



Links Players

Lesson from Ford

And pray in the spirit with all kinds of prayers and requests. (Ephesians 6:18).

My father, Ford Philpot, seldom, if ever, looked me in the eye to teach me a lesson. Like many men, he expected me just to pay attention and learn as we went along. 'Follow me,' Jesus said, and Ford's theory was similar. I was expected to learn by watching him.

One of those lessons came forty-five years ago when his friend Barry missed one of our golf trips to Florida due to cancer surgery. Ford had promised Barry that he would pray for him on the day of the surgery- but he forgot.

We got around to the middle of the 12th fairway when Ford confessed that he had forgotten to pray. He was excited about his golf game with his buddies. But now, he was distressed about his failure. He hit his second shot onto the green. He immediately got down on his knees in the middle of the fairway and prayed out loud for Barry—just a minute or so.

But it was very loud and very visible. And he didn't seem to care about the guys behind us wondering what was taking so long up there. I was totally embarrassed by this scene of my father holding up the golf course to pray. I walked as fast as I could to the green to get away from this crazy man kneeling in the fairway.

But here I am, forty years later, with a memory that has not disappeared.

Time taught me that it is never too late to pray. It is okay to forget to pray, to pray when you do remember, and to pray on a golf course—in the middle of the day, in the middle of the 12th fairway.

By the way, I only remember this story because Barry just died last month at age 95. Ford's prayers mattered.

That day gave me courage many years later to pray for a man named Tom, whom I had never met until we were paired in a golf tournament. Nice guy. Nice player.

But during the round, he did a couple of odd things- like pick up his ball from two inches instead of tapping in. This was a real tournament, and I was keeping his score. Perhaps you know that feeling. What do I put down for him on the scorecard? After a couple of those incidents, Tom realized his mistake and spoke up, "Sorry, guys. My mind is not here. We've had a bad week. My wife has cancer."

The whole group expressed sympathy and moved on. We finished on the 14th hole (shotgun start). And as we putted out, my mind heard Ford's voice, praying for Barry in the middle of a fairway. Ford was already in heaven by then, but I could hear his voice, and my heart was pounding.

I heard myself say, "Guys, would it be alright if we prayed right here, right now, for Tom and his wife." In one of the craziest moments of my golf life, we stood on the 14th green and held hands and prayed with tears for Tom and his wife, who died a few weeks later.

As you might imagine, Tom and I became dear friends, and he became a regular at our Thursday morning Bible study at the golf course.

Ford showed me. It's never too late to pray. It's never too soon to pray. It's never too crazy to pray. For more about my dad, try www.fordswonderfulworld.com, published by LinksPlayers in 2013.

Prayer: Oh, Lord, teach us to pray. Any time. Any place. Amen.

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Tim Philpot

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