



# Links Players

## God, Golf, and The Good Life The Fear of God

*The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, ESV)*

It was great to see Johnny Miller again. Invited back to Oakmont to celebrate his historic final round 63 in the 1973 U.S. Open, Johnny re-entered the NBC booth after retiring in 2019.

For three decades, Johnny never hesitated to offer straightforward analyses about a player's flawed swing, a player's poor decision, and any player who choked.

If a player was leaking oil, Johnny did not hesitate to use words like "choking or gagging" when he saw the pressure getting to a player.

What causes anyone to choke? Why do we get nervous over a four-footer? What causes us to get out of our comfort zone?

Psychological explanations are above my pay grade, but it seems to me that it is plain ole fear. Fear of failure! Fear of embarrassment! Fear paralyzes!

I am eager to understand "fear(s);" the kind of fears that cripple the best golfers in the world and my own fears. I am also eager to get my mind around the concept of fear in Scripture.

"Fearing God" is everywhere in Scripture. In helpful ways, Biblical scholars explain words have a "semantic range"—how an author uses a word in a sentence dictates its meaning.

For example, the word "trunk" could refer to the back of my car or the long snout on an elephant. In the same way, "fear" in Scripture has different meanings, depending on its use in a sentence and its context.

Sometimes the word "fear" is synonymous with reverence. When Scripture uses "the fear of God," in this way, the idea is this: the only proper posture toward God is orienting our lives around a deep awareness of his unparalleled majesty— to revere him!

Yet, like Johnny, we cannot pull a punch because it might offend someone's sensibilities. There are times that "fear of God" means exactly what we think it means. The "fear of God," can mean being afraid of God.

For instance, anyone living in stubborn rebellion against God and his commandments, would be utterly foolish to think they can escape the justice of God.

If a Copperhead crawls into your golf cart, you would be a world-class knucklehead not to run. Counter-intuitively though, if you are breaking God's law, do not run from him. Run to him and ask for mercy and grace.

After Solomon covered a wide spectrum of subjects on living the good life, he finally arrives at the proverbial bottom line— "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

The fundamental question we should return to again and again is this: How do I wisely live my life to the glory of God? In his commentary on Ecclesiastes, Craig Bartholomew elaborates on Solomon's conclusion:

"Fear here refers to a holy reverence before God and aligns with Proverbs, which makes the fear of God the beginning of wisdom. Thus, as T. S. Eliot notes, the end of the journey is to find oneself at the beginning again, only this time one understands it more fully."

**Prayer: Lord! Teach me to fear you!**

**READING:** Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 8:13; Proverbs 9:10.

1. Recall and discuss a moment when fear gripped you as you stood over a shot? Analyze!

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2. In our desire to live a life that glorifies God, what part does fear play?

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3. Application: After some soul searching, evaluate your current level of "fearing God."

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