

The Journey of Faith - Defining Moments & “Highs and Lows”

And after six days, Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John, his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. (Matthew 17:1-3, ESV)

In 1981, Bill Rogers was “lighting it up!” To rehearse: Four PGA wins, The Open Champion, another notch in his belt for winning the Australian Open, and not to be forgotten, the 1981 Player of the Year. Talk about being on the “mountain top!”

It wouldn't be for a few more years, but by Bill's admission, “Nothing was left in the tank.” The fire in his belly had dwindled to a “dimly burning wick.” The much-needed motivation to play at the highest level had evaporated. By 1988, Bill Rogers hung it up.

For Bill, it was time to go home, raise a family, and be the dad and husband Jesus called him to become. Looking back on his fifteen-year career, Bill has fond memories and gratitude for all the Lord had gifted him to accomplish.

In his more reflective moments, Bill would say about those four different U.S. Opens where he was a part of the conversation, “Boy, I wanted to win a U.S. Open.” Was there disappointment in the moment? Surely! Are there wonderful memories now? Absolutely!

Life is like that. There are highs and lows. There are “mountain top” experiences! There are valleys from which we think we might never re-emerge. There are seasons filled with joy, laughter, and meaning. Then, seasons are filled with sadness, crying, and meaninglessness.

No one goes through life without some scar tissue. Like Peter, James, and John, we are on the metaphorical mountaintop with the Lord one moment, only to find ourselves in the valley of the shadow of death the next.

It's often been remarked that we learn the most in the tougher seasons of life. It's not that we don't learn much during the good times, but in our more distressing moments, we usually learn to depend on the LORD in deeper ways.

Christians are forever grateful that God is not what Deists imagine him to be; their god created the world and abandoned it to run on its own steam. In other words, he doesn't get involved in your life. Christians are supremely grateful that the God revealed in Scripture is not like Aristotle's god; his god was merely a “mind thinking great thoughts.” Aristotle's deity could care less about us.

If we were to scan the catalog of all ancient religions (e.g., the pantheon of Greek and Roman deities) and the modern religious and philosophical ideas of gods (e.g., Pantheism, Deism, Mysticism, et al.), we would be shocked to

discover the indifference of these make-believe gods toward humanity.

Where are we to go to get an accurate picture of the true and living God who loves and cares for his own? He has made himself known perfectly in Jesus Christ, the Jesus portrayed in Scripture. There are, as most people recognize, many portraits of Jesus on offer in America. Make sure that you have in mind the one written about by those who knew him—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul, etc.

And what do you discover about Jesus when you listen to the apostles? Among other things, we see Jesus caring for the hurting. We see Jesus healing the sick. We see Jesus encouraging the downtrodden. We see Jesus triumphing over the forces of darkness. Finally, we see Jesus destroying our worst enemy—death.

And since, as Jesus said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father,” then know this—no matter what season you find yourself in, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ cares about you more than you can imagine.

Prayer: Father, open our hearts and minds to know your deep, deep love for us.

READING - Romans 8:26-39

OPENING QUESTIONS: Discuss some of the highs and lows of your game.

1. In Romans 8:26-27, how are we strengthened regarding our weakness in our efforts to pray?

2. In Romans 8:28-30, how does Paul encourage the believer and how does that serve us in our “low moments?”

3. In Romans 8:31-39, what promises are made and how should that strengthen us for the journey, especially when we find ourselves up against it?
