



Men's Golf Fellowship

Speaker Discussion Questions

Todd Peterson

LEADER'S GUIDE

Spiritual Topics: Works-Righteousness, Humility, Trusting God for your Reputation and Protection

About the Talk

Todd Peterson spoke very frankly and openly about his life and the lessons he learned from his career as a football place kicker. He spoke of how God used his “yesterdays” to prepare him for his “tomorrows” as he put it. Let’s take some time to look at some of his “yesterdays” and reflect on our own, so that we will be more prepared for our “tomorrows.”

Discussion Questions

- Todd spoke about a seminal God moment early on in his life, when he failed to make a critical kick in the final moments of an important game against the Georgia Bulldogs and lost the game. That failure and the ensuing lack of support made him realize that his perception of his life “was directly tied to how he performed.” He described it as a “performance trap.” When he succeeded, he felt good about himself and he was positive and fulfilled. But when he failed, he felt as if the bottom had dropped out of his life. It was a rollercoaster ride dependent on his success or failure. Can you relate to that? Does this describe your life? How important is success to you? Try to recall and share a big failure in your life. What did it feel like? How foundationally did it rock your life? Did you feel as if the bottom had dropped out from under you? What did it take to get you out of that pit? (*Leader Note: usually it takes another success.*) How about the reverse? Does public success make you feel strong and impregnable? **Related Scripture: Romans 8:16-17**

- *Where We're Going: Where is your identity rooted?* The purpose of this question is to begin to help men understand just how closely their meaning and purpose and value in life (i.e. their identity) is tied directly to how they perform in life and to show that God’s love and approval does not work that way at all.

- *Going Deeper:* What are one or two fears you have about failure? Why is it such a big deal to fail in public? When you fail in a big way publicly, what specifically is taken away from you that you really desire? (*Leader Note: where you want to go with this question is loss of stature in people’s eyes, loss of power or prestige, the admiration of people, etc. The realization that you want to draw them to is that they are seeking the “well done” from the people around them, i.e. the world, instead of the “well done” from God.*)
 - *Deeper Yet:* Todd was asked the following question early on by a chaplain, “who are you?” How would you answer that question? (*Leader Note: it is important here to allow men to struggle and discuss their various identities (i.e. CEO, Father, Grandfather, Husband, etc.) The point here is to lead them to understand that in God they are sons (Romans 8:14-15).*)
 - *Still Deeper:* Set the stage—Imagine a family that has a mother, father, and a biological 12-year-old son and that family adopts another 12-year-old boy. Take a moment and brainstorm with the group about what it might feel like to live as that newly adopted orphan boy. Think of the fears he might have (i.e. being sent back to the orphanage, being equally loved, etc.) and about how performance oriented that adopted boy would be (i.e. if I do what my new parents want, I won’t be sent back to the orphanage, etc.) What is the difference in confidence those two boys would have in gaining the love of the parents? Read Galatians 4:4-7. Now ask: in relation to God, do you act more like an orphan (i.e. with fear and acceptance based on performance) or more like a biological son of God (i.e. loved despite your success or failure)? (*Leader Note: the point we are driving toward is that when God adopts you into his family, you are accepted and loved in spite of how you perform.*)
- Todd shared quite openly about a time when he called Planet Hollywood and tried to get a reservation using the prestige and power he thought his name and fame would garner. He was humbled when the receptionist did not even know who he was. Have you ever done anything like that? Can you recall any similar type of experience in your own life where you were embarrassed or humbled like that? Do you expect people to treat you a certain way at the golf club, certain restaurants, or at your place of employment? Why? Is it appropriate to expect preferential treatment even though you might be paying for it? **Related Scripture: James 4:6**

- Where We're Going: **Humility**. This discussion is geared to pinpoint the deep roots of pride in each of us and remind men that humility is where true confidence lies.
 - *Going Deeper*: Todd said, *"in football, opponents make life hard, that's why I wanted God on my side"*. In your business career, have you ever had any people that opposed you, made life difficult, were actively trying to block your success, career path or way forward? How did you respond? Was your reaction a humble one, or full of pride? What are some ways that pride shows itself (i.e. anger, dismissal, retribution, gossip, etc.)? In what ways did your pride show itself in that situation?
 - *Deeper Yet*: Now re-read and reflect on James 4:6. How should knowing that God opposes the proud affect how you react to certain situations? What ways could God oppose your pride? James also seems to be saying that reacting in humility puts God on your side. Have you ever experienced that? What did, or what could that look like in your life?
 - *Deeper Still*: Todd said he had a light bulb moment when he came to understand as an athlete, *"I don't want the creator of the universe, who breathed life into me, as my opponent."* Does that impact you the way it impacted Todd?
- Todd told another life lesson when one of his kicks quite "mysteriously" veered right and missed the uprights. In the locker room when asked about it, he cast blame on his team. Why is it so tempting to blame someone else for your failure? What are you trying to protect when you do so? Take a moment and think of a time when you have blamed something, (*Leader Note: i.e. a distraction when putting, the market for your company's poor performance, etc.*) or someone (*Leader Note: i.e. a person in your company, your spouse, etc.*) to protect your reputation. **Related Scripture: 2 Samuel 22:3**
 - Where We're Going: Trusting God to defend you. The purpose of this question is to help men begin to trust that God will protect them even in the worst of circumstances and that their reputation is safe in God.
 - *Going Deeper*: Todd said, *"When you are silent, God defends you."* Do you really believe that? Do you feel that God is on your side? If so, how? If not, why? Read Deuteronomy 31:6 and then ask— If this verse is true, how does it change your reaction when people oppose you? (*Leader Note: the point we are driving at here is that if God is really for you and has the best in mind for you, there is no reason to defend yourself, because God will do it for you in His way and in His time. A difficult truth to live!*)
 - *Deeper Yet*: Think of a time when someone blamed you for something that was not true, perhaps in business or involving a colleague. How hard is it

for you to be silent when you are being accused of something you know is incorrect? Should you always correct people and defend yourself in those circumstances? Is there ever a time when you should be silent even though you are innocent?

- *Still Deeper:* If the group is mature enough, you could read Isaiah 53:7 & Matthew 27:12-14 to show how Jesus stood silent even though he would have been perfectly justified in defending himself. Discuss how absorbing untruths said about you is simply part of what it means to follow Jesus.

Closing Prayer

Lord, I confess that I sometimes act more like an orphan than as your son. That I sometimes defend myself, blame others, and act prideful in guarding my reputation. Forgive me for trying to work and earn my way into your heart, rather than accepting your love. Finally, forgive me for protecting myself in those circumstances where you just want me to trust you to protect me. And, please give me wisdom to recognize those circumstances. Amen.