



# Links Players

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## On Sanctification in Golf and Life

*For this is the will of God, your sanctification..." (Thess. 4:3, NASB)*

One day, two years ago, I was hitting balls on the range at Champions Golf Club in Houston, and I did something I had never done before and will probably never do again: I hit the flagstick on two consecutive shots from 125 yards away with a pitching wedge.

I don't mean I threw my wedge from 125 yards, and the spinning club caught some part of the flag. I hit a ball that is 1.68 inches in diameter, and that ball struck a flagstick no more than an inch in diameter from more than a football field away—and I did it twice in a row.

Looking back, I should have just quit golf then and there. I could have said forever I had mastered the game. Then I could have taken up pickleball or some other form of recreation that was better exercise, less time-consuming, and less frustrating.

What I find interesting in looking back on those two shots is that I can safely say I hit two shots as well as any two in a row Tiger Woods ever hit with a wedge. That could also be said of other shots I've hit. I've hit long drives that split the fairway. I once made a hole-in-one with a six-iron. I've holed an impossibly long putt. If you've played golf long enough, you've also probably hit such shots.

This must mean the most significant difference between my golf game and Tiger Woods's is not my best shots but my worst ones. My bad drive goes out of bounds; Tiger's trickles into the rough. My bad iron shot is 20 yards short of the green; Tiger's is 20 feet right of the pin. My bad bunker shot doesn't get out of the bunker; Tiger's is 15 feet from the pin. The test of how good I am as a golfer is not so much the quality of my good shots as the quality of my bad ones.

It's the same with our sanctification. Every Christian is called to be conformed to the image of Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8: 29). This process starts when we are born again ("regeneration") and ends at death when we go to be with Jesus and are changed for eternity ("glorification"). The process of sanctification is between justification and glorification.

We all start at different places on the path of becoming more like Jesus, but the best test of how far along we are is not what we are like when we are at our best, but what we are like when we are at our worst.

Everyone is smiling and friendly for the ninety minutes at church on Sunday morning. But who we are is how we are the rest of the week, when few are watching—how we treat our spouse at home, our subordinates at work, or the person who cuts us off on the freeway.

In short, if I want my golf game to be more like Tiger Woods's, I need to improve my worst shots, and if I want to be more like Jesus, I need to be better when I am at my worst.

**Prayer: Jesus, help me be better when I am at my worst and be more like you. Amen.**

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