



LINKS PLAYERS DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Links Players

Warning: Swing Under Construction

Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace. (Psalm 37:37, ESV)

There are brief periods in every golfer's life when we seem to have made peace with our golf swing. The ball is going where we're looking, the misses are manageable, and the game seems remarkably simple. We aren't thinking about what we're doing. We're just playing golf.

Unfortunately, these periods seldom last, and it's not always because the swing stops working. Sometimes it's because we can't leave it alone.

Then a thought creeps in. If I can play this well, there must be another level I can reach. Perhaps a slightly different grip, a little more rotation, or a change in ball position is all that's standing between me and the golfer I was apparently meant to become.

And so, it begins. Adding, subtracting, multiplying, reducing, opening, closing, flattening, and steepening. Soon we've disassembled a perfectly good swing and are staring at a puzzle with missing pieces. Naturally, we consult someone who suggests moving a few more of them.

A recent Denison Forum discussion of German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer caught my attention. In *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer describes an irrational, insatiable force he calls the Will, which drives human desire. The Forum summarizes his observation this way:

"Getting what we want leads only to temporary relief, which is followed by boredom and the quest for something new."

We swing between the pain of wanting something and the boredom of finally having it.

I immediately thought of my golf game. Schopenhauer probably wasn't much of a swing instructor, but he certainly understood the people taking lessons.

The pattern extends well beyond golf. We work toward something for years, believing that achieving it will bring a lasting sense of satisfaction. And sometimes it does, at least for a little while. But before we've had much opportunity to enjoy what we've accomplished, we're already considering what needs to change or what comes next.

A bigger house, another accomplishment, a new opportunity, a little more recognition. We tell ourselves we're simply trying to improve, and perhaps we are. There's certainly nothing wrong with

ambition or the desire to grow. But somewhere along the way, improvement can become less about making something better and more about our inability to leave anything alone.

Nearly sixteen centuries before Schopenhauer, St. Augustine offered a different perspective when he wrote in his Confessions, “Our heart is restless until it rests in You.”

Schopenhauer recognized the problem of our insatiable desires. Augustine understood that the answer wasn’t necessarily to satisfy more of them.

I wonder how much of our restlessness comes from confusing contentment with complacency. We seem to think that being satisfied with what God has given us means we’ve surrendered the possibility of becoming something more.

Yet perhaps contentment isn’t the absence of ambition at all. Perhaps it’s the ability to pursue something better without sacrificing the joy of what we already have.

God has given us minds capable of imagining, creating, learning, and improving. Those are wonderful gifts. But He also gave us the ability to recognize beauty, experience gratitude, and enjoy the present. It seems a shame to exercise the former so relentlessly that we lose the latter.

I’ve spent way too much time trying to recapture swings that I probably should have left alone in the first place. And I suspect I’ve spent just as much time adjusting the wrong things off the golf course.

Maybe the next time everything seems to be working, instead of immediately wondering how much better it could be, I’ll simply be grateful and remind myself of something I should have learned a long time ago.

“Just hit the shot!”

Prayer: Father God, thank You for the gifts of my lifetime. Please grant me acceptance and the wisdom to enjoy them. Amen.

Keith Wood

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