

FROM THE BEGINNING 3: A DRY SEASON

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? (Psalm 13:1, NIV)

TWO MONTHS AGO, I WAS *THIS CLOSE* TO QUITTING. I know, you’ve heard this before. Every golfer has. I even alluded to it in last Friday’s devotion and study. In that case I was laughing.

But what happened to me on that afternoon of despair was neither funny nor fun. Rather, it was a culmination of much of what I had gone through in the past year. My cancer treatments and surgeries really should not have been affecting my golf game, not this far down the line. Yet my game had not returned—still hasn’t—to what it was before. Believe me, I’m not pining for some “former glory.” My game may have been better than many but it was only ever average among good players, especially considering I grew up in the short-hitting era and I wasn’t among the long knockers even then.

What golf was doing to me, like David’s great enemies, was taunting and teasing me. I’d play several good holes, reminiscent of the success I had known. And then I couldn’t get a ball airborne or I had no idea how to make it go straight or I couldn’t control my distance with a wedge. Just like that, everything good would disappear.

When we are “mature in the faith,” having walked with Jesus for some time, we do not expect to be blindsided by depression or dryness. For years we’ve stood up in mind and in spirit to the derision of unbelievers; now their doubts disturb us and their worldly affections call our own name. *Where has God gone?* we desperately want to know. *Surely he has not abandoned me!*

On that awful day, one precious thing remained: the presence of a dear friend. He put up with my head-hanging and my muttered, hopeless words. And he reminded me of one great truth. “You’ll always have your putting,” he said to me.

He was right. My putting, that beautiful inheritance I gained from my father, was still with me. For the moment it was all I had to cling to. Cling I did.

Forgive the personal metaphor, but Jesus is my putting. In our darkest hours, when by season or by cynicism we are brought low in our spirit—even suggesting with David that God has hidden his face from us—he is there. He does not leave us or forsake us. He has been our Redeemer. He will be our Restorer. Cling to him.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/jg71kT7BSHE>

Opening questions Have you ever reached a point of desperation with your golf game? What, if anything, brought you back? • What circumstances in life lead you toward discouragement or irresolute living?

READING Psalm 13:1-6; Ecclesiastes 3:1-14

To the pit and back again (Psalm 13)

Which words of David’s affliction resonate with you? Where did he focus his hope in spite of his despair?

Seasons and sensibility (Ecclesiastes 3)

Among the seasons named by the writer of Ecclesiastes, which come closest to where you’re living right now?

What words in verses 9-14 present us with an anchored perspective? Where does the hope we have in Christ help us “find satisfaction” in the work of this life?
