

How a Handshake Lost the Masters

Carol Mann, in her book *The 19th Hole: Favorite Golf Stories*, recalls a lesson about overconfidence or pride.

It was the final hole of the 1961 Masters tournament. Arnold Palmer had a one-stroke lead and had just hit a very satisfying tee shot.

“I felt I was in pretty good shape,” he said. “As I approached my ball, I saw an old friend standing at the edge of the gallery. He motioned me over, stuck out his hand and said, ‘Congratulations.’ I took his hand and shook it, but as soon as I did, I knew I had lost my focus.”

On his next two shots, Palmer hit the ball into a sand trap, then put it over the edge of the green.

“I missed the putt and lost the Masters,” he said. “You don’t forget a mistake like that, you just learn from it and become determined that you will never do it again. I haven’t in the 30 years since.”



Pride, according to *Wikipedia*, is “an inwardly directed emotion that carries two antithetical meanings. With a negative connotation, pride refers to a foolishly and irrationally corrupt sense of one’s personal value, status or accomplishments. With a positive connotation, pride refers to a humble and content sense of attachment toward one’s own or another’s choices and actions, or toward a whole group of people, and is a product of praise, independent self-reflection, and a fulfilled feeling of belonging.”

Here’s another illustration proving that a prideful nature can have disastrous consequences:

The story is told of two ducks and a frog who lived happily together in a farm pond. The best of friends, the three would amuse themselves and play together in their waterhole.

When the hot summer days came, however, the pond began to dry up, and soon it was evident they would have to move. This was no problem for the ducks, who could easily fly to another pond. But the frog was stuck.

So it was decided that they would put a stick in the bill of each duck that the frog could hang onto with his mouth as they flew to another pond.

(more)

The plan worked well – so well, in fact, that as they were flying along, a farmer looked up in admiration and said, “Well, isn’t that a clever idea! I wonder who thought of it?”

The frog said, “I did ...”

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud (Proverbs 16:18-19 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter