

GOLF & LIFE FUNDAMENTALS 6: POSITIVITY

God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. (Psalm 45:7, NIV)

YOU CAN EXPECT TO HEAR ANY NUMBER OF CHOICE WORDS when a playing companion sends a tee shot into the water or blades a wedge across the green. I won't repeat those words here. What I will affirm is that this catalog does not include "happy," "joyful," or "fun." In fact, if our golf buddy left a shot in the bunker then announced, "I am so glad I did that," we would question his sanity.

Golfers on the whole can be a pretty grumpy bunch. Aren't we the ones who, even after a great round, say, "Yeah, but I left at least three shots out there"? If misery loves company, every group should be a fivesome!

Many professional golfers employ sport psychologists now for the very purpose of negating their negativity. They know it can't be helping them to walk the course in doubt or frustration. So here's news: It can't be helping your game either.

I have been told frequently by non-golfers that they tried the game but couldn't stomach it. "Too frustrating," was their assessment. Just as often I have heard committed golfers who are experiencing a bad day on the course say, "At least we're out here playing golf and not in the office working." In other words, both parties have given up.

I get it. Most people are smart enough to know that if your aggravated responses on the course are a rehearsal for frustration in life, you aren't doing yourself any good. So they stop—either altogether or for the day.

Is that good enough? Is giving in the same as walking in victory? Hardly.

More than that, James' exhortation to "count it all joy" when we face trials (James 1:2) brings its own dose of disturbance: How is that even possible?

Today's passage gives us a glimpse of the answer, though, coupling true joy with the victory we can have. The writer of Hebrews explains that the lines of Psalm 45 describe Jesus, our Savior. *He* is the one anointed with joy. That's the secret. True joy—in every context—is found in Christ. We don't muster it up or find a better psychology; we find Jesus. In him we have hope in the darkness, and victorious joy conquers our frustrations.

Opening questions Would you describe your on-course attitude as "positive"? What is your greatest challenge to keeping a positive attitude while playing golf? How about in other activities and times of your life?

READING Psalm 45:6-7 & John 15:9-12; 1 Peter 4:1-2; James 1:2-4

Love and joy (Psalm 45 & John 15)
In Psalm 45 and John 15, how are Christ, righteousness, love, and joy all woven together?

The will of God in your life (1 Peter 4)
How does recognizing the will of God in our lives contribute to our willingness to suffer and to endure suffering with the joy of Christ?

The purpose of trials (James 1)
According to James, what is the purpose of trials? How can an attitude infused with Christ's joy affect the way you deal with trials, as well as the way you interact with others? How close are you to adopting this attitude?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available at <https://youtu.be/5mMvEubesJU>.