



Links Players

Motivated by Love

It is right for me to feel this way about you all because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:7-8, ESV)

Golf is, in essence, an individual contest. If you shoot under par (with or without a handicap), the golfer beats the course. Anything else, and the course retains victory.

There are exceptions to this rule of play. High school and college golf are team sports with an individual component. To be a successful tour player these days, you require a team: strength trainer, nutritionist, instructor, agent, nanny, and caddy. Family and friends are included, but they are not onsite every week.

What about Christianity? Is a person's conversion to Christianity a solo experience between Jesus and the individual—what God does for me and what I do for Jesus?

Yes, every person needs to make his or her own decision to follow Jesus. And Paul writes like a coach to his team, "for you are all partakers with me of grace." Three times in two verses, Paul uses the plural all. Individuals join together in struggles (Paul's imprisonment) and in good (sharing the gospel). Paul's love for the Philippians acknowledged and encouraged their partnership with him (Philippians 1:5).

A Biblical Scholar and Sports Chaplain, Dr. Null, has shared, "We aren't defined by our accomplishments; we are defined by our relationships. But it is our relationships that make our accomplishments possible. Relationships give us emotional shock absorbers to deal with the ups and downs of sport and life."

Paul recognized the power of relationships for him and for the people he ministered to. The activities and accomplishments that we, as God's people, do are important, but relationships unite us as Christ's followers. If we get the order correct, then advancing the Kingdom of God is not dependent on our performance for God; it is the outflow of love. First by growing in our understanding of the depth of love God has for us individually, and then the love that brings us together.

The heart of a LINKS Fellowship beats strong when people love one another. The affection of Christ blooms when individuals (with differing opinions and thoughts) come together and unite as a team, abounding in love more and more, with knowledge and discernment (Philippians 1:9).

Paul encouraged his readers to understand what is excellent (verse 10) - to be different, not taking or giving offense or stumbling because of duty or religion. The fruit of righteousness (verse 11) yields better decisions, better disciples, and more faithfulness.

God's economy runs on love and relationships. Dr. Null shares, "For God, it's the relationships that matter first, not the product for his kingdom that is produced."

Prayer: Lord, your ways are not my ways. Help me to understand how much you love me and be motivated by love today.

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