



Links Players

ALL WE HAVE GAINED 6: STRENGTH

I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:13, NIV)

TO THE SINGULAR EYE, Stephen Curry is only one of the world’s greatest basketball players, on his way to obliterating the NBA record for most three-point shots made in a career. That’s enough to satisfy most sports fans.

But golfers know that Curry shares a love—and an expertise—for our game, too. He played alongside Phil Mickelson, Charles Barkley, and his partner for the day, Peyton Manning, in last fall’s The Match III. He has competed on the Korn Ferry Tour, which makes sense for a +1.5 handicap. And in 2019 he made a six-figure commitment to restore the men’s and women’s golf programs at Howard University.

Now here’s something else you may know of Curry: His on-court shoes when he plays for the Golden State Warriors always include a bit of Scripture, specifically today’s reference from Paul’s letter to the Philippians. It’s a favorite among athletes, as both outer and inner strength are necessary to be among the best in any sport. But is it a Scripture they are using correctly? Is Christ the key ingredient in the magic formula for winning a championship or securing the next big contract?

To answer these questions we need to know two things: the context of Paul’s words and who it is behind that strength—that is, Jesus. Let’s explore both.

First, Paul’s immediate context for this verse is his consideration of the life he has lived, with both “plenty” and “want.” He wrote that he had learned to be content no matter what came his way. That’s a significant demonstration of strength right there! Most of us hang in there with the good. Times of trouble are another story. This may be the reason so many athletes—and other people, too—cling to Philippians 4:13. An athletic career can mirror life, bringing wins and losses, health and injury, slow gains and fast forwards. We all need a strength from outside ourselves. Honest athletes, like honest people, know they cannot “do all things” on their own.

Second, Paul wrote quite clearly that the ability to persevere and triumph comes from Christ. *He* is the source of the strength we need. Even the best in the world, no matter the endeavor, are hindered by the confines of the world. Depression has consumed some of the finest athletes, financiers, artists, and preachers. For some, it has led to addiction and suicide. Do you see our weakness? Do you see our need for strength? Do you see the One who can give it? Ask him to be your strength today.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International. A video introduction for this study may be found here: <https://youtu.be/pt1Fw4k7qRQ>.

Opening questions Where do you go when you want to address a weakness in your golf game? Do you similarly have a place to turn for more concerning weaknesses in your life?

READING Psalm 20:7 & 24:8; Judges 7:1-25; Deuteronomy 6:4-5

The strength outside of us (Psalm 20 & 24)

How do these passages work together to help us see God’s strength and encourage us to rely on it? How do you access God’s strength like this?

Why so few? (Judges 7)

Why did God cull Gideon’s army (v. 2)? What do you think the 300 remaining men were thinking when they were all that was left of 32,000? How does this account show us that God’s strength can come in unexpected forms? Have you seen this to be true in your own life?

All the strength we can muster (Deuteronomy 6)

Although our own strength is limited, we are called to love God with all the strength we do have. When do you feel hindered in this effort? When do you feel up to it? How can you increase your strength for loving God?
