



Links Players

PRAYING FOR BETTER 7: JOY

...and joyfully giving thanks to the Father... (Colossians 1:11-12, NIV)

WHEN TIGER WOODS AND PHIL MICKELSON met for their much-ballyhooed Match after Thanksgiving, the logo for the event showed silhouettes of each man—silhouettes of their greatest golfing joys. For Woods, we saw his oft-given fist pump; for Mickelson, it was his winner’s leap, two arms extended above his head after winning the 2004 Masters, his first major.

Both men would likely tell you that these are not their greatest joys in life. They are fathers, after all. But when you spend so much of your life pushing in the direction of competitive victory, whether you are a regular headline-maker or an unheralded journeyman finally getting your first win, joy spills out. It comes with a whoop, a hug, sometimes tears. What it doesn’t always do is last.

Many readers will be aware of Bernhard Langer’s dissatisfaction only hours after winning his first major, also the Masters, in 1985. He’s not the only one. Reaching the pinnacle we’ve been aiming for may validate our work, but too often it shows the goal itself to be wanting. The pleasure fades quickly.

The gap between accomplishment and lasting satisfaction may be the lack of someone to thank. If I work and work to reach a goal, placing all my stock in my strength, ability, and discipline, whom will I thank when it is over? Myself? Maybe I didn’t set my goal high enough. Maybe it was the wrong goal entirely. No wonder my satisfaction disappears!

When Paul prayed for the Colossians that their lives would be better as those whose faith was in Jesus, he asked that they would experience a joyful view of what was happening to them and around them. But this was not to be a suspended joy, alone as a reference point in their spirits. Rather, it was to be a joy that produced thanksgiving, and this thanksgiving would be directed to God, the Father, “who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 Timothy 6:17).

True thanksgiving is a humble act. It recognizes that so much comes from outside ourselves. In fact, as our trust in God increases, we begin to understand how nothing comes from within ourselves. We may demonstrate a visible strength to the outside world, by musculature or constitution. But we did not design the skeleton that supports these muscular fibers; we did not instill this fortitude or provide the experiences to establish it. God did this. All of it. For that, we give him thanks!

Opening questions Can you share a story of when a golf shot or golf round gave you immense pleasure? How long did this pleasure last? • What else in your life gives you satisfaction? Is this satisfaction based on accomplishing a feat or on something different?

READING Psalm 107

A repeated joy

At this time of year, we often sing the carol “Joy to the World,” which includes the lyric that rocks, hills, and fields “repeat the sounding joy.” What joy is this and how do you see it repeated at this time of year?

The breadth of our lives, the span of our thanks (Psalm 107)

What are some of the life experiences the psalmist wrote of? Do you see parallels to experiences in your own life or the lives of those around you?

On what basis did the psalmist keep calling the people to thank God? Do you find joy in the way God has rescued you?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2018 Links Players International. An introductory video for this Bible study is available here: <https://youtu.be/Si0jB7mKer8>.