

Passing the Baton

The American women's relay race team was favored to win the gold medal in the 4-by-100 relay race in the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

The team featured Marion Jones, a sprinter who had won four gold medals at the previous games in Sydney, Australia. Indeed, the American team was off to a strong start when Jones took the baton for the second leg of the race. She gained ground as she ran her 100 meters and approached Lauren Williams, who would run the third leg.

Williams began running as Jones got close, but when she reached back to receive the baton, the women couldn't complete the handoff. Jones thrust the baton forward three times, but each time Williams failed to grab it.



Finally, on the fourth try, the runners made the connection. But by that time, they had crossed out of the 20-yard exchange zone and were disqualified.

Everyone knew they were the fastest team on the track, but because they couldn't complete the handoff, they lost the race.

It is important for one generation to set the pace for others by living authentically, but at a certain point a handoff must be made to the next generation. That handoff isn't as easy as it looks. It's the result of thousands of practice runs. That principle is true for ...

- Rearing children, who need to learn discipline for living and the values that make life worthwhile.
- Organizational development, whether it be education, business, health care, the military – the list goes on and on.
- Our nation. Ronald Reagan said it: "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free."
- Faith. Implanting the truths of the gospel in the hearts and minds of those who will succeed us is critical in the spiritual warfare in which we find ourselves on this earth.

And His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation (Luke 1:50 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter