



Links Players

EIGHT GREAT TRAITS 5: PERSEVERANCE

“You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.” (Revelation 2:3, NIV)

BOGEY, BOGEY, BOGEY. When these less-than-ideal holes just keep mounting, it doesn't take long for frustration to set in. Add a double or a triple in the mix and suddenly we're headed toward one of two common responses. The first of these responses we discussed last week: a loss of self-control. The second possible response is to quit. If you feel you owe this round to your friends, you may not walk off the course, but you also stop trying, wanting all the while to throw your clubs in your car and get as far away from the golf course as you can.

If you're a casual player, or even a more serious amateur, it's probably no great concern that persevering is sometimes the exact opposite of what you want to do on the golf course. There's even more truth to this if you are a follower of Christ who has reduced golf to one of the lesser priorities in your life. Who needs the frustration? There are so many other good things we can be doing.

But if you're quick to quit in one arena of your life, this may indicate a failing in other endeavors, too. And that *is* a concern. Because life doesn't give us enough room to wiggle out of every uncomfortable pursuit. You will either have to accept and push through hard tasks or you will choose to live a life where you never take up a challenge of any kind—that is, quitting before you start.

In Revelation, we find seven letters from Christ to local churches. In every letter, we find a commendation or a call to perseverance, faithfulness, or overcoming. More than this, those who overcome are promised rewards in Christ's eternal kingdom.

When he was among his disciples, Jesus told them, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). This may be a familiar passage to you. Many believers have taken courage from it during the tough times of their lives. A mistake some make, however, is to say to themselves, “If Jesus did it, I can do it,” or “If Jesus did it, I must do it.” What they are asking themselves is, “Can my toughness match Jesus's?” Rather, the “make every effort” approach in this case is to *take heart*. Jesus has done the overcoming, so we take heart in his strength. We don't muster up our own great might, but instead go back to our faith, securing and advancing the belief that God will supply us every great trait we need—right to the end.

Opening questions When a round is going badly, are you more likely to get angry or give up? What mechanisms do you find yourself employing in order to keep interested when the round is already a loss?

READING Job 1:13-22; Mark 14:32-42; James 1:2-4

Job's foundational perspective (Job 1)
Job 1 shows us only the beginning of Job's troubles. What were they, and how did he respond? Look too at Job 2:9-10. How do you think Job came by the perspective that would carry him through great trial?

Jesus in suffering and prayer (Mark 14)
What suffering is Jesus aware he is about to face? How honest is he with his feelings in prayer? How does he walk out of Gethsemane in strength?

Joy in the midst of it all (James 1)
Does this passage seem like an impossibility or an encouragement to you? How might you arrive at a place of facing your trials with this attitude?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2018 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study with Jeff Hopper and Tracy Hanson is available at <https://youtu.be/Bp54wzgraTI>