



# Links Players

## IDOLS | THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF A NEW AFFECTION

*And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; ... He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. (1 John 5:20-21, ESV)*

*What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, and anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. An idol is whatever you say in your heart of hearts: If I have that, then I'll feel my life has meaning, then I'll know I have value, then I'll feel significant and secure.*  
*Tim Keller, Counterfeit Gods*

Most golf movies just do not get it done for me. My first encounter with this genre was Follow the Sun, starring Glen Ford as Ben Hogan.

I'm not qualified to critique acting, cinematography, screenwriting, or musical scores. I was just never able to get past Ford's inability to mimic Hogan's swing. What actor could?

What I am about to admit borders on "sacrilegious" for many golfers. I have never seen Caddyshack or Happy Gilmore, and I have no interest in either. It is a brand- of-humor thing.

The only golf movie I have watched more than once is Tin Cup. Except for the last scene where Roy is pumping balls into the lake, my favorite scene is McAvoy in his trailer, hooked up to more than a few training aids.

Fictional or non-fictional, every golfer at any level of talent and skill has experienced seasons of bad mechanics. Or as the Europeans like to say, "bad form."

The question, of course, is how to correct the flaw and return to "form" as quickly as possible. Often, a swing flaw is the result of another issue. Focusing on the obvious flaw rarely solves the problem. One must look elsewhere—the deeper issue causing the problem.

While there are fascinating conversations about this sometimes-controversial topic, at the end of the day, we want to replace a bad habit with a good one. Seems obvious, right? Right! As we say, "it's easier said than done."

Similarly, conquering a persistent vice is not easy. Rarely, if ever, do we move from immoral to virtuous behavior by attacking the problem head-on.

Why is that? More often than not, our moral issue is a symptom, not the cause. Our external behaviors typically stem from a root issue lurking beneath. Said more simply, our behaviors are the outcomes of our hearts' alignment.

For example, wealth and wealth management are good things. But like any good thing, money can easily become Mammon (i.e., the love of money). The man with wealth drifts from looking to Christ for his identity, purpose, security, and significance and replaces the Giver with the gift—thus, a good thing becomes an idol.

The deeper issue for all of us is not necessarily noble pursuits like lowering our handicap versus unacceptable vices like drinking too much; rather, the fundamental problem is the object of our longings.

When we look to anything other than Jesus Christ for security, significance, identity, and ultimate purpose, we have traded the best thing for a good thing and made it an idol.

Thomas Chalmers, a Scottish Puritan, captured it best in a sermon titled The Expulsive Power of a New Affection: "The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection [idol] is by the expulsive power of a new one." By that, he meant a deep yearning for Christ.

When that happens, wealth, lower handicaps, time spent repairing flawed mechanics, and many other good things are subordinated to Christ and find their rightful place in our lives.

It goes without saying that vices are vices and can never be anything else. But the same remedy applies: allow your heart to gaze on the beauty of Jesus, and watch the expulsive power of a new affection drive those behaviors from your life.

Or, as the Apostle Paul says, "...we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another."

If you desire to rid your life of idols, transformation comes from beholding the beauty of the Lord, not by willpower.

**Prayer: Jesus! Break into our hearts with a vision of your beauty.**

