

THE NARRATIVE OF SCRIPTURE, PART 4

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. (Galatians 3:16a, NIV)

OBSCURITY IS HARD TO COME BY THESE DAYS. While Francis Ouimet and Bobby Jones developed an eager interest in golf as boys, their efforts were seen as child’s play and good fathers would not dare sign off on a son’s pursuit of golfing excellence, even as amateurs. There was too much important work to be done. So not only were young men like these unknown in their youth, they were discouraged from going forward in building their skills.

In our time, however, we have all seen the early television appearances of Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy. The exploits of our best junior golfers appear in magazines like *GolfWeek* and *Global Golf Post*, encouraging us to keep our eyes open for the next great sensation. Add to this the weekly airing of *The Short Game* on Esquire TV, and we may be long past the day when we will say of a player, “Didn’t see that one coming.” Sorry, Larry Nelson. Sorry, Zach Johnson.

When we look at the accounts of Scripture, we might find ourselves saying of nearly every one of God’s chosen leaders: “Didn’t see that one coming.” A few, like Noah, were tagged as “righteous” and then God called them. But most were plucked from humble living, unknown to anyone outside their family and a few equally obscure neighbors.

This is what makes the beginning of God’s work among the people whom he would call his own so fascinating. The people of Israel—and, for that matter, the entire household of faith—began with an unheralded man named Abraham.

But out of all those people down through the ages, one would stand alone. One would bring the fulfillment of God’s promises not just to build a numerous progeny descending from Abraham and Sarah, but to save the people from their sin.

In Paul’s letter to the Galatians, the apostle emphasized the singularity of this seed: “The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16b).

It’s a fascinating story when you know the whole thing. Many Bible teachers have emphasized Jesus’ own obscurity as a carpenter’s son from the little town of Nazareth. But when you have the sweep Scripture to read from, you really can say of the Savior: “Hey, we saw this one coming!”

Opening questions What does it take to transition childhood ability and energy to adult success? Tell the story of a friend or colleague who moved from humble beginnings to well-known excellence.

READING Genesis 12:1-4, Matthew 13:53-58, Philemon 1:8-17

God’s call to Abraham

What did God require of Abraham? What did he promise to him? How does this promise extend even to us?

Missing the man

In Matthew 13, how did the onlookers perceive Jesus’ upbringing and miss who he really was? What mistakes can we make in seeing what God does in a person’s life by considering only their familiar or obvious qualities?

Serving the lowly

In Philemon, Paul encouraged a Christian brother to mercifully welcome back his runaway slave, Onesimus. How did God’s work in Onesimus inspire Paul’s exhortation?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 4-minute video accompanies today’s study at http://youtu.be/oYU_GfAAC00w