

## Conversations with PGA Tour Champions It Was The Best Of Times, It Was The Worst Of Times.

*...and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28, ESV)*

In 1996, Paul Stankowski won for the first time at the NIKE Louisiana Open. As the sixth alternate the following week, he won the Bell South Classic, defeating Brandel Chamblee in a playoff. The following year, he won the Hawaiian Open.

Like me, you might wonder what ever happened to Paul. When Paul Stankowski says, “2005 was the best and the worst year of my life,” he echoes Charles Dickens’ opening lines in A Tale of Two Cities.

In 2005, Paul found himself battling serious wrist injuries, so much so that these injuries forced him to leave the Tour. Unable to compete and provide for his family, he discovered that, now at home and unable to compete, he had the opportunity to “get to know my kids.”

What gives a man the wherewithal to ride out the storms of life? For this three-time All-American, it began in 1988 when he attended a meeting with the College Golf Fellowship.

Ironically, he didn’t want to listen to the speaker, Scott Simpson, because Scott had defeated his golfing hero, Tom Watson, to claim the U.S. Open. However, all of that would change when he heard him speak about a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”

Wondering how that was possible, Paul chased down Rik Massengale, a former PGA Tour player and then National Director for CGF, asking him what he should do. Among other recommendations, Rik advised him to read the Gospel of John.

If we fast-forward to another pivotal moment in Paul’s faith journey, we discover him reliving the morning he would eventually take home the title of Bell South Champion. It turned out it was Easter.

That morning, he went to church with his wife and friends and heard a hymn: “Because He Lives.” As he walked the fairways of Atlanta C.C. during that final round, he sang the words to the hymn. Although he was nervous, he went on to win.

If you, like Paul, are curious about a “personal relationship with Jesus,” you are not alone. You may wonder, “How can I have a personal relationship with a historical figure that lived over two thousand years ago?”

After all, we can know much about historical figures like George Washington or Douglas MacArthur, but we cannot know them personally. Why? Well, for one, they are dead.

There is our clue! Jesus died but rose again! As the hymn says, “He lives.” And because “he lives, I can face tomorrow.”

The magnificent thing about Jesus is that he radically differs from any other historical person. Though now bodily at the Father’s right hand in heaven, he will send his Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, to dwell in your heart—thus, we can know him personally.

There is a vast chasm between knowing about someone and knowing them personally. Knowing about Jesus is relatively easy if you live in the West. Going beyond intellectual awareness to personally encounter the One who died and rose again requires total surrender!

**Prayer: Jesus! Come and take up residence in my heart by your Spirit.**

### READING: Romans 8:1-11; (optional-Romans 8:1-39)

1. Nerves are invariably a significant part of the game. How do you manage your nerves, especially in a tournament?

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2. Romans 8:1-11 has much to say about “the Spirit.” Reflect on Paul’s intent and discuss.

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3. Application: Does the “Spirit of Christ” dwell in you?

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