



# Links Players

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## Using God's Gifts

*And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins... (Luke 1:76-77)*

When you think back over successful golfers on the PGA Tour, certain players are remembered for specific skills that stood out among their fellow competitors.

On the green, one of the best was Ben Crenshaw; his talent with the flat stick was instrumental in winning two green jackets on Augusta's treacherous greens.

The flop shot from around the green requires precision touch, and no one does it any better than Phil Mickelson.

And when you think of someone who could escape from trouble, my mind goes to Seve Ballesteros, a magician at recovering from impossible lies.

Now, let's consider the two golfers often debated as the G.O.A.T., Tiger Woods excelled at all parts of the game. Still, one shot unique to him was his famous stinger, a low, controlled iron shot, especially effective into the wind. Tiger mastered that shot and put it to good use over his outstanding career.

When you come to Jack Nicklaus, I think of his mental toughness. A couple of quotes from Tom Weiskopf sum up this part of Golden Bear's game: "Jack knew he was going to beat you. You knew Jack was going to beat you. And Jack knew that you knew that he was going to beat you."

More from Weiskopf: "Trying to beat Jack Nicklaus head-to-head in the final round of a major was like trying to drain the Pacific Ocean with a teacup." Well said!

The Bible tells the story of one whose special talent was foretold long before he walked the earth. In the book of Isaiah, written 700 years before his birth, we read about the man we know as John the Baptist: "A voice of one calling: 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'" (Isaiah 40:3)

John's parents were Zechariah and Elizabeth, elderly and childless. But an angel spoke to Zechariah about a forthcoming son: "He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:16-18)

When John was born months later, Zechariah prophesied, saying, "And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins," (Luke 1:76-77)

John's special gift was to prepare the way of the Lord, which he did by proclaiming repentance for the forgiveness of sins. There's an old Danish proverb that says, "What you are is your gift from God. What you do with yourself is your gift to God." So the question is - how can you use your gifts to serve Him and bring glory to His Kingdom?

**Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the unique talents you have given to each of us. Help us to identify our gifts and be intentional about using them in service to you. Amen**

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