

# ~John Ebel~

*Just after Thanksgiving, John Ebel was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. In late January, Brian Bossert and I heard that John's condition was quickly deteriorating, and we made immediate plans to visit John at his home in Sun City, AZ. Two days after we made our arrangements, John Ebel passed away. By coincidence, John's funeral was scheduled for the same day that Brian and I had planned to see John. So we were able to attend the funeral, and I spoke these words during the service.*

Brian Bossert and I wish to express to you—Juanita, Wendy, Cathy and the Ebel family—the condolences of the entire greenkeeping community. We are here today as representatives of the thousands of men and women in our profession whose lives have been touched directly by John Ebel.

There was a profound depth of humility added to all his other virtues, and he was always one to deflect praise to his Lord, so I suspect that Mr. Ebel never told you exactly how good he was at greenkeeping, or how much he was admired by his peers and associates.

But Mr. Ebel was indeed a very gifted man, and of the highest and most impeccable reputation—carpentry, plumbing, mechanical electrical engineering, agronomy, business administration, motivator, teacher, writer, speaker—these were just a few of the many talents that he gave to his profession, any one of which he might have easily specialized in. He used them all in greenkeeping, and the game is richer for it.

In addition to being a gifted craftsman, he was a great leader, serving as president of both the Midwest and Chicagoland Association of Golf Course Superintendents—one of just a few to have been entrusted with both positions of leadership.

It was many years ago now when he asked the directors of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America for a special room at our annual international convention. What Mr. Ebel and several others had on their hearts was a time of worship, prayer, testimonies and the gospel. And so was born the GCSAA Prayer Breakfast, which continues to this day. Who can account for the untold thousands of lives that have been influenced by this ministry? But Mr. Ebel would refuse any credit for its remarkable longevity. He would simply say that it was “God’s work.”

That was the way of John Ebel. Everything that most men call their own, he gave to the Lord. Some have stated that this was because John was a “religious man.” However, John might have graciously objected to this. A mere religious man mistakenly believes that God is somehow anxious for our attention, as if our devotion does something to shore up God’s self-image. But John Ebel was under no such delusion. John loved the Lord for joy. John simply delighted in God.

To those who have come here to celebrate John’s life, I will now ask and say what I think he would. Are you unwilling to yield everything to God? Do so today. Don’t put off the inevitable any longer. But do so for joy; not explicitly out of guilt for your sins. Do so for the

joy that He gives to those who yield to the salvation and Lordship of Jesus. John Ebel lived for this joy. You can, too.

When Jesus said good-bye to his disciples, he told them not to be sad. “I must go to prepare a place for you.” Let us today imagine the place that Jesus has prepared for John Ebel. What an honor is ours to have known one so conformed for such glory. But what a serious thing it is, too. Those of us who knew John Ebel are all the more accountable for our own souls.

The remarkable things that John Ebel accomplished were indeed the Lord’s work, but my how John showed us what God can do with a man who knows where true joy may be found. I wonder, can any man hope for a greater legacy than this?

And now to the Ebel family, from greenkeepers everywhere, please be comforted by these words that John Ebel always finished his letters with: “The peace of the Lord be with you.” 