

QUIET TIME GUIDE
FOR Wednesday 5/08
FROM JACK MILLWOOD

Greeting:

I was shocked! I remembering yelling to my wife to come and look at what I had just seen on television. It was incredible. I had never heard of the young man at the time but I will never forget what I saw him do. It was the Master's Golf Tournament at storied Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Ga. To start with, if there is a non religious site in the world that is holy to me it would be Augusta National. One of my recreational goals in life is to play Augusta just once before I die. To me there is no other place like it. It is the one major golf tournament that is played on the same golf course every year. I grew up watching the likes of Bobby Jones, Ben Hogan, Jack Nickalaus and Arnold Palmer play it. The first time I had the chance to go to the Masters I literally felt goose bumps when I walked through the gates. I know that to a non sports fan you have a hard time understanding my sentimentality of a sports place, much less a golf course. However, I had seen every inch of it on TV and knew it by heart. As I walked the fairways I could recall shot after shot in location after location. I guess one of the reasons I want to play Augusta so much is because you can't play it. The only way you can play it is with a member and right now that is not happening. Anyway I digress. The players that play in the Masters are careful selected each year based upon their performance in golf. There is an exception made by the founder of Augusta National, the legendary Bobby Jones. He loved amateur golf. Therefore, every year a few selected amateurs are allowed to play in the Masters. The current US Amateur Champion, the runner up to the current US Amateur Champion, the US Public Links Amateur Champion, the current British Open Amateur Champion, and the US Mid Amateur Champion are the only amateurs in the world allowed to play in the Masters. That is one thing I love about the tournament. Basically here are these kids playing on one of the greatest courses in the world, along side the greatest players in the world, in front of one of the largest television audiences in the world. Can you imagine your kid getting to do that while he was in high school or in college? One of those kids was Michael Thompson. I must admit I had never heard of him. That is hard to believe since he is a student at the University of Alabama. I did not know that at the time I saw what happened. Michael was in the Masters because he had been the runner-up at the 2007 US Amateur. He was a senior at the University of Alabama. This was his first Masters appearance. The way that golf tournaments work is you play four rounds of golf and the one with the lowest score wins. That is, some of them play four rounds. Everybody plays on Thursday and Friday. Then they take the 44 players who have the lowest scores and ties as well as those within 10 strokes of the leader and let them play on Friday and Saturday. For an amateur "making the cut" is huge. It means you get to stay around for the weekend. It can make or break a career as well as being able to be in the hunt for the coveted green jacket given to the winner every year. All of this leads up to what I had just seen play out on live television. Michael was standing over his putt to make a birdie (one below par.) If he made this putt it would all but ensure that he would make the cut and play Saturday and Sunday at the Masters. This was not just for fun. This was the biggest moment of his young life. He was about to make the cut at the Masters. It could easily propel him into a promising career on the

professional golf tour. His future vocation may have even been at stake. But as he set up to make his putt and he set his putter on the ground - the ball moved on its own ever so slightly! I was watching. Other players were on the green with him. Television cameras were rolling. No one saw it! You might not think this is a big deal but golf is a game about rules. Rule 18 -2b states "If a player's *ball in play moves* after he has *addressed* it (other than as a result of a *stroke*), the player is deemed to have *moved* the ball and incurs a penalty of one stroke." It was here and now that I could not believe what I saw. Michael kept his composure, called the rules official over and **penalized himself** a stroke. What was going to be a birdie became a bogey and he was out for the weekend! That difference meant making the cut or not making the cut! No one had seen the ball move but him! Even as they replayed it in slow motion I could barely see it move. But it did, ever so slightly and he had penalized himself. For young Michael Thompson integrity mattered. It mattered more than career or fame. In a world where cheating is condoned and practiced daily I was astonished by this man "doing the right thing!" The Psalmist wrote about this in Psalm 106.

Scripture for today:

Psalm 106: 1 Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. 2 Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD or fully declare his praise? 3 Blessed are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right.

Life Application:

The Psalmist says **we are blessed when we do the right thing!** How is your integrity? Some one said to me once that reputation is what people think about us. Character is what God knows about us. Reputation is what is seen in public. Character is revealed in private. When no one is watching and no one but you and God sees what is happening, do you do the right thing? Do you cut corners?

Spiritual exercise:

These are hard questions. I hope I would do the same thing as Michael did if I were playing serious competitive golf. Truthfully I don't play competitive golf. I just play recreationally for fun. However, I do play competitive business. I do operate in a financial world. My ethics are always on the line. Today is a good day to take a hard look at our character and see what we are made of. Can God count on me to do the right thing? Can my family count on me to do the right thing? Can my church count on me to do the right thing? Can your business count on you to do the right thing? God help us all as we seek to honor you with our lives.

Thought for the day.

Integrity matters!