



LINKS PLAYERS DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Links Players

The Inner Ring

Then the master told his servant, "Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full." (Luke 14:23)

When you first joined your club, you probably noticed pretty quickly that there were cliques. Instinctively, you surveyed the social landscape, trying to figure out who was who and where you might fit. Who were the better players? Who were the regular groups? Who did you hope might invite you to play?

Before long, you may have detected something else—an inner circle. And strangely, the mere perception that such a circle existed made it more attractive. These were the people who shared the inside jokes, received the invitations, and seemed to know things everyone else didn't.

And perhaps you thought, I'd like to be part of that.

C. S. Lewis explores this desire in his essay *The Inner Ring*. He describes the peculiar pleasure of being on the "inside." Inner circles are often held together by shared secrets, insider language, mutual recognition, and, perhaps most importantly, the awareness that other people are on the outside.

Lewis makes an important distinction between this and genuine friendship. Friendship forms around a shared love: We both love this thing. The Inner Ring forms around exclusivity: We are the people who know. They aren't.

There is nothing wrong with friendships naturally forming around common interests. Golf itself does this. We enjoy playing, competing, laughing, and sharing something we love.

The danger begins when belonging itself becomes the object—when we want to be inside simply because someone else is outside.

That's when the Inner Ring can become corrupting.

Rarely does anyone explicitly ask us to compromise our convictions. It's usually more subtle. We hold our tongues when we should speak. We laugh at something we don't find funny. We agree when we'd rather disagree. Little by little, conviction is sacrificed for the privilege of remaining "one of us."

And once we finally get inside, the satisfaction doesn't last. There is always another circle.

That's because the Inner Ring isn't really about friendship. It's about status and identity. He plays with that group, so he must be pretty good. She's friends with those people, so she must be important.

Lewis's prescription is simple: Stop trying to get in. Pursue things you genuinely love because they are worth loving. Let friendships grow naturally around common interests, shared experiences, and mutual respect. Enjoy people because you genuinely enjoy them, not because association with them elevates your status.

For followers of Jesus, there is an even deeper lesson.

Jesus tells a story about a man who prepares a great banquet. When the invited guests make excuses, the master sends his servant into the streets to bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. When the servant returns, there is still room.

So, the master says, "Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full."

The Kingdom of God turns the Inner Ring upside down.

The Inner Ring says, "We are in because they are out."

Jesus says, "There is still room. Go bring them in."

Our Links Fellowship should reflect that same spirit. Social groups will naturally form, but followers of Jesus should never build their identity around excluding others—or spend their lives aspiring to belong to groups that do.

We can become so consumed with getting into the right group, receiving the right invitation, playing with the right people, and finding our place in the social order that we fail to notice something extraordinary:

Jesus has already invited us to the Great Banquet.

Perhaps one of life's great tragedies would be to miss the banquet because we were too busy trying to get into the Inner Ring.

Prayer: Lord, may my deepest interests become Yours, and Yours become mine. And may those who are drawn to those same things naturally become my community.

Boo Arnold

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