



Links Players

SIX DEGREES FROM SUFFERING: DAVID

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." (2 Samuel 12:13, NIV)

THROUGH THE YEARS, I have interviewed scores of tour players for articles in our magazine and its predecessor, the Links Letter. A common feature in these players' background is that they grew up playing several sports, setting them aside one by one until they settled on golf. Equally common is their reason: In an individual sport, you are responsible for our own successes and failures. This isn't absolutely true, as injuries and other factors may enter the picture, but it's close. In golf, I own what happens to me.

I don't know that this makes golfers better people, but it might, because if we are to gain any ground in relation to God, we must start with our sin. We must own our failures and shortcomings and appeal to the one Redeemer who can extricate us from the bonds of our ways.

This submission to God's authority and provision rarely happens inside one's head at first. We don't lay back on our soft pillow in the night and say, "I feel good in mind and body, I'm succeeding at my work, my family relationships are peaceful, my friendships are enriching—but oh, how I'm a sinner, and oh, how I need God!" Instead, what drives us to recognize our sin is that it hurts.

David wrote in his psalms about his love for the Lord. But his life included great sins. One of those was his seizure of Bathsheba, in lust, in adultery, and in murder. If you read this account in 2 Samuel 11, you'll laugh at the obviousness of the writer's conclusion: "The thing David had done displeased the LORD."

God, in his displeasure, sent the prophet Nathan, who called David out, heard his confession, and pronounced the great consequence of David's sin: Bathsheba's child would die. Not every sin comes with such a soon and direct consequence, but this one was gut-wrenching for David, and he turned to the Lord in deep contrition. He pleaded emotively, as Hannah had done, but he would pay the price for his sin all the same. David's suffering was painful, but it led him to God.

Our second great lesson from suffering should be this: Let it cause you to assess your life. Is God using the consequences of your sin to call you to him (or back to him)? If he is, you do best to respond like David, with a contrite heart that owns the sin and seeks God's forgiveness.

Opening questions When did you decide to make golf your sport of choice? What do you like about its individual nature? • Has there ever come a time in your life where you recognized that independence, though good in many ways, has its limits?

READING 2 Samuel 12:1-25; Psalm 51:14-17; 1 John 1:8-10

David's example (2 Samuel 12)

What catches your attention from Nathan's interaction with David? How quick and how deep was David's response? In what ways did God show both discipline and love to David?

David's song (Psalm 51)

David wrote this Psalm in the wake of his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah. How do these verses capture the character of God and our right response to him when we sin?

Our sin and our Savior (1 John 1)

What does this passage say about the way we should think of ourselves before God? And what promise are we given for thinking and acting rightly?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2020 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/XjZWjgZpXTQ>