

News Story Summary

During a December court appearance, Olympic Gold Medalist Michael Phelps told the judge that he felt that he had the tools to move past legal offenses, admitted he was wrong, and that he was looking forward to a much brighter future. Phelps had been stopped for driving 84 mph in a 45-mph zone. The officers discovered that Phelps was over the legal limit for alcohol consumption. This was Phelps' second DUI arrest. The first incident caused swim officials to ban him from competing in swim events for six months. Phelps had been photographed previously with a marijuana pipe in his mouth. He received a three months suspension from sports for that incident.

For this last incident, the courts sentenced Michael Phelps to one year in prison but suspended the sentence to 18 months of supervised probation. The judge ordered Phelps to abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages during this period.

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the phrases “Michael Phelps” and “Olympic swimmer DUI.”)

Focus Attention

Prior to the study, write the name *Michael Phelps* on the board.

As group members arrive, call attention to the name. Lead in a discussion about the athlete. Guide them to discuss his accomplishments in the Olympics.

Share the story about Michael Phelps' DUI arrest. Include the consequences of his actions. Also summarize the statement Phelps made to the judge.

Say: In the Book of Ezra, the Prophet Ezra committed himself to study, follow, and teach God's law. Therefore, he accomplished great things for God and was a great model for those who wanted to follow God.

Help group members to connect the lesson to the news story. Explain that Ezra's commitment to God influenced others to obey God just as Michael Phelps' disobedience to the law may impact those who hold him in high esteem.

Ask: What difference does Phelps' breaking the law make to his fans? What potential harm may his actions have on others? Does his statement to the judge make a difference?

Challenge

Remind the group of Michael Phelps' actions and disobedience to the law. Ask: *What could he do to restore trust that he will obey the law in the future?*

Challenge group members to evaluate their own potential as godly role models. Direct them to reflect on: *Level of obedience to the commandments of God; who is watching and following them as godly role models; whether they have tarnished their images in some way; if they have, what they can do to restore trust.*

Lead in prayer, thanking God that He never gives up on us when we make mistakes. Ask God to help the group members to remain faithful and obedient to His Word, just like Ezra, so that they will be a blessing to others.