



A COMPANION
STUDY GUIDE
FOR PERSONAL EXPLORATION
AND SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

The page number references in this study guide were updated in 2011 to correspond with the pages in the newer Zondervan edition of *Golf's Sacred Journey* (distinguished by the golf hole cut into the book).

Study Guide - Chapter 1: A Fork in the Road
Lesson 1 - Identity and performance

How can a game have such an effect on a man's soul? (p. 19)

Key Questions

Can you relate to the quote above? Explain (you may need to substitute *work, project, relationship*, etc. in the place of *game*).

In the successes and failures of life, we find just how attached our identity is to the world's scoreboard. What does the world's scoreboard scream at you at the end of each day?

How does that affect your heart, relationships, performance, family, etc.?

Going Deep

Read Luke 12:13-21 and 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

How do these passages reshape the scoreboard of life, moving it from the world's scoring system to God's?

Conclusion

What can we conclude about the difference between the siren calls of the world and the teaching of the Bible?

Study Guide - Chapter 1: A Fork in the Road
Lesson 2 - The origin of failure

I began to press as I headed into the final nine. I knew better, but the adrenaline seduced my logic. Unbeknownst to me, I had just engaged the melt-down sequence. On the 10th I pulled my shot slightly into the trees on the left. I pulled it because I feared the water hazard to the right. (p. 19)

Key Questions

So often in life our failures and successes are dictated by things over which we have full control, such as thoughts, attitudes, decisions, and responses. Discuss the pre-failure sequence above and describe a recent situation in your life where a similar sequence occurred. Be specific.

Now rewrite either the scenario from page 17 with the competitor in control, or your own recent episode with you in control.

A desired outcome is never guaranteed, even when we think well. That is because we live in a fallen world and we are not conditioned robots or computers. However, we increase our probabilities for a desired outcome—and we are able to live with whatever result—when we learn to control that over which we have full control.

Going Deep

Read Luke 6:45, Romans 12:2 and Philippians 4:8.

How do these passages suggest the importance of attention to our thoughts before God?

Study Guide - Chapter 2: The Links of Utopia
Lesson 3 - Johnny

Every so often in life an extraordinary relationship unfolds in a most unexpected place. I was in the midst of just such a time. (p. 35)

Key Questions

Briefly record a story (if you have one) about an extraordinary and positive relationship that unfolded in your life, either involving golf or away from the game.

What traits in the character of this person stood out most for you?

Why, in spite of good relationships such as this, do you think we tend toward "going it alone"?

Going Deep

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-11 and Luke 10:1.

How do these passages remind us of the importance of meaningful partnerships?

Questions for personal contemplation

- What has most allowed you to build friendships in your life?
- What has most hindered you from doing so?
- What changes would you have to make in order to tip the balance in the favor of healthy, powerful friendships?

Study Guide - Chapter 3: Conviction
Lesson 4 - Making a godly stand

“The grip is fine. It is your answer that is unacceptable.” (p. 39)

“Every champion has convictions,” Johnny said, “But perennial champions have convictions based on foundations. These foundations become his first line of defense when facing adversity.” (p. 43)

Key Questions

Why do you play golf?

Do you believe that your time on the course could be used to change another person's life? How?

What does Christian conviction on the course look like?

What is wrong with a statement like, “Church is for God; the golf course is a time to have fun with the boys”?

Going Deep

Read Isaiah 7:9b and Revelation 3:15-16.

How do these passages rewrite our thinking about the way we live out our faith in a variety of arenas?

Study Guide - Chapter 4: Shadow Casting
Lesson 5 - Shadow casting

“You dropped your guard,” Johnny said, “You have to be ready. Otherwise, surprise gives way to emotion, and in this game emotion loses.” (p. 58)

Key Questions

As we grow in fellowship with Christ and His people, some guards—those representing our prideful defenses—are meant to be dropped. But the guard of diligent godliness is intended to protect us from the enemy’s lies and temptations. Reflect on a time when, by God’s grace, you were able to keep this godly guard up under trying circumstances or strong temptation.

How do incidents like these serve to increase our faith in God?

What are three typical challenges you face most days that test the mettle of your faith? How can you prepare to keep your guard up against these challenges?

Going Deep

Read Ephesians 6:10-20.

What are some of the defenses God has equipped you with in order to stand against the schemes of the devil? How can you “put these on” each day?

Study Guide - Chapter 5: Signing a Masterpiece
Lesson 6 - Perspective

Something was loosed. Something that had long since been imprisoned was freed. The fun of painting overcame the dread of failing. (p. 68)

“Every time you hit a shot, you are signing a painting. When we fail to engage art, we sign our name to a stick figure outcome. However, when you engage art, you sign your name to a masterpiece. The great ones all understand.” (p.69)

Key Questions

What objects in your life tend to obscure your view toward true greatness?

Can you recall a time when the stress of the world was closing in, but God showed up and gave you a new perspective?

Going Deep

Read Colossians 3:1-2.

How does a passage like this reset our mind on things that matter? Consider memorizing this passage to always have the right perspective at the ready.

Read Colossians 3:23-24

How does this passage suggest that we “sign God’s name” to the things that He gives us to do in our lives?

Study Guide - Chapter 6: Tradition vs. Truth
Lesson 7 - The road to greatness

He turned to me, "Is it tradition you seek, or truth?" he asked. "Is it excellence, or acceptance?" he challenged. "These are the questions of greatness. These are the questions that must be answered if a man is going to lead a revolution." (p.87)

Key Questions

What is it that holds men back from seeking truth over tradition? What would it take to break through this blockage?

Do you know any revolutionaries in your life? Are you one? What would you have to overcome to become one?

The enemy, Satan, will often seek to halt our progress with these words: "Just fit in. Don't rock the boat." Present an example of how this might be very bad advice.

Going Deep

Read Matthew 23:16-26.

Jesus delivers powerful words to the Pharisees about the hollow nature of their traditions, countering them with His righteous truth. If Jesus were to look at your life today, what "traditions" that you maintain might He challenge with greater truth? How shall you turn these over to Him?

Study Guide - Chapter 7: The Pilot's Checklist
Lesson 8 - Practicing for an emergency

"Confidence is supreme in this game. Confidence comes from being prepared for an emergency." (p. 94)

Key Questions

If confidence comes from preparation, what is the key to crisis management in your own life? What kinds of spiritual preparation do you need to engage in?

Who is someone you know who is prepared in this way? What knowledge and traits do they possess that you do not? What would it take for you to attain what they possess?

Going Deep

Jesus faced the greatest difficult circumstance of all time, when He bore the sins of all others on the cross that brought His undeserved death. What prepared Jesus for this emergency? (Investigate Matthew 14:22-23 and 26:36-46 to fortify your answer.)

Read John 16:33 and 1 John 4:4.

According to these verses, where do we find our strength when faced with faith-wrenching trouble?

Read 1 Peter 1:3-9.

How did Peter encourage the persecuted followers of Christ to cling to the truth of John's passages above?

Study Guide - Chapter 8: Hickory Sticks
Lesson 9 - Breaking out of the comfort zone

“You see, I believe greatness is revealed in the unorthodoxy of life. It is in thinking out of the box labeled ‘comfort zone’ that we discover truth. Our box is nothing but a self-imposed prison, a trap set for unsuspecting souls. My passion in life is to set people free from their boxes.” (p. 108)

Key Questions

What are some comfort zones that our upbringing or our culture can produce in us that keep us from moving forward?

Describe a time when you were at first held back by a “comfort zone,” either on the golf course or in life. Were you able to break out of it? How?

Going Deep

Read Jeremiah 1:4-10.

What was Jeremiah’s “comfort zone”? How did God call him out of that place of personal security into a life of amazing purpose?

Answering Johnny

What box would you like to be set free from today?

Study Guide - Chapter 9: Buried Lies
Lesson 10 - Pushing out into the deep

“What will your epitaph say?” (p. 125)

The instrument panel of my life was going hay-wire. What I thought to be true north was about to let me down. (p. 127)

“You are an empty man on a journey to success, a destination that has never filled the deep longings of any man’s life.” (p. 128)

Key Questions

Describe the most honoring funeral you have ever been to. What made this person so memorable and praiseworthy to those in attendance?

If, as Johnny says, success cannot satisfy the deep longings of your life, what can? How would you have to restructure your life to include this pursuit?

Going Deep

Read Luke 5:4-11.

What greater purpose than fishing did Jesus give to the disciples? How did they respond?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

What kind of life does this passage inspire us to build? On what basis can we begin to build such a life?

Study Guide - Chapter 10: A New Voice
Lesson 11 - Becoming a Johnny

*People all have stories,
they just don't have many listeners. (p. 142)*

Key Questions

Can you compete and have compassion at the same time?
What might this look like?

What would have to change in your life for you to have margin for someone like Joe?

How does this chapter challenge the assumption that "nice guys finish last"? Is the chapter successful in this challenge?

Going Deep

Read Matthew 5:14-16 and Romans 12:14-21.

How do these passages train us to bring the spirit of Christ in us to people who need Him?

Read the familiar story in Luke 10:25-37.

What strikes you afresh about this parable in light of today's study and discussion?

Study Guide - Chapter 11: Destiny Knocks
Lesson 12 - Imperishable trophy

It all came together in this scene. I had a putt to win a perishable trophy, but I was seeing an imperishable one. (p. 156)

Key Questions

Have you ever heard the knock on the door of destiny in your heart? Did it move you to make changes in the way you were living?

List some imperishable trophies.

Nearly every reader wants to know whether the young pro makes the putt to win. What do you think? Does it really matter?



Going Deep

Read Matthew 6:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

What is the common emphasis of these passages? How might you attain the kinds of prizes of which they speak? Who do you think would be the first to notice such a change of priorities in your life?

Questions for personal contemplation

- In reading this book, how would you say your thinking changed with regards to measuring success?
- What perishable trophies are you ready to stop pursuing?
- What imperishable trophies are you ready to start pursuing?



Study Guide - Chapter 1 (revisited): A Fork in the Road
Lesson 13 - Making a choice

Up ahead was a fork in the road. I had to make a choice. I was in no mood to have to make a choice. (p. 23)

Key Questions

Describe the last time you had a fork-in-the-road experience. Looking back now, how did the choice you made affect where you are now in your life?

Have you ever had this kind of choice made easier by a "voice from behind you" telling you which way to turn? Whose voice might that have been? How could you tell?

Author David Cook is convinced that God's voice was a major influence on his writing of *Golf's Sacred Journey*. Now that you have completed the book, would you say there is evidence of this? What is that evidence?

Going Deep

Read Isaiah 30:20-22.

How did the direction of God come to His people? What was the result of His leading in their lives?
