically quoted here.

The interview was sent via email to triathletes who were not known to the authors to be Christians. Eight triathletes responded to the interview. Approximately 200 did not reply and two were openly hostile to the idea. Of those who replied: one is a well-known race director and veteran triathlete; one is a novice triathlete and full-time mother; one is a competitive age-grouper, full-time in the German military, married with no children; one is a competitive age-grouper who has done many Ironmans and is a professional hospital employee with adult children; one is in senior leadership in his company and takes training and racing Ironmans seriously though he is relatively new to the sport; one is a mid-pack short distance triathlete and a military contractor supporting a family; and two were unknown to the authors.

The order of interviewees has been kept consistent. For example, the first answer to each question is one interviewee, the second answer to each is another interviewee. This order has no relationship to the descriptions listed above.

- a. What types of volunteer services are important to you at races?
- IM is the standard
 - course marshalling (keeping the course safe), race timing, gels and beverages
 - Encouraging Food/water stop volunteers, masseuses
 - Of course the guys at the aid stations but since I mainly try to stick with my own stuff I am pretty independent from aid stations and the food and fluids they offer. So this service stands back a little bit. Very important is a good and profound introduction to the race site, the course, the rules and that stuff. This together with a smile and some uplifting words help wonders in providing a great race day.
 - Water stations, not obvious mile markers guides.
 - Pre-race and during race volunteers
 - All, thing is, if there were no volunteers you would have no race..
 - Nutrition aide, safety, and enthusiasm
- b. What is the best volunteer service that you've experienced at a race?
- All 3 IM events I have participated in
 - Lake Van race a couple of hot, hot summers back...those people did great...I think they were kids from ROTC
 - SOMA 1/2 Ironman
 - O.k., I don't know if I get that question right but I guess you want to hear a story about some outstanding volunteer service. Here we go: I was on my bike in a race and in a sharp turn a water bottle fell out of its cage. Due to the rules I had to stop to pick up my stuff again. While I stopped my bike and dismounted, a volunteer that was making sure everybody makes the turn in the right direction, caught my water bottle that was rolling around on the street and sprinted up to me to hand me my bottle.
 - All been great...any is good.
 - massages!

- Late during an ironman the volunteers that have been out there all day cheering you on and giving you that cup of chicken broth
 - Ironman 70.3 World Championship, Clearwater, FL, after having extreme difficulty in the swim portion, the volunteers helped get me through the balance of the race.
- c. What volunteer services would you like to see offered?
- IM entry fee J...kidding, free guest speakers, SMEs
 - more masssaaaaage post race and cold cold towels
 - more post-race massage
 - I know, some races have it but others don't. So what I would like to see offered in all races is somebody at those tricky points on the course where you could interfere with traffic that makes sure everybody can have a safe race.
 - Can't think of any right now.
 - athlete updates to family members
 - I do believe it's all been covered...
 - Nothing beyond what I have seen over 293 tri's completed, except consistency. Mainly as stated above, nutrition, safety, and enthusiasm
- d. What type of social events do you value at races?
- Pre-race meal
 - lunch
 - after-parties
 - In small races with few participants I especially enjoy the awards ceremonies combined with an after race snack. This time after the race where you can hang around with fellow competitors and crazy geeks tell each other your race stories, have some food and have a good time. In big races I really love to stroll around the expo, talk wit the people there about the latest gear and - I like eating - having a Pizza or other great food that you are allowed to gulp down after a strenuous race without having any regrets.
 - Not sure.
 - after race food/awards
 - None, I don't care for them
 - Very little for me I just go to race, but if it is offered-beer, food, music
- e. What is the best social event you can recall at a race?
- IM Hawaii pre-race meal
 - live band and multi course meal after the St. Croix Half at a nice resort along the bay. Also...the nightclub in Shreveport that had a private party for USAT after the Nationals three years ago was a blast
 - Bix 7 post-race party (food, music, beer, dancing, prizes)
 - Well I think that was at the "Escape from Alcatraz", there was a food tent - I really like to eat - with really great tasting and anyway also healthy food in a huge variety. We had to stand in a long line and that was a good chance to meet people and get into a conversation while really cool music was playing in the background. It was just

- great. Great weather, good food and nice people to chat with while enjoying a lovely after race meal.
- Not sure...sorry.
 - the day before IM Canada race there is a parade with athletes and their families that everyone participates in..it's cool because everyone brings flags from their countries/states
 - Post race dinner/party... Expo
 - Gult Coast Half Ironman, the refreshments, music and beach are beyond reproach. It also depends on the distance raced, i.e. if racing half Ironman distance and above the party is hard to enjoy when fatigue has set in.
- f. What social events would you participate in if they were offered?
- N/A
 - pre-race carbo feasts are good, lunch and dinner...special workshops or talks.
 - pre-race course previews, practice events. At the Bix 7, they have "Bix at 6" preview races, with volunteers and police support, every Thursday night (6PM) for 4-8 weeks before the race. It allows you to run the exact course as part of your training
 - Definitely the awards ceremony of smaller races where most of the time you know these guys personally. Otherwise - as it is obvious by now - in after race meals if the food is worth the money that you probably have to spend (please no crappy cold food that tastes like ... my racing flats...).
 - Again, not sure.
 - not sure
 - Post race party... Expo
 - Food and drink, music, etc
- g. What type of training events do you like to do in groups?
- Cycling
 - ride and run mostly (bricks, long rides, long runs, etc.)
 - track workouts, long rides
 - Long endurance training at moderate effort where you can chat and enjoy a relaxing workout together. Provided group dynamics don't lead to an ever increasing intensity.
 - Long runs.
 - masters swimming, triathlon training
 - Cycling then running
 - Very little
- h. What training events would you participate in if they were offered?
- Cycling
 - Low key training rides or runs. No specific training or key workouts.
 - swimming workouts
 - bricks, transition training
 - Swimming sessions. Just took a great crash course in swimming more efficiently (mostly for triathlons). It was very useful and informative.

- cycling
 - Cycling and running
 - Maybe in an active club I would participate in most of their events, i.e. Colombia Triathlon Club or St. Pete Mad Dogs, etc.
- i. What do you think about running / triathlon clubs?
- Great
 - Great way to share costs to races and equipment expenses, build love and harmony and laugh and have great times. I belong to a couple. It is also a great way to motivate and challenge yourself because you can see who is gaining on you...who you are gaining on...etc.
 - Good support group, can share travel expenses with them
 - It's a good motivation. Especially when the weather is bad or you lack motivation for some reason and you know there are guys waiting for you, this almost forces you to go out and train and that's a good thing.
 - Great for motivation and learning more.
 - love the clubs
 - They are awesome, camaraderie and competition
 - They are very good for growth of the sport and the social aspect, I do not live in an area that has an active club
- j. What are some of the good / bad parts of clubs you know?
- Tough to match their schedule...but really it's a personal time issue
 - Gossip
 - see above. Bad = disorganized or lack of organized training events
 - Good parts: Getting to know people that are insane, too. Receiving new perspectives on training. Getting some tips for new training courses. Having a knowledge pool at your hand. - Bad parts: Sometimes a club can make you inflexible. You have to stick to a schedule if you want to take part in the workouts.
 - too much drama
 - Good... Bringing people together with common interest and goals, club championship like the one swtc has.... Bad... Seems when you get a group together there is always somebody to complain about something
 - Social and motivation is good. Just meeting people with common interest is fun. Learning from others is always good.
 - The good-group workouts good; The bad, too much organization and cliques
- k. If you were going to join a club what would you look for in it?
- Training, clinics, support
 - personality of members and values/morals.
 - active, friendly members
 - Meeting like minded people, training advice, some kind of an online platform where everybody schedules his or her planned trainings and people can join in, a shopping community that enables you to get gear a bit cheaper, make trips to races together.
 - Relaxed and not so competitive; maybe help to be competitive with yourself.

- make sure that it has all skill levels; not just the really good people!
 - Good people to be with, group training, group social aspects, etc
- l. Do you believe in luck / superstition? Is there anything along these lines that you do in prep for races?
- NO
 - Mostly get on/of my bike on the left...get dressed left foot first. I also have a nice pair of glasses a billionaire friend of mine bought me in Pebble Beach that I wear and those help me think very highly of myself (give me confidence.)
 - Nope
 - Simple answer: NO
 - Just training.
 - I believe that luck seems to come to those that prepare well!
 - No
 - Luck is when preparation meets with opportunity. Some days the body just reacts better than other days. This could be called luck, but is really just that day and the preparation for that day, plus whatever else is going on that can affect it, i.e. relationship, weather, good or bad sleep, work, health, etc.
- m. Do you believe in spirits / supernatural? What kinds of spirits and gods are there? Have you ever had an experience with such entities? Are these spirits/gods/God personal or distant?
- God (Christian belief)
 - I do. I pray to Jesus and my Mother's. They are two of the closest to me.
 - Yes, in God. Who is omnipresent.
 - I do believe in a kind of spirit, some may call it god, that formed the world and keeps it running.
 - For me it is more on the distant side. It is the force you don't see, you just feel and that gives your life meaning.
 - Self spiritual.
No / one god / personal
 - No
 - Yes, I believe in all of the above; however, I believe very strongly in the deistic concept of God providing the world with everything it needs to exist, then has backed off to observe mankind either take care of it or screw it up. Mankind has not let God down in that it has done both to it, since the beginning. My belief is that there is one God for this world and many spirits. The spirits are both personal and distant. The ability to recognize them, their meaning, and value to life is the critical thing. Our resident is in a canyon once inhabited by Comanche Native Americans, there are still many spirits here as a result of this, but it takes some insight to realize that aspect of the area.
- n. Is there such a thing as spiritual power and where would you go to find spiritual power?
- Heaven (personal belief)

- a bus...on a log...by a pond...in yoga...in a dressing room...YES...and you can find it hidden in nature. It is abundant and sometimes you find it where you never expect.
 - Yes, through faith.
 - There is a spiritual power that, for me, correlates with the aforementioned spirit. To find this spirit I would like to go to a quiet place where I can focus and think in silence to feel this power.
 - Pray to God.
 - I believe in spiritual power. sometimes it comes from within; something from the outside
 - No
Written resources are fine, but it most go within ones' self to find spiritual power.
- o. In your opinion, what is man's / your ultimate destiny?
- Life after death...Heaven
 - To serve the greater good with distinguishment...in other words...try to serve beyond what he himself may think he is capable of
 - Advancement of humanity
 - Although I have no idea why man and therefore why I am alive on earth I am quite sure it has a purpose and if it even is just a tiny little not noticeable purpose but there is one, there has to be one.
 - Heaven.
not sure; I just try to be the best possible person every day that I live.
 - Carbon atoms
 - My belief is in an after life, but in a state of re-incarnation. There is too much to learn about life to achieve it in one life time.
- p. How much trust do you place in science?
- A lot
 - I mix art with science...so 50/50
 - Quite a lot, but it is always fallible due to man's involvement (ego, greed, mistakes)
 - I trust in science as far as it delivers logical explanations for things. But there are still phenomena that cannot be explained by science or that science delivers different theories to explain these. In those cases I don't rely on these explanations.
 - Some.
 - 80%
 - Tons
 - My trust is okay depending on the scientist and what the issue is. I do not put trust in a scientist to tell me the world and life exists because two planets collided.
- q. What can science teach us about the world? What questions can science not answer?
- Everything SINCE the beginning / The beginning (I am talking absolute origin)
 - Using proper observational and data collection techniques and analysis protocols / a WHOOOLE lotta stuff. Science can't answer why my boyfriend says he loves me to death, but does childishly clever stuff to hurt me and is unconscious when he does.
 - It can teach us almost everything, except morals.

- Science can explain how things work together for example why things fall to the ground (gravity), why aircraft can fly (thrust and lift through aerodynamics) and so on. / Science can not really answer why people behave like they do or how the world was formed. There are lots of theories on the market but these are too uncertain to rely on them.
 - Yes.
 - The other 20%
 - Everything / Most likely
 - Science can teach us about how to save the world from total destruction of it through creating things that will destroy it, i.e. global warning, etc.
- r. Is time more important in your day to day life, or do you feel comfortable enjoying events and not paying attention to time?
- Time is a driver...I wish it wasn't!
 - Time Management is very important to me...but I also go by **THE INVISIBLE CLOCK** a great book written by my friend George Lawrence-Ell
 - The latter!
 - I would love to enjoy events more often while not paying attention to time. On weekends and in my spare time I achieve this pretty well. During the week, sometimes on a tight schedule, it often is not possible for me.
 - Very limited in time with 3 kids.
 - unfortunately I am driven by time; I would prefer to not have it rule my day to day life
 - time
 - Time is relative to how long you have been around the planet. On my last birthday I turned 68, so time to me now is somewhat different than when I turned 28 and was getting in to full swing with my profession, life, and family. The whole key to life is to enjoy all aspects of it, and not to worry about time. Use every minute of the day as affectively as possible and just enjoy
- s. Is there a universal right and wrong? Define right and wrong. (Note: those in bold font were put in bold font by the interviewees. These are the only answers in bold font in the entire interview. This trend seems to indicate a common intensity of emotion precipitated by the question.)
- **Yes, BUT it's in the individual's interpretation of why they did it/do it that differs**
 - **NO...it is all relative. Hang around with lawyers, theologians, scientists and artists and you'll get what I mean.**
 - No. Our rights and wrongs come from our moral beliefs, which is our own (personal or societal) application of our own (personal or societal) ethics.
 - There is no universal right and wrong. Right and wrong are manmade definitions and differ depending on the culture you live in. Take for example the crusades of the middle age. Christianity was spread with the sword and it was thought to be the right thing. Nowadays Christians would never do this because they think it to be wrong. In the middle age people were accused to be witches and rightful burned alive. Would we consider this to be right nowadays? So please excuse me for not defining right and wrong. Who am I to define such a thing? It will be defined by time, culture, values....

- Yes. What you do is what you want others to do to you. It comes down to whether you can sleep at night with it.
- I don't believe there is truly an answer to this; it is one person's perspective vs. another. I only hope the other person's perspective is the same as mine
- Kinda but not really / **this is getting too deep, everybody's view on ethics differ.. So the right and wrong is different with everybody**
- **This could be answered many ways I guess, but yes there is a universal right or wrong and there are all kind of guides out there to give us guidance, i.e. the Golden Rule, the written scriptures(of all religions), the spiritual gut feelings. Right and wrong could be defined, again many ways by some, but I feel it is that feeling you have when in private you make a decision based on right or wrong, when no one is watching and only you have to live with the decision. Generally if you have to stop and think about something being good or bad, or ask someone, or even consult with the written word, it is probably not good.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

From www.usatriathlon.org

Membership Activity (full-year licenses)

1993: 15,937 2000: 21,341 2005: 58,073 2006: 84,787

Breakdown of 2006 annual membership per age group (Numbers are approximate)

Age- group	Female	% of age- group	Male	% of age- group	Total in age-group	% in relation to all current members
under 16	6806	44.61%	8263	54.17%	15255	17.99%
16-19	747	37.18%	1257	62.57%	2009	2.37%
20-29	4788	43.82%	6135	56.15%	10927	12.89%
30-39	8915	34.23%	17116	65.71%	26046	30.72%
40-49	6446	31.11%	14260	68.83%	20718	24.44%
50-59	1893	24.81%	5737	75.18%	7631	9.00%
60-69	313	17.19%	1504	82.59%	1821	2.15%
70-79	36	13.14%	238	86.86%	274	0.32%
80 plus	1	5.26%	18	94.74%	19	0.02%

2006 Breakdown of Membership by Gender – 35% female, 64% male, .29% not indicated
Elites: 39% female, 61% male

2006 Annual memberships by state: (Top 10)

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Texas 10,457 | 6. Illinois 3,408 |
| 2. California 8,910 | 7. Virginia 3,348 |
| 3. Florida 8,762 | 8. North Carolina 3,289 |
| 4. New York 4,297 | 9. Massachusetts 2,924 |
| 5. Colorado 3,631 | 10. Georgia 2,885 |

Single Event Permit Activity (one-day licenses) - A one-day license must be purchased for a USAT-sanctioned race if the person is not an annual member. Be aware that one person may purchase multiple one-day licenses over the course of a season.

1994: 49,083

2000: 101,047

2001: 116,799 (includes one-days sold at 2000 Danskin series races)

2006: 198,645 (adult only)

Approximate Education Range of Multi-sport Athletes (based on a 2000 survey of 925 members and non-members)

Completed high school only	7%
Two-year school	7%
Four-year school	40%
Graduate school	28%
Post graduate	18%

USA Triathlon Registered Clubs

2000: 50 2003: 237 2005: 375 2006: 523

Club Numbers	
Collegiate Clubs	80
Avg. # of Members	71
Over 1000 Members	4 clubs
Between 500 and 1000	2 clubs
Between 250-500	17 clubs
Between 100-250	63 clubs
Under 100	437 clubs

States with Most Clubs		
1.	CA	60
2.	TX	40
3.	FL	33
4.	CO	32
5.	NY	30

It is estimated that between 150,000-250,000 people try a multi-sport event in the United States each year. This includes triathlons (swim, bike run), duathlons (run, bike, run) and aquathlons (swim and run).

USA Triathlon's female membership has increased from 11 percent in the early 90s, to about 29 percent today. This is especially impressive considering a survey by the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association that found women prefer non-competitive events to maintain physical fitness.

USA Triathlon has many commissions of volunteers that help run the organization. Among these are the Age Group Commission, the Athlete Advisory Council, the Duathlon Commission, the Women's Commission, the Clubs Commission, the Officials Commission and the Race Directors Commission. It also has 10 active regional federations.

A 2000 survey of 925 multi-sport athletes found:

- 35% value their bike at \$2,000-\$4,000; 18% spend \$1,500-\$2,000
- 28% spend \$50-\$100 on swim equipment; 23% spend \$25-50 on swim equipment.
- 36% spend under \$300 on their bike equipment; 22% spend \$1,000-\$3000 on their bike equipment; 19% spend \$300-\$500.
- 54% spend \$100-\$299 on their running equipment; 26% spend \$300-\$500.

From www.tricalifornia.com

Event: Wildflower Triathlons, 7,500 participants, 32,000 spectators, 95 vendor spaces

Additional Activities: Triathlon clinics Thursday - Saturday, several bands play on main stage, evening pasta feeds, packet pick-up on Thursday to Sunday, family style entertainment and youth activity area.

Event best known for: Second largest triathlon in the world, largest sports expo in the industry, 3-day Expo (Friday-Sunday), captive audience of active lifestyle community, voted best race location by Competitor Magazine.

Event: Accenture Escape From Alcatraz, 1,600 participants, 10,000 spectators, 40 vendor spaces

Event best known for: Nationally Televised Event, Most unique and challenging triathlon, 2-day Expo.

Event: The Triathlon at Pacific Grove, 2,000 participants, 10,000 spectators, 25 vendor spaces

Additional Activities: Friday clinics, Friday Carbo Load Pasta Party, afternoon beach Awards Ceremony.

Event best known for: Scenic looped course is spectator and media friendly, beautiful location to take a vacation, ITU Junior Elite event.

Event: Scott Tinley's Adventures, 600-1,000 participants, 15 vendor spaces

Event best known for: Family fun weekend and getting new participants into the sport of triathlon, grassroots style event, Escape to Alcatraz Qualifier.

Event: Treasure Island International Triathlon, 2,000-3,000 participants, 12,000 spectators, 40 vendor spaces

Event best known for: USA Triathlon's third annual "Haul to the Great Wall" elite race series. Pan American Cup Race. And we can't forget to mention LOCATION. You couldn't create a more scenic (Bay Bridge, Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, San Francisco Skyline) course. It's has a great mix of technical and fast flat areas. Looped course that is spectator friendly with 3 hot corners to watch the athletes pass by. Culmination of the Tri-California Pro Series and presentations of Pro Series Purse.

Triathlete Market Breakdown: Few sports can boast the demographic of the average triathlete. Extremely focused and driven to succeed, these affluent young professionals not only embrace new technologies but have the purchasing power to obtain them. The average triathlete competes in five triathlons per year and actively participates in a variety of other sporting events, including 10K's, marathons, mountain biking, skiing, climbing, hiking and weight training. Triathletes are eager to try the products that will help them train harder, go faster and excel in their sport. Eighty-five percent state that they frequently give advice or recommendations to someone else purchasing sports products or services. In general, triathletes at all levels are active, educated professionals that have a disposable income and the tendency to spend...

Our Sport: Triathlon is a relatively young sport, but it is becoming a powerhouse in terms of the active lifestyle market. In the 25 years since it was conceived, triathlon has grown beyond being merely a test of athletic endurance and has established itself as a lifestyle sport among hundreds of thousands of people around the world. This remarkable reach will certainly broaden now that triathlon has made its Olympic debut.

From www.slowtwitch.com

...First, there is the level of commitment a triathlete has to his sport. A 10k runner is, on average, only loosely glued to his event. His financial investment is light and, really, so (potentially) is his training investment. He buys a pair running shoes and he's ready to go. Not so a triathlete...

Triathletes represent a high demographic. They are not only high achievers in sport, but in life. I'm not sure if this is still the case, but at one time the single most prevalent occupation in triathlon was attorney (hey, lawyer jokes aside, they can afford to spend a lot of money). In America at least, triathlon is the sport of movers and shakers...

Reebok's triathlon series coordinator Jim Curl realizes he has an opportunity, and is treating this first year with care. "I thought it not best to try to guess what women want in a triathlon. I went to a lot of races and I just asked the women who were racing what bugged them, and what they'd like to see different.

"So there are a lot of little touches. A choice of white or spaghetti strap finisher's shirts. And then what we call an 'info cafe.' After you finish registration there's a real cafe. Free Starbucks coffee, and if we get everything we want, there'll be free phones, free internet. Or just a nice place or sit, and to talk or to look at what's going on around you.

"Now, it's not exactly everyone's choice of conversation topic, but there's the toilets.

We'll have them in groups of 10, with a single line for each group, as you would line up for bank tellers. There will be an attendant for each group of toilets, and then there'll be a cleaning person employed. If the bathroom needs cleaning, you hang a flag when you leave, and then it gets cleaned before the next use. Would any business allow dirty toilets? Why does our industry allow dirty toilets?"

Curl says he eventually wants showers at the finish line... At race registration you hand over your bag of clean clothing, you get it at the finish. Athletes take a shower, they come out and enjoy the party, "...instead of looking like the cat just dragged them in," says Curl. "Men don't care. A lot of women do care."

From www.triathletemag.com

Few sports can match triathlon's impressive demographics. Extremely focused and driven to succeed, these affluent young professionals not only embrace new technologies but also have the purchasing power to obtain them. They are continually searching for products they believe will give them an edge and that will add to their distinct image as a triathlete. As informed, active consumers, they are the people that friends, family members and neighbors look to for advice on purchasing decisions related to cross training and endurance athletics.

Contact Person

Chris Anderson, Fellowship of Christian Athletes – Endurance
FCA Endurance website: www.fcaendurance.com

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