



# Links Players

## LOSSES AND GAINS 5: FRIENDSHIP

*Wounds from a friend can be trusted... (Proverbs 27:6a, NIV)*

**G**OLF HURTS. Play enough and you'll end up at your chiropractor or physical therapist. You might even need surgery. Fortunately, most of us don't add that much wear and tear to our bodies for the sake of the game we love.

Here's something more: Golfers hurt. I mean, they hurt each other. I have my own stitches thanks to swing of another. And I've been privy to concussions, breath robbers (guys know), and even brain trauma resulting from anger and from accident. Believe me, I do all I can to stay out of another's shank zone. If someone yells "Fore!" I cover my head, turn my back, and duck. Call me a wimp, but I'm not a fan of acute pain.

The irony in being hurt by a golfer, of course, is that the wound usually comes from a friend. They don't mean it, but there it is.

What really hurts in life is when a friend does injure us intentionally. Suddenly we are forced to ask the question: Is this person really a friend? When a business partner reneges or a confidant spreads your privacies in public places, you may only be able to conclude that this "friend" isn't. At least, not anymore. Or not right now. And you find a way to protect yourself.

Life, too, can test friendships. Many seemingly inseparable couples have surrendered to divorce because a special needs child drives a wedge of heavy responsibility between them. Arguments, including church arguments, divide friends. So, too, we discovered in 2020, do politics and pandemics. Many said harsh goodbyes—if they were that cordial—because a long-time friend wasn't red enough, blue enough, scientific enough, or faith-driven enough. Wow.

Friendships actually ignite the middle letter of the LINKS acrostic. The N stands for "Network friends together in Christ." You can't get that phrase right without adopting it all. Friends have a common affinity, like golf. Friends spend purposeful time in each other's company. Friends aren't loosely knit, but entangled in one another's lives. And the thing that holds them together in smooth times and rough is Jesus. That's Jesus, who didn't really care about politics or petty disagreements. He wanted to know one thing: Are you walking this road with me, the road that leads to eternity? Disciples walk that road, with him, and with each other. They walk it even where it is most rocky.

**Opening questions** When you consider your friendships in life, how many of them are connected to golf? What does the affinity for golf add to your friendship?

**READING** 1 Samuel 20:1-4, 12-13, 42; Proverbs 27:6; Philippians 4:1-3

### Dedication in friendship (1 Samuel 20)

What had come between David and Jonathan? What hard vow did Jonathan make to David? How do we know we can trust the promises of a friend?

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### Wounds of a friend (Proverbs 27)

What do you think Solomon meant when he wrote that the wounds of a friend can be trusted? When has a true friend wounded you for your own good? How did you receive that wound at the time? Why can you see the good in it now?

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### Restoring broken friendships (Philippians 4)

What was Paul's tone in verse 1? Why do you think it was important to him that Euodia and Syntyche were reconciled? How is it important to a Christian's worship and witness that he or she not maintain rifts with friends?

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Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International. An accompanying introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/0L9nQ1ig5k>