



Links Players

KINGDOM HABITS 3: MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. (Romans 12:3, NIV)

MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST COME OUT WITH IT. Maybe we should stand on the first tee, look each other squarely in the eye, and ask, “What do you expect to shoot today?” At least that way, we could help each other over the humps and bumps known as poor decisions and ugly shots.

What we do instead is hide those expectations. It’s not intentional, really, and we often hide them from ourselves, too. Until something goes wrong. The first tee shot sails into the trees, we can’t extricate ourselves easily enough, and suddenly we’ve put down a 7 and our breathing gets fast. *Have I thrown it all away already?* Or it can happen on the back nine, when all is smooth sailing and a good round looks certain. Then we send one out of bounds. The expectations we didn’t admit to having are now in jeopardy and we get angry or mopey or somehow both.

These are not pretty pictures I’m painting, I know—but at least you’re not looking in the mirror like I am! What we can see, though, is that there’s good reason instructor Jon Sherman includes managing expectations among his seven habits for achieving breakthrough in your game. In fact, Sherman calls unrealistic expectations “the common mistake that every golfer makes.” He teaches us to look at Tour player stats to see what is true for them when it comes to things like proximity to the hole, because many of us hold ourselves to higher standards than the best players in the world!

What we need in golf and in life, if we let the apostle Paul be our teacher, as he was for the Romans, is sober judgment. We need to be realistic about who we are and what we can do.

Paul told the Romans that appropriate perspective on ourselves comes from the faith given to us by God. That seems like an odd truth. Isn’t faith about how we see God? This may help: John the Baptist said, “He must increase; I must decrease.” When we have the right perspective on God (which comes through the ever-maturing faith he has put in us), we will have the right perspective on ourselves. In this way, we become healthily realistic about us both—our awe of God enlarging and our appreciation of who he has made us to be finding its proper calibration, so that we serve him and others confidently yet humbly.

Opening questions Considering the current state of your game, what scoring expectations should you have at the beginning of a round? Are these the expectations you actually carry with you?

READING Exodus 3:1-12; Psalm 139:13-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11

Moses before God (Exodus 3)

How did this encounter in the wilderness put Moses in “the right place” before God? What difference does it make that God goes with us in the things he asks us to do? How does God’s presence in your life change your expectations?

God’s design for us (Psalm 139)

What wonder is there in knowing that God has been there since your beginning? What assurances come from knowing that he already knows you so deeply?

Serving with God (1 Peter 4)

What is our purpose in the work God gives us? How does God’s provision matter in getting this done? How does this change your view of success?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International. Jon Sherman’s “7 Habits That Can Lead to Major Breakthroughs in Your Game” may be found at <https://practical-golf.com/golf-habits/>