



September 6, 2026

I Can Do All Things Through Christ



Becoming the World's Best



Wrestling with a Comeback

BY BETH LUEDERS

Competing in her first Olympics Games—held in 2016 in Brazil—23-year-old Helen Maroulis faced the most decorated women's wrestler of all time: Japan's Saori Yoshida. The Japanese powerhouse was a 13-time World Champion and had won every gold medal since women's freestyle wrestling made its debut at the 2004 Athens Olympics. In fact, in the past fourteen years, she had lost only two matches.

Helen had met Saori on the mat twice in the months before

the 2016 contest, and both times Saori had quickly pinned the young American. Helen later said of her opponent, "You think this person is super human."

But as the women stepped onto the mat for the 2016 Rio gold medal match, something almost unthinkable occurred: Helen gave up one point to the legendary Olympian and scored four. On that August afternoon in Brazil, the match between the world renowned wrestler and the up-and-coming U.S. grappler ended with both women



in tears. Saori buried her head in a towel in defeat, while Helen shed tears of joy and pointed heavenward.

Helen Maroulis stunned the sports world and earned the title of the first, and only, American woman to win a gold medal in wrestling.

In an NBC Sports interview, Helen said that, in the last few seconds of her astonishing match against Saori Yoshida, she repeated over and over to herself these words: “Christ is in me. I’m enough.”

Christ is in me. I’m enough.

Those six words would continue to carry the Olympic champion in the years following her Rio victory as her mountaintop experience gave way to a painful season in the lowest valley. In despair, she would wrestle with hard questions: What happened to her gritty prowess? Would she ever wrestle again? Would her faith prove reliable for a heroic comeback?

Helen had never shied away from monumental obstacles. The Rockville, Maryland, native started wrestling at age 7 when her younger brother needed a drilling partner. Helen asked her parents if she could compete and her father made her a bet. If she won her first match, she could continue in the sport that had no girls’ teams.

Helen won that bet before losing the rest of her matches that season with a 1—30 record. But the determined grade-schooler who had fallen in love with wrestling pressed on, competing against boys throughout high school. Helen became the first girl to ever place at Maryland’s Boys’ State Championship.

“When I started wrestling, people would say, ‘Look at that little girl. She’s so cute going out there and trying,’” Helen remembers. “But when I started winning every match, a lot of parents didn’t like that. A lot of boys I wrestled didn’t like it. A lot of coaches didn’t like it, either. So there was a lot of bullying and name calling. I remember parents

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screaming, ‘Get that dyke off the mat!’”

The teen wrestling trailblazer took a square stance at the jeers. An outsider in the male-dominated sport, she kept on pinning and winning. At age 17, Helen moved away from home to pursue more focused training and the opportunity to wrestle against other women. She competed in her first World Championships in 2008 and earned multiple titles and medals even while completing her college degree in communications. Along the way, the accomplished athlete started to look at her inner life.

“My family is Greek Orthodox, but all I knew about church was we had to wear tights and listen to services in Greek which I didn’t understand,” Helen says. “Then wrestling took



Helen wins gold in the 2016 Rio Olympics.

over and we always competed on Sunday, so we just stopped going to church. Wrestling really became my religion and the determining factor of my worth and my identity.”

In 2011, 20-year-old Helen started working with a coach and living with his family. The coach made one stipulation: Helen needed to join them for church on Sundays.

“After hearing a pastor’s message on unconditional love, I realized that wrestling can’t love me,” Helen says. “I realized no one can really display that love in the way that Jesus did.”

Helen made a personal commitment to the Lord a few days later. After she lost the Olympic trials in 2012, she fully devoted

her next four years of training and everyday living to God. Helen began earning international golds including the ’12 Pan American Championships and the ’15 and ’17 World Championships.

“Whatever You ask of me, I’ll do it,” Helen recalls praying. “My faith decision had nothing to do with wrestling. It really was about character and changing me as a person. Those next four years were transformative and that’s when I really started becoming a disciple.”

But after capturing gold in Rio, Helen’s life collapsed in a major takedown in 2017 when she followed the well-meaning advice from a trusted believer who told her that if she wanted to get close to God, she needed to pray for Him to break her and not bless her.

As Helen earnestly prayed for that breaking, she began to believe that every injury after that was tied to that prayer. As the injuries piled up on her 125-pound frame, Helen was pinned by a full body slam of health woes. These included several concussions with vertigo complications, a shoulder surgery, and a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Many days Helen was forced to stay in bed instead of hitting the training room.

“My stress trauma was from a variety of head injuries and being in really toxic, abusive relationships that wore me down,” Helen says. “The head injuries were kind of the final straw.”

Helen explains that her concussions left her with a

brain unable to function sharply, thickening mental fog, and the decreasing ability to regulate her emotions. “I’d hit a certain tolerance level for the day. If I had too much eye contact or conversations on top of a tough drill or workout, sometimes it was too much on my brain,” Helen explains. She describes “wonky outputs” from her stressed brain when she would hear voices at night telling her to put a knife through her brain.

After getting hit in the ear during practice and suffering yet another concussion, Helen was placed on a 72-hour psychiatric hold to ensure that she didn’t harm herself or others. In one internal wrestling match with the enemy, Helen sensed Satan warning her to back off pursuing God. Immediately Helen thought of Simon Peter’s words in John 6:68. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (NIV).

Strengthened by those living words, Helen determined to push through and forward in getting her full health back.

“That was definitely a dark night of the soul. But God allowed me to go through all that so that I realized everything I feared and experienced did not have power over me,” Helen shares. “I came to know the true power and authority of God and Christ and how to stand in that authority.”

The Olympian relied heavily on the prayers and encouragement of her family and friends and dug deeper in her own study of Scripture. Working with doctors and a Christian neuropsychologist, Helen let her



Young Helen and her always-supportive dad.

brain rest and heal day by day. One of her cling-to Bible verses became 2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) which says, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

“There’s a lot of mental, emotional, physiological, and spiritual components to trauma and healing,” Helen says. “So I really tried to tackle my healing from a mind, body, soul perspective. God gave me grace that led me through that process of how to do that.”

During her brief retirement from wrestling, Helen took up the harp. She also made time for some fun, like salsa dancing. Her comeback wrestling training and renewed focus paid off with a bronze medal at the



2021 Tokyo Olympics, followed by three more World Championship medals in 2021, 2022, and 2023. After the 2024 Paris Olympics break, Helen added in jiu-jitsu and ended up with a World Championship gold medal later that year.

“I really have seen amazing ways that God used my injuries to transform me and heal my brain and make it stronger than ever,” Helen adds. “I now have a better understanding of Him, His Word, other people, and myself.”

After the 2021 Olympics in Tokyo, Helen helped serve refugee women

Helen’s steady faith is a model for others who long to get a headlock on their obstacles. Soon after she became a Christian, Helen started praying on the mat before each match. Helen says, “I don’t pray for victory, instead I pray this: ‘God, thank You for this day. I pray to be free from fear, to be a window, and not a wall. All glory to You. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.’”

Three-time Olympic champion Helen Maroulis is indeed a window to the world, revealing her relationship with her Creator to everyone who knows and follows


“I like the saying that ‘Part of healing is when you help others heal.’”

and children in Greece. With her firsthand experience of PTSD, she could empathize with the displaced individuals.



Helen’s own healing from trauma continues to shape how she ministers to others who are hurting, including veterans or others with concussions, or athletes healing from injuries or even abusive coaching relationships.

She says, “I like the saying that ‘Part of healing is when you help others heal.’”

her. Keeping her eye on the 2028 Olympics, Helen focuses on staying in the here and now, making the most of each training session, conversation, and competition that she can.

“Getting my second chance in wrestling makes me appreciate it so much more. When I wrestle, it feels like I get to walk with God and it’s so beautiful,” Helen shares. “Winning and the medals are great, but they are just the byproduct of the best part of all: getting to be close to God.” 

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Praise Without Words

Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.

— Psalm 33:2 (NIV)

If you play a musical instrument—or paint or sculpt or make pottery or engage in similar artistic activities—you have a sense of how

God enables you to express your soul to Him through your hands. If you dance, you know the wonderful feeling of being empowered by God to celebrate His grace through your body's graceful movements. In all these acts of worship, there is no language—yet there is. If such acts are committed in Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, your deepest thoughts and emotions are

conveyed in a manner that surpasses words. And the God of Heaven understands. He receives such offerings of gratitude and praise, and He delights in them.

The Lord blessed you with fingers, hands, a body, a voice. Anything you do with these gifts can be done for God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). If you ask Him, He will teach you how to use the talents He gave you to honor Him and draw near to Him, and in so doing discover great satisfaction in His fellowship and presence.



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DAILY BIBLE READINGS

SUNDAY	<input type="text"/>	Revelation 21–22
MONDAY	<input type="text"/>	Genesis 1–2
TUESDAY	<input type="text"/>	Genesis 3–5
WEDNESDAY	<input type="text"/>	Genesis 6–8
THURSDAY	<input type="text"/>	Genesis 9–11
FRIDAY	<input type="text"/>	Genesis 12–14
SATURDAY	<input type="text"/>	Genesis 15–17





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