



Links Players

RELATING TO GOD 7: THOSE WHO CRY OUT

The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. (Psalm 34:17, NIV)

SOMETIMES, WHEN ILLUSTRATING A POINT, it's hard to find an experience all golfers have shared. But this I know: We have all cried out on the golf course. At the ball. At the bad hop. At our partner. Maybe, yes maybe, at God—if only to say, “Why, Lord, did you ever permit me to take up this confounded game?”

Maybe your cries are mild. Mine can be the embarrassing type. You know, the kind where you're barking gibberish at inanimate objects, including but not limited to your sand wedge, your lie in the sand, the bunker itself, and the ball that dared roll into this preposterous spot. Please don't listen when I do this. I'll be over it in a minute, I promise.

The fact is embarrassment may be the very thing that restrains us from crying out more than we do. Scrunched faces and squawking voices become no one. They demonstrate a lack of decorum, good manners, self-control, and everything else prized by our friends across the Pond. Those Brits really do need to learn to break emotional ranks now and then.

When we are God's people, however, if there is one thing we should know, it is that God has an ear for his people. He loved us from the beginning, and then after the beginning, when we threw away every good thing in our sin. He loves us now—not because we've gotten better by leaps and bounds, but because he is unchanging, even when we play prodigals and self-righteous prudes.

If God loves us like this, he is there to listen when we cry out. In fact, because he wants authenticity from us, he wants us to cry out. Strangely, God named his people Israel, meaning *wrestles* or *struggles with God*. Folks, he expects us to lay hold of him, to bear our grievances and demand our blessings. The worst thing imaginable is that we keep our distance. He wants us dangerously close to him, holding him fast, even it means there is blood, sweat, and tears between us.

You may, like blind Bartimaeus, have something very specific about which to cry out to God today. Do it! Your cry may sound like many of David's: “Why, Lord, is there such wickedness around me?” Cry it! God wants to hear from you, loudly if it must be so. There's no embarrassment in such a messy appeal; rather, there is great hope that the God of heaven and earth will hear and rush to help you.

Opening questions How do you express your frustration on the golf course? How about in life? What do these expressions say about your perspective on the game? on the world?

READING Genesis 32:22-30; Mark 10:46-52

Wrestling with God (Genesis 32)

Jacob refused to let the angel of the Lord go. Why? Typically, would you say you are someone who keeps a “safe distance” from God or someone who is desperate for his nearness? Does this change in a time of crisis?

A mad cry (Mark 10)

What was Bartimaeus' plea? How do we know he directed it in the right place? From verse 52, what can say Bartimaeus' cry expressed? Are your own cries demonstrations of anger or worry, or do they come from a heart of faith?

If you have a desperate plea to God today, what is it?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2020 Links Players International. An introductory video for tis study is available here: <https://youtu.be/U0rshVuBz-E>