

# Wednesday Prelims Devotion

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Last year I came to Nationals with a very small team - just myself and three other girls. We were here to give things our best shot and take in the experience. We were not expecting much. But to our excitement, one of my teammates made it back to finals on the first night. For those of you who have been here before, you know what the atmosphere is like during finals – excited and packed.

A larger team noticed we were having some trouble getting up against the bar to cheer our teammate on and they waved us over and helped us get some room. Then they asked us what our teammate's name was and helped us cheer for her. These athletes had never met us before. They didn't know when we were or where we were from and they had never even met the girl they were cheering for. It may seem like something so insignificant, but it was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life. You can go to any other meet of this caliber and that sort of thing will NEVER happen. Teams stay to themselves, kids cheer with their heads plugged into iPods, and those other kids are just the time in the lane next to you, not really people.

Here at YNAT's it's completely different. We share something as YMCA swimmers that other swimmers just don't quite have. We care about each other and we respect each other. You can look around the deck and see the bundles of color that divide each team. But when I look around, I see one team. One huge USA YMCA Swim Team. This is a spirit I hope everyone can catch while they are here in Ft. Lauderdale. This meet is about so much more than just the astounding times that pop up on that board; it's about the phenomenal character of the athlete's who have worked so hard to get here. I am extremely happy that I get to end my YMCA swimming career surrounded by all of you.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, thank you for bringing us all together to experience this incredible event and thank you for the many opportunities we will have while we are here. Watch over us as we hit the water the next four days and bless us with warm weather and sunshine. In your name we pray, amen.