Civility and Humility

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. (Proverbs 16:18)

“Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man.” C. S. Lewis

The etiquette of golf is a beautiful thing to observe. Waiting for your playing partners to take their turn, complimenting them on good shots, commiserating on the not-so-good ones, self-policing when it comes to rules, and shaking hands after the final hole are all excellent examples.

The etiquette remains, even in the heat of battle. Compare that with the chest-pounding, foul gestures, arguments, and what-can-I-get-away-with manipulations in so many other sports.

There are many stories in the Bible that deal with pride. Consider Adam and Eve in Genesis 3; The Tower of Babel in Genesis 11; Pharaoh in Exodus 7-12; Haman in Esther 3-7; and the prideful Pharisee in Luke 18, to name but a few.

Why is that? The answer is straightforward: Humanity’s undoing centers on pride, and God wants to encourage us to learn from these stories.

Does this mean that golfers are less prideful and more faith-based than those who play other sports or those who don’t even play sports? With tongue firmly stuck in cheek, golfers will answer that affirmatively.

Does this mean that there are no players in other sports who are humble and devoted to our Lord? No, it does not. There are notable examples in every sport of individuals who exemplify the kind of behavior that makes Jesus smile.

The true value of this reflective exercise comes down to one question: Where am I on the continuum of pride? On one end, does it rule my life? Do I need to win, win, win, and constantly one-up others?

On the other end of the spectrum is my standard one of doing my best (Colossians 3:23), but not at the expense of others.

Sir Isaac Newton said, “If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.” Rather than using those who came before, he humbly acknowledged them.

Are we genuinely helping others in a healthy way? Do we recognize Jesus in people around us, both familiar faces and strangers? Do we reflect on ‘What would Jesus do?’ [WWJD], or do we just pursue what seems good for us?

It’s interesting how long pros take before they hit any shot. They talk with their caddies and consider all the elements. I’m more of a walk-up-and-hit golfer, not quite, but close. The game of golf encourages thinking, although overthinking anything can be toxic.

What if we did the same with more of our behaviors? What if we lean more on our 24/7 Caddie who loves us and wants the best for us? What if we really listened to what He is guiding us to do?

I know that I could vastly improve in both areas: on-course analysis and WWJD. How about you?

Prayer: Lord, You have blessed us in so many ways. But with that gift comes the responsibility to be more humble and more loving to others.

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Tom Berliner
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