



Links Players

A MISSION IN LIFE 4: SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE

When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. (Acts 2:6, NIV)

WRITING IS HARD. This is especially so when a writer is assigned to provide material for an audience who knows better than he does. As one who follows all sports but especially golf, I sometimes recognize when a sportswriter who doesn't really know golf has been assigned to cover it. The work includes wording that sounds right but is just enough off that we golfers recognize it. For instance, you might read that a golfer "hit a hole-in-one" or "shot a birdie."

Language, the experts tell us, is culture itself. And the difference between these nuanced errors and the common vernacular among avid golfers is the difference between outsiders and insiders—with the same being true in any cultural environment.

So if you're on a mission to share the life that you have been given in Christ, the best way to communicate this with golfers is in the language golfers use. You don't need to be a preacher.

Soon after Jesus ascended to heaven, about which we read in the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit entered the picture in a new and personal way. On the feast day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, the yet small group of believers experienced the power of the Holy Spirit and began speaking in languages not their own. This, we would say, was the miracle. The blessing was that the assembled people, who came from all over the world for this Jewish celebration, each heard the apostles' message of Jesus as Messiah in their own language.

As it is with most missionaries and Bible translators, you were not given the ability to "speak golf" supernaturally like this. Yet you gained understanding of a golfer's language and its subtleties by experience. You know the culture in a way outsiders do not—which gives you the ability to speak readily in a way that golfers can understand.

A gifted athlete amounts to little if he or she is not using that gift. The same can be said of us if, having gained access into the golfer's world, we don't step up to engage golfers. There are connections between mulligans and forgiveness, between practice and spiritual growth. When we draw lines like these in the way we talk, we will find those with ears to hear and hearts ready to receive the gospel of Christ.

Opening questions How does language help you know whether you are talking to a "real" golfer? What are some other arenas in your life where you can include or exclude others depending on how you talk?

READING Psalm 96:1-4; Luke 19:35-40; Titus 2:7-8

A wide ring of praise (Psalm 96)

Who is supposed to declare the work of the Lord, and who is supposed to hear it? How do these few verses motivate us to join the declaring chorus?

Voices and stones (Luke 40)

What actions of the people did Jesus affirm here? What do their actions tell us about the nature of the message of Christ as it resides in us? Is the wonder of Christ this alive in you?

Language and content (Titus 7)

While our language may vary from setting to setting, what characteristics should mark our speech and teaching in all contexts? Are you equipped to teach this way? What can you do to increase your qualifications?
