



Links Players

The Jesus Plan

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12–13).

You have probably never heard of Dan McLaughlin. I hadn't until I read *Peak*, a book about the science of improving performance.

As *Peak* notes, McLaughlin read the bestselling book, *Outliers*, in which Malcom Gladwell discussed what he dubbed the “10,000 Hour Rule”— that if a person practices anything for at least 10,000 hours, they will become proficient.

McLaughlin was so convinced of the 10,000-Hour Rule that, at age thirty, he quit his job with the intent of practicing 10,000 hours and qualifying for the PGA Tour. This he called The Dan Plan.

And there is one other thing: before implementing The Dan Plan, McLaughlin had hardly ever touched a golf club. Only 10,000 hours? Master the piano? Possibly. Master Pebble Beach? Not likely!

In the end, after four years and 5,000 hours of practice, McLaughlin got down to a 2.6 handicap before he injured his back and gave up on The Dan Plan.

Still, the experiment is fascinating and is good proof of *Peak*'s premise—that the primary driver of extraordinary performance is deliberate practice, not innate ability.

Because thoughts of God and golf reside in close proximity in my brain and sometimes conflate, I wondered, “What if a person applied the 10,000-Hour Rule in pursuit of sanctification?” I know this sounds outlandish and unspiritual.

As in swinging a golf club, almost every natural instinct we have as fallen human beings is wrong. Also, humans, whose natural instinct is to be bad, don't typically engage in deliberate practice to be good.

Surprisingly, though, there is a well-known case of someone doing just that. He started by creating a list of thirteen virtues he wanted to master. He then focused on one virtue per week, tracking his success or failure in a chart. After thirteen weeks, he repeated the process, cycling through all thirteen virtues four times in a year.

Years later, writing of the experiment, he said, “ I was surprised to find myself so much fuller of faults than I had imagined; but I had the satisfaction of seeing them diminish.” He concluded that while he

had fallen far short of the perfection he sought, "I was, by the endeavor, a better and a happier man than I otherwise should have been." The person was Benjamin Franklin.

The Apostle Paul knew something about sanctification. He spoke of pressing on to become like Jesus. He writes, "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on . . ." There is work to be done on our part, a form of deliberate practice.

We could call it The Paul Plan, but it is really The Jesus Plan. Like The Dan Plan, we have a teacher to correct our wrong impulses, but He is divine, and He not only teaches us but also empowers us to be conformed to the image of Jesus.

The Jesus Plan, though, is only for those who have already become Christians. It does no good to try to become more like Jesus until you have been born again. If you try to be good before you get right, you will only get frustrated.

But for those of us who have become Christians and been filled with the Holy Spirit, all this talk of The Dan Plan, Benjamin Franklin, and deliberate practice has been intended to lead to this one question: What would happen if we put the same deliberate practice into becoming like Jesus as we do in trying to become like Tiger Woods?

Prayer: Lord, help me to be more deliberate in my effort to become more like You. Amen.

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Scott Fiddler

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