



Links Players

ON LOCATION 10: TOUGH STUFF

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. (Romans 16:3-4, NIV)

WHEN THE MEMORIAL TOURNAMENT ROLLS AROUND EACH MAY, I find myself telling one person or another that Muirfield Village is the hardest course I have ever played. I'm not one of those who thinks they need to play a course all the way back to get the full experience. Still, for me, Muirfield just gets more narrow and more penal as the back nine progresses. The precision required to play the closing holes successfully is more than my game can bear. (Although I'd be willing to take another shot at it!)

Of course, Muirfield isn't the only course that can give me fits. A flat, open layout with tame greens can be just as challenging if it's my D-game that has decided to show up today.

Trouble may come from without or within; it's still trouble.

By now—and I could say this to someone of almost any age—trouble should not surprise you. Jesus said that we would face tribulation. No caveats. It's going to happen.

James repeated this assurance when he wrote, "Consider it all joy *when* you encounter trials of many kinds." But maybe you've noticed something: this isn't easy. Trials are no fun. Joy is not the natural response to difficulty. Old injuries and new regulations have this in common: they can bring us headaches today.

How can we cope? The spiritual answers are obvious: Trust God. Pray. Rest in him. But here's another important principle: Do all of this in the presence of others. God has given us the community of believers to support one another, especially when times are tough. Paul's biblical letters carried a commonality, in that he included real people, names and all. And when he did so, he wrote of whether they were a help or a hindrance to his life and ministry. Those who came alongside to help, as Priscilla and Aquila did, he commended.

We do well to step into one another's troubles, share the challenge of tough times, and relieve the weight for any single one of us. It's hard work; but as we've all been told a hundred times, many hands make it lighter.

Opening questions What course has given you the most fits through the years? Have you discovered any ways to play it more successfully? • What is your usual method for coping with troubles in life?

READING Psalm 73:21-28; Acts 4:32-35; 1 Peter 4:12-14

Going to God first (Psalm 73)

How did Asaph describe the effect of his troubles? What reasons did he give for turning to God? Are you quick enough to go to God when things are going wrong in your life? If not, what holds you back?

Meeting needs (Acts 4)

How does this passage demonstrate the practical nature of the help that believers were giving to one another in the early church? What kinds of needs can we meet practically for others in our time?

Believers' painful suffering (1 Peter 4)

Peter was writing to those being persecuted for their faith. Have you ever suffered or known someone who has suffered this kind of trial? What connection did Peter make between such suffering and the suffering of Christ? How does remembering Christ's trials help you deal with yours?
