

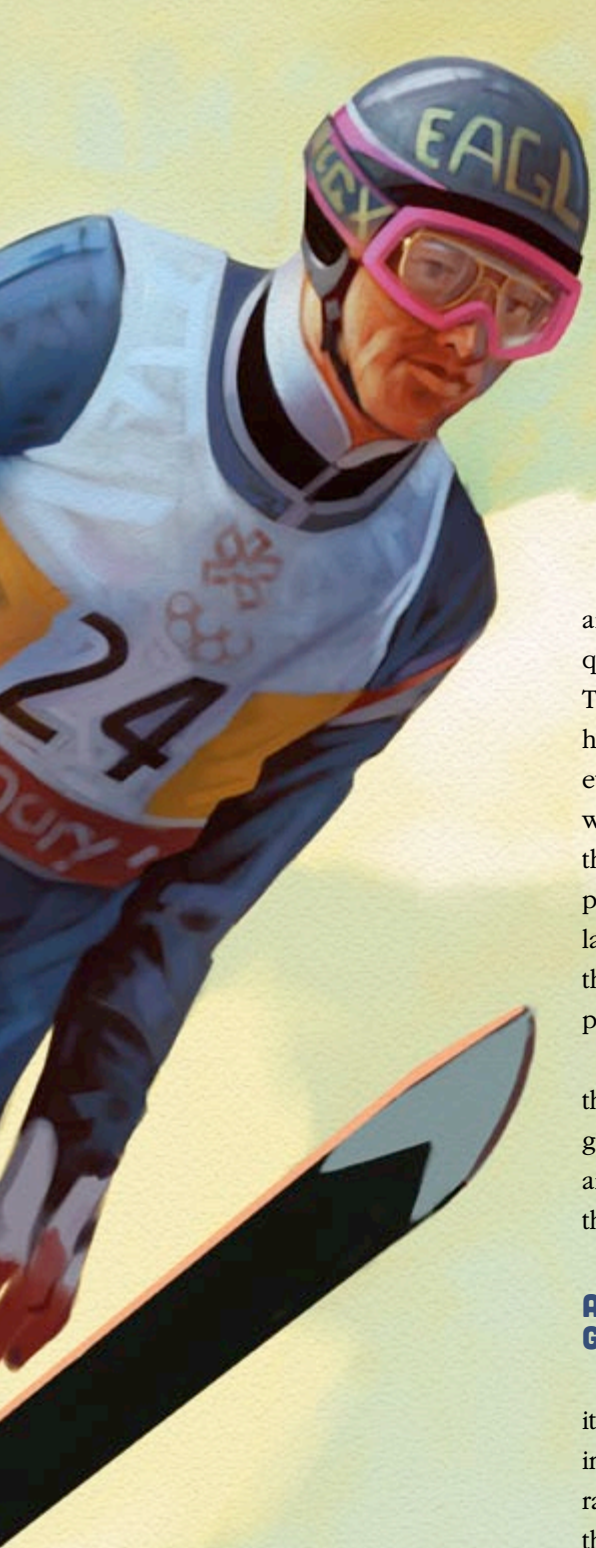
Soar LIKE AN EAGLE

In all likelihood, he was going to finish dead last. Michael Edwards was the first person in history to represent Great Britain as an Olympic ski jumper. He was taller and heavier than his competitors (a disadvantage in ski jumping). He had such bad eyesight that he needed to wear thick glasses while jumping—glasses that fogged up at high altitude. He was entirely self-funded and as a result used mostly borrowed ski gear as opposed to the top-notch equipment provided to other skiers by their sponsors.

The odds were stacked against him. And yet, during the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, Michael Edwards had a perpetual smile on his face. He was already achieving the goal he'd had for many years: to compete as an Olympic athlete.

He didn't care when people told him he'd never win. He didn't mind that other competitors would be better than him. And he never expected to take home the gold. His goal was to make it to the Olympics, and that's just what he did.





BEING *your* BEST IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN BEING *the* BEST.

He had wanted to inspire people, and inspire them he did. The crowds quickly started cheering him on. They loved rooting for a guy who did his very best and chased his goals, even though Michael's prospects of winning seemed slim to none. As the games continued and he indeed placed last in every event, his popularity only grew. Nicknamed "Eddie the Eagle," Michael Edwards had people across the globe rooting for him.

His Olympic story shows that there's a lot to be said for setting goals, doing your personal best, and not worrying so much about those around you.

AVOID COMPARISON IN GOAL-SETTING

When it comes to setting goals, it's useful to think in terms of achieving our *own* personal best efforts, rather than in terms of doing better than somebody else. For example, one good goal for a runner might be to run a mile at least 10 seconds

faster than his personal record—as opposed to 10 seconds faster than his friend's best time.

If we fall into the trap of comparing our goals and accomplishments to those of everyone around us, we will likely think we're falling short over and over.

"We spend so much time and energy comparing ourselves to others—usually comparing our weaknesses to their strengths," teaches President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. "This drives us to create expectations for ourselves that are impossible to meet. As a result, we never celebrate our good efforts because they seem to be less than what someone else does."¹

It's worth remembering that in the parable of the talents (see Matthew 25:14–30), the two servants who put their master's money to good use were praised equally. Ultimately, it didn't matter that one ended up with 10 talents (portions of money) and another ended up with 4. They were

both welcomed “into the joy of [the] lord” (Matthew 25:21, 23). Only the third servant—the one who didn’t try at all—missed out.

Our goals don’t need to be enormous and flashy to be meaningful. Meeting a goal to raise your grades in a single subject you normally struggle with is an achievement worth celebrating. So is meeting a daily scripture-reading goal, whether it’s one verse or something more.

President Uchtdorf adds: “Successes may seem tiny to you and they may go unnoticed by others, but God notices them and they are not small to Him. If you consider success to be only the most perfect rose or dazzling orchid, you may miss some of life’s sweetest experiences.”²

SET SPECIFIC GOALS

So how do we go about setting goals that work for us individually? Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offers the following counsel: “Set short-term goals that you can reach. Set goals that are well balanced—not too many nor too few and not too high nor too low. Write down your attainable goals

and work on them according to their importance. Pray for divine guidance in your goal setting.”³

So, let’s say that your Mutual group has a 10-mile hike coming up in six months. You’ve prayed about it and decided to set a goal of completing that hike. Now what?

Write down your goal! But that’s only the first step. As Elder Ballard teaches, we also need to have short-term goals we can reach. That might mean setting a short-term goal to hike 3 miles, then 5 miles. The 5-mile goal could take several weeks of training or longer to pull off. Once you successfully accomplish it, though, you can set another short-term goal. Maybe 8 miles this time.

Before long, the 10-mile hike won’t be such a big deal. You’ll be ready.

**“SUCCESSSES MAY SEEM TINY
TO YOU AND THEY MAY GO UNNOTICED
BY OTHERS, BUT GOD NOTICES THEM AND
THEY ARE NOT SMALL TO HIM.”**

—PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF

FOCUS ON IMPROVEMENT

In life we are constantly exposed to the top musicians, athletes, and on and on. Fortunately, we don’t have to match or outdo their performances to improve ourselves. We simply need to set and reach goals that help us do *our* best, both temporally and spiritually.

Remember that setting goals is a lifelong process—one that’s done most effectively when we focus on increasing our own personal best one step at a time. **NE**

NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Forget Me Not,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 120.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Forget Me Not,” 120.
3. M. Russell Ballard, “Keeping Your Life in Balance,” *New Era*, Sept. 2012, 2.

IN YOUR LIFE

As you think about goals you can set, don’t forget the teachings and opportunities in Personal Progress and Duty to God. Each of these booklets helps you learn how to make plans and reach goals to help you and others come unto Christ (see pages 12 and 14).

