



Links Players

Kingdom Focused

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
(Matthew 6:33 NIV)*

It's a new year with new goals. For some PGA Tour players, the goal could be to move into the Top 30, a category they have never been in.

All the players want to be in the Top 30 in Fed/Ex Cup points at the end of the season to compete in the Tour Championship. However, for most players, specific areas of their game need improvement to get to that next level.

My father, Larry Nelson, qualified for the PGA Tour in 1973. For several years, the goal was to play well enough and make the money needed to keep his tour card or improve his status to play every week.

By the 1978 season, he had earned playing privileges for all the events but still needed to win. His caddie, Herb Stephens, decided to keep all of his statistics in a notebook for the entire season and gave it to him to review at the end of the year.

Larry, being a late starter to the game, knew he didn't have a great short game; however, he didn't realize how many strokes he was losing because of his lack of short-game skills until reviewing the stats.

He spent the entire off-season focused on improving his short game. The next season, Nelson won twice and finished second on the PGA Tour Money List behind Tom Watson. He qualified for the US Ryder Cup Team, went 5-0-0 in the matches, and his Hall of Fame career took off.

In golf, it is obvious what the main objective is — get the ball in the hole in fewer strokes than everyone else. If you are not doing that, well, with enough examination, you can figure out what you need to work on to improve.

I don't believe many of us know the main objective of Christianity. That is not meant to be offensive. I hope you ask yourself, "What is the main objective of following Jesus?"

If your answer is "getting to go to heaven when you die," then you have likely missed the focus of Jesus' ministry and teaching. Jesus focused his teaching on bringing heaven to earth, which should

be our focus. Remember the prayer he taught us to pray? “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

Jesus taught, demonstrated, and commanded his followers on one agenda: pursue and live out the way of heaven on earth. When his followers do it well, it is so attractive!

Ultimately, it is how the world will operate after he returns and establishes his permanent kingdom. For now, the command is given to us in grace because we will often fail in our sinful natures; however, the objective is still the same as it was 2,000 years ago — live out the kingdom of heaven on earth.

If I could offer you a goal for 2024 (now that you statistically have likely already failed your resolution), set your eyes on one trait of the kingdom of God and ask God to fill you with it.

When you experience affirmation of that accomplishment, then pursue another. That’s the simple recipe for “seeking first the kingdom.”

Prayer: May your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

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Josh Nelson

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