



# Links Players

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## The Famous Needle-Mover

*So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. (Matthew 4:24, ESV)*

“Golf has become a sport without needle-movers,” according to a recent Golf Digest article. The author summarized the decline of TV viewership of the PGA Tour to three points: 1) “Golf audiences broadly don’t care about any specific player,” 2) “A good story, rather than any single personality, is what resonates with golf audiences,” and 3) “The LIV defections, like Rahm’s, look increasingly absurd” and “the individual players might matter so little that it’s not actually doing any real damage beyond perception.”

A spike in recent viewership occurred on Sunday of the 2024 American Express tournament. Nick Dunlap, a college amateur, captured the golf world’s attention as he methodically worked his way around PGA West to win his first PGA tournament and break Phil Mickelson’s thirty-one-year record since an amateur has won a PGA Title. Dunlap became a needle-mover for one day because of his story.

The premise of the Golf Digest article jars a few similarities to when Jesus started his ministry and is familiar to us today.

During the early first century, many divisions existed among the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Herodians (Jewish elite sympathetic to Rome for selfish reasons), and the common Jewish people.

Today, we have competing theologies between denominations and a significant decline in church attendance in the United States. In both contexts, the focus is not on God; often, it is on humans doing what is right in their own eyes.

What resonated with the people who did take notice of Jesus? He taught the people through parables (stories). He healed them. He offered hope. Jesus told his story, and it changed their lives. When we stop to listen to another person’s story, space opens for an encounter with God. We experience connection and belonging with one another and to the One who created us.

There were players in Jesus’ life, like Judas, who betrayed him and others who failed to remain loyal and faded away, having zero impact on the Gospel spreading to the ends of the earth (Acts 13:47).

There will be people in every generation who refuse Jesus and turn away from God. But when believers lock arms in unity (it doesn't mean an absence of differing opinions), the power of the Gospel message breathes life.

The PGA Tour may not have a current "needle-mover" (aka Tiger), but if you are a follower of Jesus, then you know the supreme "needle-mover." Despite all the hard things happening in the world – wars, natural disasters, financial and health hardships, differences in church denominations, and the decline in church attendance, Jesus' fame is forever true.

Our stories are his story. His story is our story. With him, we all become needle-movers.

**Prayer: Lord, make me a kind and compassionate needle mover through the power of the Holy Spirit. Help me stay loyal to Jesus and rest in his story.**

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Tracy Hanson

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