



Links Players

Performance

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.
(Romans 12:2-3, NASB)

Each person reading this is keenly aware of the way the world categorizes us based on what we do, what we've accomplished, and who we hang out with. We have to admit that's not unusual in the game we love. Here's a funny story I clipped from Sports Illustrated many years ago.

"A dignified English solicitor-widower with a considerable income had long dreamed of playing Sandringham, one of Great Britain's most exclusive golf courses, and one day, when he was travelling in the area, he made up his mind to chance it.

Entering the clubhouse, he asked at the desk if he might play the course. The club Secretary inquired, "Member?". "No, sir." "Guest of a member?" "No, Sir." "Sorry."

As he turned to leave, the lawyer spotted a slightly familiar figure seated at the lounge, reading the Financial Times. It was Lord Parham. He approached and, bowing low, said, "I beg your pardon, your Lordship, but my name is Higginbotham of the London solicitors Higginbotham, Willingby, and Barclay. I should like to crave your Lordship's indulgence. Might I play this beautiful course as your guest?"

His Lordship gave Higginbotham a long look, put down his paper, and asked, "Church?" "Church of England, sir, as was my late wife." "Education?" "Eton, sir, and Oxford." "Sport?" "Rugby, sir, a spot of tennis and number 4 on the crew that beat Cambridge." "Service?" "Brigadier, sir, Coldstream Guards, Victoria Cross, and Knight of the Garter." "Campaigns?" "Dunkirk, El Alamein and Normandy, sir." "Languages?" "Private tutor in French, fluent in German and a bit of Greek."

His Lordship considered briefly then nodded to the club secretary and said, "Nine holes."

Having lived in the UK and spent a good deal of time there, I find this story hilarious but also a little penetrating. It has been claimed that there are three identities in each of us: the person the world thinks we are, the person we think we are, and the person we really are.

Psychologically, that may hold some water, but spiritually, I'm not sure we should rely on that paradigm. For one thing, we all spend far too much time thinking of ourselves as though we are

seeking Lord Parham's approval. For another, the most important thing about us believers isn't something we can claim any credit for.

A story by Donald Grey Barnhouse reinforces a healthy self-perspective. "One Sunday, I was preaching in Philadelphia. My subject was a rehearsal of the verses in the Scripture in which God treats His work concerning our sin. As I preached this great message of deliverance, I noted a boy about twelve years old. He was sitting in the gallery and leaning forward, holding the rail, listening with great intentness. When I came to my summing up, I put all of the promises into a single sentence. "Our sins are forgiven, forgotten, cleansed, pardoned, atoned for, remitted, covered; they have been cast into the depths of the sea, blotted out as a thick cloud, removed as far as the east is from the west, remembered against us no more forever, cast behind God's back."

After the closing hymn, I was greeting people as they were leaving and the young boy came toward me. He caught my sleeve and said, "Good sermon, Doc!" I smiled, and he continued, "Gee, we're sure sittin' pretty, aren't we?" And then he went on his way."

Sounds to me like that kid had it figured out.

Prayer: Father, teach us to live our lives in accordance with your will and forgive and correct us when, like the Pharisees John warned us of, we "love the approval of men rather than the approval of God."

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