



# Links Players

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## John, “Son Of Thunder,” Gains Spiritual Balance

*It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes. (Ecclesiastes 7:18, NIV)*

As I watched The British Open last month, I marveled at the effortless the top golfers exhibited in their golf swings. Whether they were bombing 300-yard drives or nailing pinpoint wedges from eighty-four yards, it looked so easy.

When I think of golfers whose free-flowing swings I would like to emulate, Ernie Els and Fred Couples come to mind. One of the constants in their graceful swings is their ability to maintain proper balance. We know that when we maintain good balance throughout our swing, the legs, hands, arms, and torso are working in harmony. Proper balance enables us to create maximum clubhead speed for more distance as well as more solid contact at impact leading to better accuracy.

Maintaining spiritual balance is critical in our faith life. Solomon, in today's verse, counsels against going to extremes. In another translation, The Voice instructs us to keep things in balance.

One of the common themes I discovered through our exploration of the lives of Jesus' apostles is the incredible transformation many of them experienced during their three years' walk with Jesus. Earlier, I wrote about James' passion and zeal which were, at first, negative traits God transformed into strengths by the time he was martyred. His younger brother, the Apostle John, underwent a similarly dramatic change.

John, in his early years, was intolerant, ambitious, narrow-minded, passionate, and brash. He wanted to single handedly bring down fire to destroy inhospitable Samaritans. He asked Jesus to stop a man who was not part of the inner circle from healing people in Jesus' name. He even went so far as to ask for a seat next to Jesus in the Kingdom.

John MacArthur, in his book, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, characterizes John as lacking “a sense of spiritual equilibrium in his younger years which is personified by his zeal, intolerance, and selfish ambition.”

Being one of Jesus' closest disciples, John was able to witness and experience first-hand Jesus' incredible love for him and others. From those experiences, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was able to achieve and maintain a delicate balance of his strong personality traits that were both strengths and weaknesses. As a result, he became one of most effective leaders in the early church.

At times, our best characteristics become pitfalls for us. Even our best traits can become obstacles in our attempts to engage others in our evangelistic efforts. I have an incredible desire to share the Gospel and its truth with folks who are in desperate need of God's saving grace.

At times, I become frustrated when others fail to grasp or accept as true certain theological or moral precepts I regard as obvious. John's transformation to a loving and godly man serves as an important model for me as I continually try to achieve spiritual equilibrium.

If we can maintain spiritual balance, those around us will see in us the peace, hope, joy, and love we experience in Christ. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we hope that they will realize what is missing in their lives and seek us out to discover how they, too, can experience peace, hope, joy, and love in a more fulfilling life. As we continue our efforts to change the conversation at our clubs and in our neighborhoods, let us be aware of the need to keep our spiritual balance.

**Prayer - Help me to regain my balance so that I might be a light unto others.**

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