



Links Players

A Paineful Lesson

Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:34, NIV)

In the 1998 U.S. Open at the Olympic Club in San Francisco, Payne Stewart led by four heading into the final round.

After finding his first fairway on #12, his drive came to rest in a sand-filled divot. In addition to bogeying the hole, Stewart was assessed a slow play warning. Reeling from the bad break, Payne also went on to bogey the 13th and eventually lost to Lee Janzen by a stroke.

I can relate to Stewart's frustration when he got to his ball on the 12th. He did what he was supposed to do off the tee, yet he still found trouble. I've had the same sinking feeling this summer. I feel like I'm doing the right things (worship, prayer, scripture, church, fellowship, etc.), but I keep waking up to woe.

June 25 – Despite successfully prepping for a colonoscopy, my procedure was called off just before anesthesia when I was diagnosed with atrial fibrillation or AFib. The condition of my colon will have to wait, as I'm now on a journey to judge the health of my heart.

July 19 – My wife Susan, in her fifth year of contending with cancer, suffered the first of two blockages. The irony is that both caused travel troubles for what were supposed to be mend-in-the-mountains adventures.

August 6 – My mom suffered a severe stroke that has rendered her left side limp and relegated her to a hospital bed ever since. Having to spoon-feed her pureed peas was not on my bingo card.

September 10 – One of our 22-year-old daughters was admitted to the same hospital with elevated blood sugar. Diagnosed with new-onset Type 1 diabetes, she spent three days in the ICU while they brought her out of DKA (diabetic ketoacidosis).

Players don't like bad results (divot) from good execution (fairway hit), but that doesn't make them quit golf because it's part of the game. Similarly, Christians shouldn't stop following Christ because things don't go their way. In fact, Jesus promised they wouldn't (John 16:33).

Reports are that Christ found Payne early in 1998, and his caddie Mike Hicks said, "Christ will change your life. Payne was just at peace with the whole scenario at Olympic." Thankfully, I am at peace with our current lot in life, a result of being transformed by the renewing of my mind (Romans 12:2).

Like golfers who talk about ‘the process’ and not worrying about results, we can apply the same mindset to our faith walk. When the Lord declared, “for I know the plans I have for you” (Jeremiah 29:11), I wanted in on those plans. Now that pride has taken a ride, I’m content letting His plan unfold.

And how did I arrive at this peace? “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7). I’ve run out of editorial space to elaborate, so sit with that passage a while and see what it does to and for your heart.

Here's the good news. Stewart went on to hoist the winner’s trophy at the 1999 U.S. Open at Pinehurst, and in due time, I know I “will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away” (1 Peter 5:4).

Prayer: Lord, teach us to humble ourselves under your mighty hand and to cast our anxiety on you. Grant us peace as we learn that you will lift us in due time.

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Drew Hamilton

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