



Links Players

PRAYING FOR BETTER 1: INTENTIONALITY

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. (Colossians 1:9, NIV)

IN MY YEARS OF COACHING HIGH SCHOOL GOLF, a particular scene occurred over and over in the early days of our season’s practice sessions. The new players—often just getting started in the game—would look over at one of my accomplished competitors on the range and quickly become disheartened.

“Do you know what the difference is between you and them?” I would ask. When they shook their heads, I would answer my own question: “About a hundred thousand practice balls.”

What I was trying to convey, in words and in tone, is that the good players aren’t so special. They’ve simply put in the time to get to where they are. And yet, in those 11 years, I had just one new player who took up the challenge to improve his game and become an accomplished competitor himself. The others only dabbled.

Golf is only one of countless arenas in life where intentional commitment—what we might also call discipline—makes all the difference. Experience isn’t just something that happens to us; sometimes we have to go out and get it.

The same is no less true with our spiritual lives. If we wish to cultivate our faith, we will need to demonstrate our seriousness with an application of our time and effort.

A foundational practice in this regard is prayer. It is the avenue for open conversation with God. We may talk to him in the way that we talk to a trusted friend. Sometimes our conversations may be a way to catch up with one another, as a husband and wife do at the end of the day. Other times, we may talk to God more soberly, sharing with him the great concerns of our current life. In return, he may do the same, addressing areas that need attention in our soul. But what our prayer life must never be is a haphazard arrangement, where some days we meet but most days we don’t. We need to be in touch with Jesus, for our sake and the sake of others whose causes we would bring to him in prayer.

As we open this series, Praying for Better, we come to Colossians 1:9 and see how intent Paul and his partners were in praying for the believers in Colossae: “We have not stopped praying for you.” It’s a reminder that prayer is no accident, but an activity with strong purpose.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2018 Links Players International. An introductory video for this Bible study is available here: https://youtu.be/h4B_GT15p4A.

Opening questions In golf, do you have a practice routine or is it more of a catch-as-catch-can activity? • Is the way you approach golf reflective of your intentionality in other areas of your life, or are you more serious in other endeavors? • Would you consider yourself to be someone who is serious about spiritual matters in your life?

READING Daniel 9:1-19; Colossians 1:9-12

Daniel’s fervent words (Daniel 9)

In practice, what did Daniel’s prayer “look like” (v. 3)?

Which of Daniel’s words demonstrated the seriousness of his prayer?

How can you identify with the urgency of Daniel’s requests in verse 19?

Looking ahead (Colossians 1)

In the weeks ahead, we will move through this prayer passage in Colossians 1. How would you describe the general request Paul has for the people? Which of his specific prayers are things you might ask your friends to pray for you in your own life?
