

Hey, can a horse be a legend? Yeah, I mean a *specific horse* that lived and died! So, yeah...can a horse be a legend? Well, I think it's pretty clear that the answer is "yes."

So, have you heard of a racehorse named Secretariat? Chances are that you have, even if you've never really watched even one horse race in your entire life. The reason for that is simple—well, Secretariat *is* a legend! But why? Well, first, he was given a very catchy name. But Secretariat also won what's called the Triple Crown in horse racing in the United States. That means he won the three premier races—the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness Stakes, and the Belmont Stakes—all in the same racing season in 1973. Secretariat's winning all three races in the Triple Crown was the first time that happened in 25 years.

But that's not the really big story: Secretariat set new record times for all three races! And that's not all! Each of those record times have stood for fifty years now...yeah, even though there have been four other Triple Crown winners since Secretariat, his records from 1973 are still standing. But what's really amazing is watching Secretariat actually win the Belmont Stakes on YouTube—you will be astounded at how he demolished his world-class opponents. Secretariat simply blew the competition away—after he crosses the finish line, it seems to take forever for the 2nd and 3rd place finishers to get to the very same finish line!

Did you know that Secretariat is the only non-human on ESPN SportsCentury's list of top 50 athletes in the 20th century? And there's actually a documentary about Secretariat that reveals just how and why he was so amazing as a physical specimen. And there's also an entertaining movie about Secretariat with actor Diane Lane starring as Secretariat's owner, Penny Chenery.

Now let's take a look at a bigger picture here: literally countless people worldwide love a contest where someone comes out the winner! For example, take the main athletic extravaganzas that the world participates in...the last two Summer Olympics, over three billion TV viewers watched the 40-plus Olympic events, contests that ranged from track-and-field to gymnastics to tennis.

And how about the TV watchers for soccer in the 2022 World Cup competition, with over five billion viewers worldwide reported! Then also how about stadiums full of many thousands of people for the uniquely American car-racing world called NASCAR? It's a colorful sport with its roots in the bootleggers of illegal alcohol in fast cars trying to evade Federal agents during the Prohibition period in the U.S.

But you know that athletic contests and races go waaaaay back further than all these. The original Olympics were first held in 776 BC in, yeah, you got it, the city of Olympia, Greece. And that era's events included several types of running as well as chariot races that included horses.

Oh, so you're not so much interested in sports and contests? Well then, how about the race you're running? Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV) says this to us...

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Wow, how about that—there's the race *we* are personally running, an endurance race for God! But wait, here's a key question, do you personally feel more like a racehorse...or a workhorse? Yeah, are you relating to Secretariat the triumphant champion or to that ol' reliable harnessed-up horse pulling the milk wagon, day in and day out? Specifically, as a believer sincerely striving to run your race well in all your key roles in life, are *you* more of a racehorse or more of a workhorse—the one who grinds it out, day after day?

Wait, before you answer that, hear me out—because I actually know the specific answer as it relates to you! That's because there's a rock-solid principle and reality in life and in God's Kingdom...and here that reality is: *for everything worthy of our focus, time, and gifting, we must be a consistent, persevering,*

obstacle-overcoming workhorse in order to win the races God appoints us to! And that's true for everybody, whether you're an Olympian, an accountant, a dentist, a pastor, or a pro athlete.

Take Tom Brady, considered by many to be the GOAT of the National Football League. You know what "GOAT" means...the Greatest Of All Time. Why is Brady considered a GOAT? Some would say it's because he's earned more Super Bowl rings than anyone else: yeah, while playing in a record 10 Super Bowls, Brady steered his team to win in seven of them! But he also owns many NFL records as a pro quarterback.

Troy Aikman is a prominent, long-time TV analyst for NFL games and won three Super Bowls as a pro quarterback himself. Aikman calls his friend Brady the greatest ever, but the funny thing is, Aikman says that Brady is the most unathletic pro quarterback ever, too. Hey, Aikman evidently says that to Brady's face. So, why does he say that? Apparently because Brady is a relatively slow runner and not very mobile!

So, just how did Brady get to 10 Super Bowls and win it seven times? Well, Brady knows how to steer his entire team to achieve high productivity, to simply score more points than opponents. Brady knows how to win the race, to be a great "racehorse" in key games. But the real undergirding truth is that Brady is truly a consistent workhorse all the way into his mid-forties. He has crafted a strict diet and physical regimen. He knows what he and his team need to do in every situation. But the key reason that Brady is considered the GOAT is his *longevity* in doing all that. Yeah, most pros never get to even one Super Bowl; Brady got to ten in his 23 seasons and won seven! But that means Brady did *not* reach his goal in 13 seasons! World-class-workhorse Brady suits up every game, even if yesterday's results were not glorious.

So, how about someone like Amazon's founder Jeff Bezos, undeniably one of the greatest businesspeople of any era? Amazon was incorporated in 1994 and only started selling other goods besides books in 1998. Frankly, many American consumers didn't even have Amazon on their personal radar screen until well into the 2000s. And despite that, Bezos was a workhorse from the beginning, working for years to develop Amazon's supply chain into greatness. And what's the result? That many of us turn first to Amazon for many purchases because Amazon wins the race that we want won for us—of speedy convenience, value, and service day-in and day-out. Yes, the real story of Amazon is that the persevering, focused, smart workhorse becomes the racehorse, winning all those incremental races for the consumer's benefit!

And how about the Apostle Paul? We know Paul for his many Holy Spirit-inspired epistles in the Bible. Make no mistake, Paul did something nobody else in history has done: he wrote the most epistles in the Bible—he won those unique "races!" But wait, how did this man who persecuted Christians become the racehorse delivering unique epistles that have taught billions? You got it: Paul was an enduring workhorse!

Do you remember that, after his conversion, Paul spent many years apart from Jerusalem? Those were years of Paul studying and getting fresh, direct revelation from God...all that in order to uniquely deliver results for God! And you know about his journeys: missions trips, shipwrecks, persecutions, conflicts, prison—for Paul, that was all in a day's work, the necessary workhorse activity that directly helped forge and facilitate this great Apostle leading the early church in distinct ways, including the writing of all those amazing epistles! Yeah, that's the necessary workhorse needed to fulfill racehorse results.

Are you a Tom Brady, a Jeff Bezos, an Apostle Paul? Well, for each and every Christian, the answer can be "yes!" We are all called to be a willing workhorse that delivers as an amazing racehorse directed by God!

The truth is, the people who win in the long haul—yes, the very people who win and stack up a multiple number of incremental wins in races over time...you know, elite athletes, enduring pastors, successful businesspeople, exceedingly fruitful Christians—well, those folks have been in the trenches for years doing the work, being the workhorse that is poised to win the race before them. Not one of the folks who are mistakenly thought of as "overnight successes" lounged around doing nothing, then suddenly won the race. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us..." Yes!

A&A: Application & Action

1. Do you make it an intentional practice of identifying key races God has appointed you to and the daily, grinding tasks you must do to win those particular races? Give examples of this linkage in your life.
2. Regardless of what multiple, important races God has directed you to—like parenting and workplace engagement and Kingdom commitments—do you often feel like an unappreciated workhorse, grinding away with no end in sight? Do you think God takes note of that? Give specific Biblical and personal examples of your thinking.
3. What specifics do you do in your various daily routines to successfully acknowledge/uplift/reward those who work for or around you...those who can so easily slip into feeling like unappreciated or underappreciated workhorses? Share these specific techniques and successes.