

GOLF & LIFE FUNDAMENTALS 7: FINISHING

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7, NIV)

A COUPLE WEEKS AGO I WAS A WILLING GOLF FAN, watching some excellent players in a major junior tournament in our area. Compared to the pros we see on TV, this might be the “Single A ball” of the golf world, but it’s the same game and there were some really great shots hit throughout the four rounds of the tournament. I am glad I was there to see them.

To be more detailed, however, I followed the lead group all week, because this foursome included the boy I had come to watch most closely, as he plays on the high school team I coach. This means I spent a lot of time walking with his parents. Moms and dads, you know how this goes—you may be more nervous than your child who is competing! In this case, those nerves were ramped up, for this young man started the last round with a six-shot lead. Can I tell you what prayer was on his parents’ minds hole after hole that day? “Lord, just let him finish well.”

For these parents that prayerful request meant two things. The first (and the lesser) was that their son might play well enough to hold the lead and win this tournament, because it meant more to him than any other. But second (and greater) was that, no matter the outcome, his attitude would reflect the gratitude and respect they had taught him through the years. As it turned out, he acquitted himself in both ways.

But what of us, and what of our broad lives beyond the little golf games we play?

Focusing on finishing may seem the consideration of an older crowd. You might say, “I still have many things to accomplish.” In faith, however, there is no such thing as starting too early. If we are to lay up treasures in heaven and invest the talents the King has given us on behalf of his kingdom, then we would be wise to consider the foundational principle of investing: start as early as you can.

If you have found a love for Christ, do all you can today to cultivate that relationship. This means prayer and reading of the Scriptures. It means walking with Jesus and working for him. You do not know how you will die. Your prayer to live a long, fruitful life may not be answered. But your second prayer—the one in which you ask the Lord to make you one who lives and dies with gratitude and respect for him—this is a prayer he would love to redeem. And in his doing so, you will finish well.

Opening questions What’s the best finish to a golf round you can ever remember having? • What concerns you most as you consider the remaining span of your life?

READING 2 Timothy 4:4-8; 1 Timothy 4:11-16; Matthew 25:14-30

‘The good fight’ (2 Timothy 4)

How would you describe the “good fight” to which Paul refers? From the text, where does this spiritual investment in Christ lead in the end?

Ageless (1 Timothy 4)

Paul’s words to Timothy were written to a younger man, meaning that faith crosses the spectrum of ages. What attitudes and practices did Paul charge Timothy to follow? In what ways do these apply also to us?

Worthy investments (Matthew 25)

Who in this parable hears the words, “Well done”? What made their work worthy of reward?
