

Bouncing Back In Business And In Life

By Jim Langley

I have been playing golf since I was 19, and can still recall joining some college friends in playing my first nine holes without any prior golf instruction. Even though my first attempt was a poor one, I was hooked and took up the game seriously that summer.

One of the major challenges in golf is being able to “bounce back” from exceeding par on the previous hole. This is critical for shooting par or even under par over an entire round. These days, bounce-backs for me come more along the lines of managing a par after several bogeys in a row, since my golf skills have diminished as I have gotten older. But I still love the game, and bouncing back remains exhilarating.

Of course, the importance of bouncing back is not limited to the golf course. We have all discovered this in the workplace, as well as other areas of our lives. Over the past 30-plus years I have faced my share of personal experiences that required me to bounce back from adversity. I have always found, sometimes by way of hindsight, that these memorable occasions can prove significant for learning how to persevere.

Often we have done nothing to deserve the adverse circumstances in which we find ourselves. In golf, sometimes the golf ball just takes an unfortunate bounce into a water hazard, a sand trap or some other difficult lie. The same holds true for the workplace. We may have done everything we thought we should, and yet we fail to close a much-needed deal. A long-anticipated promotion goes to someone else. Or the proposal we devoted many hours to preparing is not received with the enthusiasm we had expected. So how do we respond? We can quit. We can wallow in self-pity. Or, we can choose to bounce back, determined not to let the setback overcome us.

Jesus’ disciples went through many trials and most of them died as martyrs, yet they persevered for Christ until their last breath. They knew how to bounce back from adversity. In fact, Jesus assured them this would be so. A short time before His crucifixion, He told His followers, **“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also”** (John 15:18-20).

This is one reason two Scripture passages focus on how we should handle the trials and adversities that come our way. In Romans 5:3-5, the apostle Paul wrote, **“we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us....”** He might well have said, “When difficult times come, be prepared to bounce back.”

Another apostle, James, offered a similar admonition: **“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything”** (James 1:2-4).

God is not necessarily looking for martyrs, but is seeking devoted followers who will place Him and others before their own needs. He wants us to bounce back from whatever our spiritual enemy throws at us and remain faithful to the very end. He wants us to have true victory as we deal with adversity in this world. Bouncing back, whether in the marketplace or the golf course, can be one of our greatest joys!

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Can you relate to the idea of “bouncing back” on the golf course? Even if you do not play golf, perhaps you can understand because of another form of competition, or even in terms of some professional setbacks you have faced. What has it been like for you to bounce back from difficult circumstances?
2. What are some factors that might interfere with our ability or capacity to bounce back when trials and adversities inevitably come our way?
3. Do you think that those who are followers of Jesus Christ in particular should expect challenging circumstances, both at work and in their personal lives, from which they will need to bounce back? Why or why not?
4. Even though he did not use the term “bounce back,” one of the biblical writers cited in this “Monday Manna” said we should “consider it pure joy...whenever we face trials of many kinds.” Does this seem like strange advice? How can we find “pure joy” as we encounter and deal with such difficulties?

NOTE: For more about what the Bible says consider the following passages:

John 16:32-33; 1 Corinthians 4:10-13; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12; Romans 8:35-39