



Links Players

Wrestling with God

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” (John 1:47–48)

Anyone who’s played golf for a while has probably thought about quitting at some point. Looking back, those moments might seem laughable—but in the heat of frustration, they’re anything but funny.

After hours of practice, when the shanks invade your iron play, and you post an embarrassingly high tournament score, it can feel as if the whole game has turned against you. You think, This just isn’t worth it anymore.

As we often say in the Links Players community, life is a lot like golf. Go through a divorce, face bankruptcy, or lose someone you love, and those same haunting words can echo in your heart: Life just isn’t worth it anymore.

The disciple Nathanael may have felt something similar as he sat beneath a fig tree. The Chosen offers a moving backstory: Nathanael, a gifted architect, dreamed of designing and building the Temple—the very house of the Lord. When that dream collapsed, he sat alone in a field, crying out to Yahweh, “This was for You, God. Why has this happened?” In despair, he burned his architectural plans, watching his dreams rise in smoke—yet he still prayed the Psalms.

Then Nathanael’s friend Philip invited him to meet Jesus. What followed was a revelation so personal that no one else could have known it:

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There’s more to Jesus’ words than initially meets the eye. He compares Nathanael’s brutal honesty with that of the patriarch Jacob, whose name originally meant “deceiver.”

After wrestling with God through the night and refusing to let go, Jacob’s name was changed to Israel—“one who wrestles with God.” Similarly, Jesus recognized that Nathanael, like Jacob, had wrestled with God, holding on in faith while vulnerably crying out with the psalmist, “Do not hide your face from me!” (Psalm 102:2).

Nathanael had likely poured out his heart in doubt and despair. Yet in that brief exchange, Jesus revealed profound truths:

- “I saw you.” → Jesus affirms that He was present with Nathanael in his struggle.
- “I heard you.” → He reveals Himself as the God who listens and sees.
- “I am the One you were crying out to.” → Jesus identifies Himself as God incarnate—the bridge [ladder] between heaven and earth.

Golf frustration may feel significant, but it pales beside life’s real crises. Broken relationships, failure, and loss confront us all—and they can lead either to bitterness and despair or to faith, hope, and love from a God who sees, hears, and reaches down to those who cry out to Him.

Those who wrestle with God and refuse to let go discover that He meets them in their struggle, shapes them into the likeness of His Son, fills them with enduring hope, and equips them for the mission He has prepared for them.

Prayer: Lord, I will not let go of You; please do not let go of me. Bless me, guide me, and send me.

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Boo Arnold

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