

No Lay-up Shot: A Lesson from the Master

Jim Elliff

For some reason unknown to humankind, my older brother got to play golf on the distinguished Augusta National Golf Course, the course where perhaps the best tournament of the year is held—The Masters.

It was there that the following life-shaping event took place. He was playing through the course with the required caddy. After he landed in the middle of hole 13 of the notorious 3-hole Amen Corner, he asked the caddy for a certain short iron.

Astonished, the veteran caddy exclaimed, “What do you want with this iron?” “I want to play it safe by laying up just this side of the creek,” my brother replied.

“Man,” the caddy exclaimed, “You didn’t fly all this way to hit no *lay-up* shot!” And he yanked out a fairway wood to hand to my brother.



My brother said, “But I might go into the water.”

“You might or you might not,” said the caddy, “but one thing is for sure—you’ll never know till you try.”

My humbled sibling dutifully took the wood from his hands, smacked the ball, and landed it on the green!

Astounded, he exclaimed, “I’m going to go home and write down in my Bible what you just told me.”

“I don’t understand what you’re talking about.”

“You see,” said my brother, “a man can get to an age and stage in life where he can be content just to hit lay-ups—short, easy, no risk shots. But you’re right, I haven’t come all this way in life just to hit lay-ups. Starting tomorrow morning, I’m going to get up and hit it as hard and as far as I can.”

There are those believers whose entire life is spent hitting lay-ups. These are the cautious, forever tentative people. Sadly, not much happens for the kingdom of God through them.

There is a time to be careful, of course. It’s not courageous to play tennis on the highway, for instance. It’s just stupid. But we’re talking here about the big issues of life. Are you tentative or tenacious in your approach to the future? Did God place you in the world just to protect yourself or to do something meaningful and courageous?

We should have the spirit of Caleb. He was no golfer, but he could still climb a mountain at age 85. As a friend of mine once said, “He was not of a retiring

disposition.” In the allotment of lands in Canaan, this adventurous, faith-filled octogenarian requested that his portion be the hill country where the giants lived in “great fortified cities.” Life would not be flat and meaningless for this man. There was something to *do*.

God often commends boldness. “Be strong and very courageous,” God told Joshua. “We had the boldness of God,” said Paul. “The righteous are as bold as a lion,” stated Solomon.

You only have one trip through this world, or, to put it another way, you only get on the course once. You may not play out the entire 18 holes, or you may be blessed with a double round. Regardless, you had better take advantage of the short time you have. Life is not about lay-up shots, but bold advances for the Savior.

I remember a turning point in my life at age 38. Lots of men feel it. They know enough about their past to understand what they should and should not be doing. They are not that old, but they are more aware than before that the last hole is actually not all that far away. It’s time to decide. Do you hit a lay-up or do you go for broke?

With the help of a now deceased friend, J. Oswald Sanders, who had also experienced a great change in his life direction around my age, I decided against complacency in my Christian life and ministry. I took an entirely new direction, over *my* uncompromising creek, for the sake of the glory of God. Some of my friends and family were not sure I was sane, but I was determined to experience “God’s work, done in God’s way” (as missionary Hudson Taylor put it). I’ve never regretted it.

You cannot just dream something up for your life out of nothing, but rather must find out from God what you are to do. He leads you in a way that demands faith. But will you do it? Can you even bring yourself to think of it?

First, humbly tell God that you are ready to do something significant for Him, whatever glorifies Him at any cost. Second, pray, read the Bible, get counsel, and search till you find out the kind of faith-filled ministry that will make a difference in the kingdom. Get this from God. Third, ask others who will encourage your faith to pray with you. Surround yourself with caddies who have some spunk. And then, pull out your fairway wood and swing hard.

“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.” Luke 9:24

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