



Links Players

PEOPLE WHO HELP 1: HELPING WITH PRAYER

Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out. (Ephesians 6:18, MSG)

HERE'S A FUNNY STORY, told to us recently by a woman in our small group. Some Americans traveling together in a foreign country lost track of one of their companions. They searched for some time, to no avail. Finally, one woman in the group said, "We should pray." It was a common enough idea, but it was met with a startling response from another of the travelers: "Oh no! Has it come to that?"

Has it come to that? You have perhaps heard it observed that the kingdom of God is upside-down, where the humble are exalted and the first shall be last. So often, however, we are the ones who get things backwards—as when we act before praying.

Golfers don't love getting things backward, but we sure do. When a player strikes an ugly ball off a par-5 tee, we wryly say, "Ah, you hit the wedge first." And when we strike a downhill putt too firmly, we may wind up with a longer putt coming back than we started with.

So as golfers who know how backwards hurts and people of God who want to get life right, let's commit to something basic today: Praying first. When we do this, we avoid the mistake of looking for answers without ever asking God for them.

Paul and his fellow apostles never seemed to miss a chance to pray. We read that the early church "devoted themselves...to prayer." They were intentional about finding time and a place to talk to the Lord. In this way, we know they were following the example of Jesus. But they were also helping one another.

Maybe The Message paraphrase of the Bible isn't sophisticated enough for your linguistic palate, but today its simple words get right to the point. Prayer should be an act of dedication. And while the *words* of our prayers are lifted to God, who can answer uniquely and supernaturally, our *time* of prayer is often dedicated to others. We pray that God will come alongside them in what they are facing now and go before them in what they will face next.

Prayer is the best preparation for life—our own lives and the lives of others. When we pray first, we're as ready as we'll ever be.

Opening questions What golf errors do you see most regularly in your usual foursome? Are you able to laugh them off, or is your group more serious than that? • When it comes to prayer, what would you say you still have to learn about it?

READING Luke 22:39-46; Mark 11:17; 1 Cor. 3:16; Ephesians 1:15-19

Prepared and unprepared (Luke 22)
What difference do we see between Jesus and his disciples in this passage? How did Jesus connect prayer with preparation in this poignant context?

Alive with prayer (Mark 11 & 1 Corinthians 3)
In coupling these two verses, how important do we find it to be that we are praying people?

Big prayers for others (Ephesians 1)
List key components of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. When we pray for spiritual results in others, what affect might the answers have in their lives?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2018 Links Players International. An introductory video for this Bible study is available here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=lr9tqGV5F_s