



Links Players

OH, TO BE WISE 5: A WINNING WAY

*When a man's ways please the LORD,
he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. (Proverbs 16:7, ESV)*

WHILE THE WORD OFTEN DOES COME WITH NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS, not all consequences are bad. Your thesaurus will point to synonyms like outcomes or results or products. This is helpful to keep in mind when you're fighting a mental battle against your golf swing. Not even your miscues all end in double and triple bogeys. In fact, one of the benefits of experience in golf is learning how to score decently when you're not striking the ball well.

That said, you don't want to bank on pars and birdies when you're hitting it sideways. Balls that stymie behind trees, skip out of bounds, and bury in bunkers should send us a message: time for a lesson and time for some practice.

Now if you step away from golf and look at life more generally, you find that the bad outcomes should also be sending you a message. If the consequences of your actions keep going against you, it's time to ask, "What should I be doing differently?"

You will often hear conversations about this kind of reflection when it comes to grave troubles—a DUI, bankruptcy, divorce. The proverbs repeat a moniker for those who do not step back from incidents like these to take a good look at what's going on: fool. It is simply foolish to not take proper stock of our lives, especially when our behavior produces penal consequences.

But most of life is more subtle than that, particularly when it comes to relationships. Long before divorce papers are filed, for instance, insults and arguments and distrust should be warning signs that a good assessment is in order, maybe with the help of a pastor or counselor.

Still, today's proverb shows us that there is one way to live that produces positive outcomes, even among those who call themselves our enemies. That way is the way of the Lord. When we say and do things that please God, we become peacemakers. In fact, we might say that if we keep finding ourselves at odds with others, the problem may well be ours; we aren't pleasing God.

So step back today. Take a good look at your life. Are you following God's will for your life, living in a way that honors him? It's a way that wins all around.

Opening questions Do you think good breaks balance out the bad breaks on the golf course? Are some golfers more "lucky" than others? What might make them so?

READING Psalm 119:129-136; Matthew 5:38-48; Romans 12:17-21

Loving the way of the Lord (Psalm 119)

What relationship does the psalmist express with God's words and instruction? When do you find yourself appreciating God's commands? When do you find yourself stepping back from them?

Loving our enemies (Matthew 5)

What instruction did Jesus give about loving our enemies? Are there those who stand against you who need to see that you love them all the same? Are you willing to do all it takes to love those who challenge you?

Living at peace with others (Romans 12)

Paul drew from Solomon's proverbs as he encouraged Jesus' people in Rome to love well, even in the face of evil. What principles in this passage can you add to your life today in following the way of the Lord?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International. An accompanying introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/aLXw8Jft9w>