

IN BUSINESS AND GOLF, OVERCOMING FEAR IS THE KEY

By Jim Langley

Before being deployed to Vietnam in late 1966, I was stationed at a U.S. Army base as a training officer/headquarters company commander for one of the three training battalions. When not working, I spent my spare time improving my golf swing. Golf had become my passion after graduating from college in 1965, proving to be the most challenging game I have ever played. I carried a 3-handicap and had some success in local amateur tournaments.

Because I loved competition, I briefly entertained the idea of a professional golf career after my military commitment ended in 1970. Today I can still play respectably on the course, but now enjoy the game as an outlet to escape the distractions of life we all face. I have come to see golf as an analogy for any ongoing challenges we all face in business, as well as personal and spiritual matters.

One of the keys in golf is to remain focused. Fear is the biggest detriment to the golfer's success on the course because it hinders our focus. It is amazing what can go wrong as a stationary ball becomes airborne after being hit by a golf club. Even a putt rolling on a green often finds a way to stay out of the hole. Practice is important in golf, as it is in all aspects of life, but I have found the most important factor is to trust your swing and concentrate on getting positive results. Fear causes tension and keeps our muscle memory from repeating what we have done well in practice.

In the workplace, fear also can become an obstacle to success: Fear of losing existing clients, fear of seeking new customers, fear of taking a risk, fear of trying a new approach to what we do, fear of what the uncertain future might hold. During my long career in the business world, I have learned the Bible says a lot about overcoming fear.

In 2 Timothy 1:7, the apostle Paul advises young Timothy, *"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity (fear), but a spirit of love, power and discipline."* That is a principle I have used in my business and personal life for years. God wants us to succeed in all our endeavours that are pleasing to Him. He is always there and we can call upon His Spirit as we face the many challenges life brings.

In golf, we may feel fear when faced with a lengthy shot over a water hazard. In business, we may fear stiff competition to building and sustaining our company. And in life, many kinds of adversity can cause us to experience fear. We would be wise to follow the admonition of the Bible: *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight"* (Proverbs 3:5-6)

It is easy to focus on the size of the waves surrounding us, just as Peter did after he jumped out of the boat to greet Jesus (Matthew 14). Distracted by the waves, we can find ourselves sinking into despair. This is when we must grasp God's hand and allow Him to lift us up out of the depths of our dilemma.

In 1989, a new clothing line called *"No Fear"* hit the market, a favourite of extreme sports enthusiasts. This slogan appears on shirts and caps. We can adopt a similar motto when facing workplace challenges. With Jesus guiding us, there is nothing to fear – even in taking calculated risks in life. Through prayer, studying and seeking to understand principles God wants to teach us in the Scriptures, and obtaining sound, Bible-based counsel from good friends, we can trust the Lord to guide us securely and safely.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Can you relate to the discussion of experiencing fear in golf or some other competitive sport? What has that been like for you?
2. What are you currently facing – or expecting to face – that has made you feel fearful? How have you been dealing with these circumstances?
3. Do you believe that faith in God can relieve us of the need to fear the future and the unknown? Why or why not?
4. Can you think of a time when you tried to trust in the Lord, and asked Him to direct your path – your decisions and actions that you took? If so, describe that experience?

Note:

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions of the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following passages:

Joshua 1:1-9; Psalm 118:5-9; Proverbs 29:25; Matthew 14:25-31; 1 John 4:18