



Links Players

Practice

...though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14, ESV)

I had just driven it down the middle of the fairway on #16 at our home course. #16 is a 484-yard par five from the senior tees. The tee box faces Southeast, almost always in the wind. This day was breezy, so I was still 225 yards out to an elevated green. I thinned my three wood but got away with it. I had 35 yards left to the pin. I had to hit a wedge on the green and make my birdie putt. My team was counting on me!

I took a couple of beautiful practice swings and addressed the ball. My immaturity as a golfer reared its ugly head. I chili-dipped the shot, and it fell short of the green. I hit my next shot 25 feet past the hole and two-putted for a bogie! There is a good reason this scenario plays out more often than it should; the lack of consistent practice!

Golf, like life, is full of surprises. Thinking that you'll always hit every fairway and every green is unrealistic at best and will leave you unprepared for the challenging situations you face on the course.

After 35 years of playing golf, I should be a better short-game player. Hitting shots from the bunker, the woods, and rough deep enough to hide a small child takes constant practice.

We expect to see a beginner have trouble with his short game and challenging shots. A more seasoned golfer, i.e., one who has put the practice time in, will rise to the challenge when faced with difficult shots.

Today's scripture reminds us that we can be believers for a long time and still be immature Christians. We are still drinking from a bottle rather than eating steak!

God speaks to us through His written word, and we should read and study his word daily. But just reading and studying is not where we should stop. Putting what God teaches us into constant practice is the only way we will grow.

Jesus said that if we love him, we will study his commandments. NO! He didn't! He said if we love him, we will obey his commandments (1 John 5:1-5). Getting better at sharing the gospel only comes with, you guessed it, sharing the gospel. If you want to get better at serving? Find a way to serve. If you're going to get better at giving? Practice giving regularly.

The more we study God's word and put it into practice, the better we become at discerning his will for our life. I will grab my wedges and head to the short-game practice area after I've written about this. Who knows, maybe I'll meet someone I can serve and invite to our LINKS fellowship!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give us the desire and strength to obey your word constantly.

Keith Rushing

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