

“Jesus Christ Changed My Life”

I love playing golf. I enjoy the physical and mental challenges of the game. It is always good to be outdoors in the fresh air. Most golf courses are beautiful. Watching the wildlife is always fun. I have seen hawks, cranes, fowl, deer, fox, groundhogs, turkeys and alligators. It is a great fun to play with family and friends.

I watch golf tournaments on TV, usually the men’s tournaments, both the regular PGA Tour and the PGA Champions tour (players over age 50). There are quite a number of Christian players who openly share their faith. There may be women players too, but I have not watched as many of their tournaments.

If a golfer makes the cut on Friday after two days of play, they are able play all four days, ending of course on Sunday. Since the Christians players are not able to worship that day, there is a network of believers that meets early on Sunday morning for prayer and devotions.

There are other professional sports with Christian players too, most noticeably football and baseball. I do not know the percentage of Christians in each sport, but I have noticed a difference in how the sports media covers golf versus the other sports. In other sports, when players mention their faith in an interview (usually right after a victory), the reporters quickly move onto the next question. The golf reporters seem more comfortable with the players mentioning their faith, and the golf commentators do not shy away from mentioning players’ faith.

Just the opposite happened with an NBC interview of the Houston Texans rookie quarterback, C.J. Stroud. He was asked right after his team defeated the Indianapolis Colts in a playoff game on January 13, “What does this moment mean?” Stroud replied, “I mean, first and foremost, I just want to give all glory to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The reporter moved immediately to the next question. Then when NBC posted the interview on social media it edited out Stroud’s first response giving glory to God.

Contrast that with golf reporters’ and commentators’ openness to golfers sharing their faith. I will mention three players in particular. Bernhard Langer, from Germany, has openly shared his faith for decades on the regular tour and now the Champions tour. He did well on the PGA Tour, winning the Masters twice. When they first started ranking golfers worldwide, he was the number one player in the world.

Langer’s record on the Champions Tour is amazing. He has the record for the most wins on that tour – 46. His 45th and 46th victories occurred after he turned 65. When he was interviewed in February last year after his 45th victory, tying him with Hale Irwin for the most victories, he was asked what was going through his mind that day knowing he could tie Irwin. Langer said he did not want to be distracted by negative thoughts or doubts. He said, “I wrote down this Bible verse this morning and put it in my pocket, and kept looking at it through the round.” He pulled the paper from his pocket and read, “Proverbs 3:5-6: Trust in the LORD with all you heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” Langer always acknowledges his Lord.

Scottie Scheffler, age 27 and currently the number one ranked player in the world, always acknowledges God and Jesus when interviewed. He won the Masters in 2022, and gave some amazing interviews during that tournament, especially on Sunday when he won, thanking God for the platform he has been given to bear witness to Christ. He talks about how much Jesus has changed him in the past ten years. You can watch one of those interviews: "Scottie Scheffler talks about his Faith" on YouTube <https://youtu.be/rDjKlx1jrA0>. (He mentions, Meredith, his wife in the interview.)

The most recent player to share his faith so publicly is Grayson Murray. He is 30 years-old. His first win on the PGA Tour was seven years ago. No wins at all until January 14 this year at the Sony Open in Hawaii. For seven years he struggled with alcoholism, anxiety and depression. He nearly died when he collided head-on with a car in Mexico last April while he was riding a motor scooter.

When interviewed immediately after his victory in Hawaii, his first response was, "Jesus Christ is first and foremost. Without him, none of this would be possible." At one point the reporter asked him how this win would change his life. He responded, "It's a lot for my career. I knew today was not going to change my life. My fiancée changed my life [He was engaged to Christiana Ritchie in December], Jesus Christ changed my life. Today wasn't going to change my life, but it did change my career a little bit, and I'm excited."

"Jesus Christ changed my life." That is solid wisdom and perspective from a 30-year old who is only eight months sober. Let us pray we all remember Jesus changed our life, and that matters more than all other changes.