



Links Players

Conversations with PGA Tour Champions

Fred Funk: Jesus Take The Wheel

...you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory...
(Colossians 3:1-17, ESV)

"I am more than what I shoot," reasoned Fred Funk. Boy, did he just hit the nail on the head! Our identity was never intended to fluctuate based on how we play. Sadly, it often does.

Observing the mood swings of friends and opponents (including my own) over the years shows that we often determine our identity or reputation based on our GHIN.

Everyone who loves this game knows the indescribable joy of bettering their previous low round, winning a closely contested match, or hitting the ball within two feet of a back-left pin placement when it mattered. We puff our chests out just a bit more than usual.

But we also know those miserable feelings when we struggle. Like a sock lost in the dryer, we scratch our heads and ask, "Where did my swing go?" That rascal has vanished, and we have no idea if it will ever return.

Like the prophet Hosea's wife, we understand that this game doesn't always love us back (read the book of Hosea to understand this allusion). You arrive at the first tee brimming with hope, only to witness the game show its affections to your opponent.

Fred waxes philosophical about the "yo-yo" relationship that most struggle to overcome in their love-hate relationship with golf, admitting that our love for the game, if taken too far, can destroy other valuable aspects of our lives.

Yep! We love this game! And why not? This game, like so many other gifts given to us through what theologians call "Common Grace" (those gifts, like sunshine and rain, given to all humanity irrespective of their relationship to Christ Jesus).

Like all other created goods—art, music, hiking, biking, rock climbing, reading, and pickleball—here lies the danger: we are invariably tempted to build our identities around the gift rather than the Giver of all Gifts. In times past, I admit, "Mea Culpa." Or, as we say in Mississippi, "I am a guilty dog!"

When we fail to build our sense of self around who we are (image bearers), our relationship to him (we are loved and forgiven), and our participation in his larger purposes (he calls us), we sadly default to constructing our identities based on the ups and downs of everything else, including what we shoot!

Many of you will relate to walking off the 18th green under par; it feels like you are walking on clouds. Conversely, you also know that awful feeling when you walk off that same 18th green as if you had never picked up a club before.

With Christ as the anchor of your life, both of these moments are seen in their relative importance. Without Christ, these moments can inflate one's sense of significance or drown one in unconsolable misery.

In short, live for Jesus and enjoy the game!

Prayer: Jesus! Teach us how to orient our lives around you as the supremely valuable thing in our lives!

READING: Colossians 3:1-17

1. Discuss those incredible highs and miserable lows from previous play with fellow Links Players.

2. After reading Colossians 3:1-17, discuss as many of Paul's admonitions and exhortations as time permits. How can these truths impact our sense of self?

3. Application: Describe the aspects of your life that you have struggled to free yourself from in the past or are currently tempted to anchor your identity around now.
