

The Lily Pad



“I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.” Solomon 2:1



PLAY GOLF TO THE GLORY OF GOD

As our weather finally warms up – Spring was long in coming for us this year in Southeast Wisconsin. At the Columbian Fish Fry, I was invited to join the Hon-E-

Bees Summer Golf League (thank you Ms. Marolyn Kell and my appreciation to Ms. Karen and you for your grace and patience; it was great fun). I’m just returning from an incredible Mediterranean Pauline Pilgrimage, but I’ve been so looking forward to playing golf once again!



As an authentic Georgia Peach, it only takes a few bars of “Augusta” and Tiger Wood’s spectacular win at The Masters, to confirm that spring is here! There is a promise of new life in the sound of the Masters theme song and lyrics:

Oh, Augusta
Your dogwoods and pines
They play on my mind like a song
Oh, Augusta
It's you that I love
It's you that I miss when I'm gone
"Augusta" by Dave Loggins

The game of golf is tied to the beauty of God’s created world like few other competitive pastimes. This is at the heart of the sport’s attraction. With no standardized playing area, the designers and groundskeepers are commissioned to nest the course in the splendor of nature’s terrain. “The heavens keep declaring the glory of God,” says Psalm 19:1, and the best of links (golf courses) do the same, if you have eyes to see it.

Enjoying creation is one thing, and giving hours on end to playing a game can be quite another. We praise and give honor to the glory of God, but what about playing golf?

Those of us who might defend our watching of the Golf Channel and our desire once again to be like Tiger, should be swift to acknowledge that the game is not without its spiritual hazards. If we are to play golf to the glory of God, we should beware of the aspects of the game that appeal so strongly to our indulging temptations.

Time Consumption. It’s no coincidence that “golf widows and “widowers” are a commonly understood term. A single round of golf can quickly consume half a day or more. And it takes an extraordinary amount of time and expense

not only to play the game, but to hone the skills and keep them sharp: clubs, balls, shoes, bag, apparel, greens fees, club dues, cart fees, and more

It's worth approaching golf with Christian conviction. We put our hope in God, "*who richly provides us with everything to enjoy*" (1 Timothy 6:17), and tells us the enjoyment is richest not when it's stockpiled, but used to bless others — "*remind the wealthy to be rich in good works of extravagant generosity, willing to share with others. This will provide a beautiful foundation for their lives and secure for them a great future, as they lay their hands upon the meaning of true life.*" (1 Timothy 6:18–19).

Those who know golf best can testify to how desirable it can be. You rarely ever hit what feels like the perfect shot, but when you do, that's what you remember most and keeps you itching for another round. Unlike team sports that require other people to play, golf is easily personal; you can scratch the itch anytime without need of a companion. But the Christian who enjoys golf will say with the apostle Paul, "*I'm free to do as I choose, but I choose to never be enslaved to anything.*" (1 Corinthians 6:12).

Conscious, then, of these hazards and more, how might we keep it in the fairway and enjoy golf in a distinctly Christian fashion?

Enjoy God in His Creation -

Such is the allure of the game in general. Golf provides an appropriate opportunity to experience the beauty of God's creation. Golf can be an awe-inspiring and worship promoting experience (**though it's no replacement for community worship**). Pray before hitting the links, sanctifying the experience to Christ, and make a conscious effort to take in the enormity and beauty of your surroundings and not get lost in the *scorecard*. Thank God for his beauty on display throughout the course.

Rest, Recreate, and Exercise -

Golf makes for a good walk. Too often motorized carts keep us from enduring the exhilarating exercise of walking nine or eighteen holes with a bag of fourteen clubs. As for rest and recreation, *God blessed the seventh day and made it holy* (Genesis 2:3). *God smiles upon our acknowledgement that we are not God and need not sustain the universe with our unrelenting labors. He means for us to work earnestly, as to him* (Ephesians 6:7), and has purpose in our faith-filled leisure as well.

Make It a Channel for Relationships -

One way to redeem the time-consuming aspect of golf is rich meaningful conversation. Whether it's speaking good news to a fellow saint or sharing what truly matters with an unbeliever, few hobbies unfold at such a rapid pace yet allows intimate interaction to occur during the game. This is one of the key ways that golf can be made useful for the good of our neighbor. Be intentional about who you play with and what you say.

Learn to Deal with Failure -

One day, there will be no more failure, only victory. But until then, we hobble from one mistake to another, from bogey to double bogey and golf, like baseball, is a conservatory for learning to deal with failure. Even the pros rarely hit a shot exactly as they hoped. Golf forces us amateurs to reckon with our failures and deal with disappointment.

Golf, I don't think there's a more difficult or more humbling sport! Rather, make that humiliating because if you play at all, you know all about those shots that result in laughter from your partners and humiliation for you. No one escapes them not even Tiger Woods, and definitely not me.

Finally, Christians should be least afraid of failing. We have a champion who has succeeded for us definitively in all ways. Our ongoing sins and miscues are all forgiven by our union with a victor so great that he frees us to find recreation and humility where others drown in idolatry and arrogance. The grace of God is deep enough and the work of Christ is all-encompassing, **that we might even play golf to the glory of God.**



We are ambassadors of the Anointed One who carry the message of Christ to the world, as though God were tenderly pleading with them directly through our lips. So, we tenderly plead with you on Christ's behalf; "Turn back to God and be reconciled to him." 2 Corinthians 5:20 (TPT)

FORE!

Pastor Clarissa