

LINKS PLAYERS MAG 6: ANDREA'S OPENNESS

"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." (Luke 19:40, NIV)

ANDREA GASTON HAS LONG BEEN A PUBLIC FIGURE IN GOLF. She may not be known the way Annika Sorenstam and Juli Inkster are known, but you don't coach Division I college golf without public scrutiny. Your athletic director is watching, players are watching, fans are watching, the media are watching—and the more you win, the more watching they are doing.

So Gaston's multiple conference championships and national titles have drawn the kind of attention that comes with success.

Beyond her coaching, however, Gaston has long had a life of faith. She grew up as a Jewish girl in a Catholic neighborhood, then was encouraged in her spirituality by some Mormon friends. Eventually she pushed away from the religious trappings and found her way into personal relationship with Jesus at a Bible study of college students in Southern California. A business career took her away from golf for more than 10 years, then she returned at the coaxing of a friend. And what a return! She won two California State Amateur trophies in her 30s and only then landed in coaching. All in all, Gaston has a lot to talk about.

When a cancer diagnosis came for Gaston in 2017, though, she kept quiet about it, not wanting to disrupt her players' efforts. But when they were finally eliminated from the NCAA Championship in the semifinals, she told her team that she would be having surgery in two days. They cried with her and rallied around her. Gaston's newly expanded story was picked up instantly by the golf media. Now even her private life was being made public.

What Gaston learned in it all was that sometimes God brings into the open the pieces of our story we would rather not have borne on the winds. But his motivation is never hurtful. What he may well be doing is putting us in position to tell others what means the most to us. So with this much of her life already out there, Gaston kept going. She gave all who would hear the riches she held in the Good News of Jesus.

You may be uncomfortable here in thinking that God will draw you out of your shell to share your own story of faith. But may I appeal to your sense of competition? You don't want the rocks to beat you! How much better it is to praise God openly, that others may hear and believe.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2018 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study can be found at <https://youtu.be/qYa5iD-Tkk>. The Links Players magazine article with Andrea Gaston is available here: <http://www.linksplayers.com/articles/andrea-gaston>.

Opening questions Are there parts of your personal story that few, if any, people know? What do you think keeps us from telling others about these?

READING Luke 12:1-12

Disclosures and declarations (Luke 12)
 What unnerving promise did Jesus make in verses 2-3? What does this tell us about our making efforts to conceal our failings?

When Jesus spoke of "him who has the power to throw you into hell" (v. 5), to whom was he referring? How does he then hold this power in balance with God's caring oversight of us?

In verses 8-9, what are the two options Jesus says we have with regard to the knowledge we possess about him? What motivates you to choose one over the other?

What is the Holy Spirit's role in our speaking on behalf of Jesus (vv. 11-12)? What is our role (also read 1 Peter 3:15-16)?
