



# Links Players

## ON LOCATION 2: THEN AND NOW

*We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps. (Proverbs 16:9, NLT)*

**I**F GOLF IS A MICROCOSM OF OUR LIVES, then here is something we must affirm: We all have a past.

When I was coming up in the game, I did so with the older equipment, small in the face of the clubhead and soft in the makeup of the golf ball. During my college years, the first metal woods (our game’s greatest oxymoronic contribution to the English language) arrived. Not long after I’d acquired such a driver, I hit it from the fairway and it screamed down a long par-5 like a bullet. An older friend turned his head and said wryly, “Whoa, now! It’s just a game.”

We’ve come a long way. In my mid-50s I’m still collecting nuances of the game. But what I am learning always is how to cope with the changes in my body. Some of these come with age, others with disease that has reshaped me, more still with lack of practice time. These accumulated factors demand adjustments—not the least of which is a change in my expectations. I don’t always succeed.

Now there’s a truth in life: “I don’t always succeed.” Sin, foolishness, external factors—all these can keep me from attaining the goal of my plans, even if those plans amount only to getting through the day unscathed.

But a lack of success should never preclude a lack of learning. We have much to gain even when much is lost.

How do we do this? Well, we must begin with humility. If we boast of our plans and prowess for rebuilding, we risk forging ahead without the blessing of God. Humbled people seek his leading.

Next, we ask for two things in prayer: lessons from what’s occurred and direction for what’s next. Failure may not be a call to “try, try again” but rather to move on to something altogether different. Dare we ask God what he thinks? We must!

Finally, we proceed with the confidence of calling but the circumspection of wisdom. A sure direction does not forgive rash action. Each day we arise and ask the Lord, “Where do I go? Whom do I take with me? What words do I say? What actions do I take?” We are not meant to walk through every open door, but rather to see each opening as a chance to inquire again of our God.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2019 Links Players International. An introductory video to accompany this study is available at <https://youtu.be/Q7fnd8pwoY4>.

**Opening questions** What is one memory you have in the game that still informs how you approach it today? What is something, in golf or in life, you have learned only recently?

**READING** Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; Psalm 121; Proverbs 13:14-16

### Life under God (Ecclesiastes 2)

Do these words make you think you should look at life more simply, or with deeper consideration? Like Marty Jacobus in today’s accompanying video, do you bear sadness for those who still live in sin around you?

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### The source of our help (Psalm 121)

How foundational is this psalm in forming the right perspective on your life, no matter what stage you’re in? Where is it especially capturing your attention today?

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### Still learning (Proverbs 13)

How do these three proverbs encourage learning? What is something you need to commit to learning more about? How do you think this learning will benefit your relationship with God and with others?

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