

PRAYING FOR BETTER 2: UNDERSTANDING

...asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. (Colossians 1:9, NIV)

WE CAN'T HELP OURSELVES," 1981 PGA Tour Player of the Year Bill Rogers chuckled on a driving range in Texas during a gathering of Links Players at the end of October. He was looking down the range where two other former Tour players were sharing a stall, one teaching and one learning.

The joke of course was that golfers—no matter how experienced or how old—keep looking for the elixir. There must be a way to get better! Hall of Famer Gary Player was especially known for gathering insight from just about any source. He figured you could always throw it out if it didn't work. Still, it takes a humble learner to stand aside and let someone else do the talking.

In continuing to make our way through Paul's prayer in Colossians 1, we find that his first specific request on behalf of these believers in Colossae was that they would gain a knowledge of the will of God. As you might imagine, this is no cursory information-gathering, like checking the price of beans at your local supermarket. To know the will of God is to know, we might say, the secret of life. So we're not wrong to call this next-level stuff.

What does it take, then, to know the will of God? Paul answered this question by saying such knowledge comes through "all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

I love this phrase because it takes me to that place of humility where learners really learn. Why? Because I can't possibly attain *all* spiritual wisdom and understanding in this life. I can open my eyes and ears to what God has to teach me from this moment forth, and I will still be learning on the day I die. What God gives me today, I can use for today, and maybe tomorrow. But tomorrow, he will give me more.

This does not happen by accident, we know. God's will is contained in God's Word. So we commit to reading the Scriptures. And God's will is affirmed by his Spirit-gifted teachers. So we listen to the sermons of those who preach, committing ourselves as the first believers did to the apostles' teaching. And we are encouraged to do God's will by our brothers and sisters in the faith. So we continue in fellowship with them, asking for their prayers and their helpful words, mucking about in the stall together, like two old pros unready to surrender to the game.

Opening questions Are you one of those golfers looking for a solution to your struggles, or are you pretty satisfied with your game as it is? • Where do you go to learn better technique for your game? Where do you turn to learn better lessons for life?

READING Hebrews 5:11-14; Psalm 119:33-40; Proverbs 3:19-26

Growing up (Hebrews 5)

How did the writer fault his readers in this passage? Do you recognize deficiencies in your own commitment to learning and growing in the faith?

The value of wisdom (Proverbs 3)

Who is the best source of wisdom? What makes this so? What advantages do we attain and what troubles do we avoid by gaining understanding?

The path to learning (Psalm 119)

How are learning, obedience, and wisdom intertwined? What "worthless things" do you need to wisely turn away from in your life right now?
