



Links Players

Winning Through Losing

For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength." But you were unwilling.... (Isaiah 30:15, ESV)

At The Open Championship in Portrush, Scottie Scheffler made comments that sparked a lot of conversation about the idea that winning, even a victory in major championships, is not ultimately satisfying for him, nor would it be for anyone.

Yet he also spoke about how much he wants to win. Perhaps his intense competitiveness is unique to him. When Scottie speaks about this tension, I can relate. Maybe you can, too.

At a young age, I was taught to play the game. My first tournament was when I was about age 10 or 11 years old, and bringing a trophy home was the goal. I liked winning. A lot!

My father taught my brother, sister, and me how to score. Dad taught us the fundamentals, but more than anything, he showed us how to shoot low numbers and defeat opponents. As the years went by, affirmation from winning tournaments began to shape my identity.

Whether this competitive streak was taught to me or whether it was in my nature, I had it, and I really wanted to win. Perhaps this is why I can relate to Scotty's comments.

Outside of God's leading, there is a dark side of competitiveness that can shape a false identity rooted in performance. For those who have this competitive streak, a lack of success can lead one down a path of discouragement, depression, and even self-loathing.

Recently, I won a prestigious tournament at my golf club. It came with my name engraved on a trophy that would be prominently displayed. My ego was stroked. Pride was quietly high. I casually mentioned to a few friends that I had played well.

Then the crash!

Four days later, an email explained that, due to a computer scoring error on a competitor's scorecard, my victory was downgraded to runner-up.

Shocked and deflated were words that described my feelings. My mind went to some dark places, and emails were drafted. How could this have happened?

But I'm older, maybe more mature, so I paused... to think more deeply about why I want-and perhaps need-to win at golf. This led me to confess my need for admiration from others.

This reflective moment reminded me that the ways of God are higher than my ways and that He uses the silly things of this world (like golf) to form me into His likeness and character (see Romans 8:28-29).

A little reflection, a little recalibration, and clarity came. He was humbling me to form me!

He was reminding me that my identity is rooted in a relationship with Him, not being a golf champion. Now, of course, if your identity is rooted in Christ, then, by all means, go for the “W.”

His affirmation is my real need, not others’ validation of a singular performance.

With this understanding, the “higher road” in this instance was to thank my Heavenly Father for loving me regardless of a golf victory.

The email I had drafted to the competition committee was scrapped in favor of one that thanked them for all their hard work on the tournament, and mistakes happen to all of us.

There were no hard feelings. Someone else had played better, and they were to be honored. I wrote to the event's champion and congratulated them on their victory.

All I felt was peace.

When interruptions, surprises, and even injustice come our way today, will we pause to ask, “Heavenly Father, what is this really about? Do you have something to teach me here?”

Prayer: My hope is that you’ll pause to ask this question in those moments.

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Pete Hiskey

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