

**A MISSION IN LIFE 7: FRIENDSHIP BUILDING**

*“I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” (Luke 16:9, NIV)*

MY GOLF GAMES USUALLY START WITH JUST TWO OF US. I’m not much of an organizer. Texting and calling until I’ve got a foursome seems like a lot of work. Maybe I’m lazy, too.

So arranging the game is the easy part. Once I have a single yes, I’m good to go. But then comes the first tee. On a busy day, when you only have two, you could be joined by anyone. In fact, two recent rounds I’ve played have been a mix and match, where those we started with weren’t those we finished with. We’ll just call it odd times on a crowded golf course. But what it also provides is a chance to meet new people.

Most friendships begin this way. We’re introduced to someone, or we’re thrust into the same environment, and we get to talking. “Small talk” and “big talk” both seem to miss the mark when it comes to building a friendship, so let’s call the most effective conversation “medium talk.” Yes, I just made that up, but hear me out. In this medium talk, we go beyond the incidentals of acquaintance and we stop short of the weighty topics that intimidate people. This middle ground is the place where work and family and interests are related. And if we get the sense that the discussion is connecting rather than competing, a friendship starts to form.

At Links Players, the third tenet we have presented all these years is “Network friends together in Christ.” The idea is that we don’t do life alone; we do it together. And if we can bring our friends who don’t know Christ into connectedness with those who do, we just might see some great kingdom stuff happen. Friendships on earth can lead to friendships for eternity.

So we do well when we keep in mind a specific progression: Move acquaintances toward friendship, then move friends toward Jesus. In order to make this happen, you need to be prayerful, asking the Lord to help you see opportunities to deepen conversations and break the ice about topics of faith and salvation. This will come more easily to some people than to others, but we can all be friendly, ask meaningful questions, and listen for ways to connect at a heart level. We can also use the resources and gifts we’ve been given (“worldly wealth,” Jesus called it) to benefit others and encourage them to spend more time talking with us about things that matter not just today but a thousand years from now.

**Opening questions** What is one of the least comfortable golf pairings into which you’ve ever been placed? Were you glad to escape that group, or did the day end up surprising you as pretty good after all?

**READING** Luke 16:1-9; Hebrews 13:2; John 15:13

**Shrewd devices (Luke 16)**  
In his parable, Jesus commended the shrewd manager for using his creativity to build relationships that lasted. Does this disturb you or inspire you? What worldly means do you have that can help build friendships of eternal significance?

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**Open doors (Hebrews 13)**  
How does hospitality fit the idea of friendship-building for the sake of God’s kingdom? What is required of a hospitable person?

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**Sacrificial friendship (John 15)**  
Who is someone you have observed loving and caring for others sacrificially? In what ways could you “lay down your life” for others? What motivates you to do so?

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Written by Jeff Hopper ©2019 Links Players International. An introductory video for this Bible study is available here: <https://youtu.be/RKRvjV27SB4>.