

MAGAZINE INSIGHTS 4: GOD OF OUR TRAGEDIES

“My power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV)

FOR ALL HIS VICTORIES ON THE PGA TOUR, Davis Love III has not lived a “charmed life.” Last week, we recognized the tragic loss of Love’s father in an airplane accident when Love was just a young man. Additionally, Love has lost a brother-in-law to suicide, a difficulty made all the greater in that it was Love himself who discovered the body. This year, Love has moved into that stage of life where his caring eyes are often turned toward his ailing mother.

Sure, in two weekends Love will be able to move into that great distraction known as the Ryder Cup matches. But like all of life’s entertaining hours, they are only that—a distraction. Their endurance is temporary and they offer no true solace.

Maybe one of the toughest things for followers of Christ to contend with in their daily walk of faith is hardship. And when some Christian teachers emphasize the material and physical blessings that are supposed to rain down on the faithful, it becomes even more difficult to manage our expectations and accept bad reports and bad results.

Let’s begin with those expectations. While Scripture does teach that earthly rewards and blessings come from the Lord, it never suggests that these things arrive in a *quid pro quo* fashion, where those rewards arise in proportion to our goodness. In fact, Scripture often teaches the opposite. Many magazines ago, Casey Martin told our readers that what helped him come to grips with his debilitating circulatory disease is an understanding of John 9:3, where Jesus answered questions about a man born blind. It was assumed that this “curse” was the result of sin. But Jesus refuted that belief, saying, “This happened so that the work of God may be displayed in his life” (John 9:3). It is critical to recognize, then, that our hardship may be the very method God uses to shout his name on the earth. Surely this is the case when a miracle follows, as when Jesus healed the blind man.

But when trouble produces no such beautiful ending, it is still imperative that we see the work of God in us and around us. Paul was led by the relentless thorn in his flesh to the grace of God. And the three men destined for the furnace told the king, “Even if God does not rescue us...we will not serve your gods or worship the image you have set up” (Daniel 3:18). But above even these examples, we stand amazed again at the work of our Savior, who endured the cross in all its severity, trusting that somehow the Father’s love would emerge even in this. Oh, did it!

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International. A six-minute introductory video is available for this study at <https://youtu.be/hqANVr1evS8>

Opening questions What tragedy-to-triumph story has served as an inspiration to you? Were the lessons of this story more in the triumph or the tragedy?

READING Psalm 42:3-5; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 1 Peter 2:18-25

Pleasure and pain (Psalm 42)

What changes occurred in the psalmist’s life? How did this feed his expressions of faith in God?

Purpose in pain (2 Corinthians 12)

What did Paul give as the reason for his thorn? What else did he gain from this pain? How willing are you to endure pain for good purpose, and how able are you to trust God to accomplish this purpose?

Ready for anything (1 Peter 2)

How did Jesus endure hardship? What did his hardship produce for us? How might we follow his perspective and action?
