

BACKWARD THINKING, PART 2

... one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-13, NASB)

NOT SO MANY DAYS AGO, I received one of my favorite all-time phone calls. It came from a leader of a Links Fellowship who was seeking the assurance that nearly every golfer eventually needs: “Please tell me I’m not crazy!”

The game will do it to you. You get to muttering out there, and suddenly you have one of those metacognitive moments, where you’re thinking about your thinking. *Am I really talking to myself? My goodness, what has taken hold of me? I must be one step from the loony bin. And golf has done this to me!*

What this friend wanted to know was whether he was off his rocker for believing that golf could teach him things about his walk with Christ. Was he overspiritualizing? Had this intelligent, clear-thinking, long-time Christian gone over the line? He knew his pastor couldn’t help him with this one; he needed to talk to a golfer, someone who would “understand.” So he called me. Ha!

What we ended up talking about was how his attitude on the golf course was confirming what he had already suspected about himself in other aspects of his life. In a word, he was a *quitter*. It sounds so harsh to say it like that, I know. You might as well call someone a *liar* or *stupid*. There’s just no way to pretty it up.

But this friend had been doing the right thing. He’d been praying, talking to God about his ah-just-give-up propensities. Do you know what God had told him? *You need endurance*. Now his golf game—which drove him to stop caring as soon as a round went sideways—was telling him the same thing.

When I talked with another golfing friend about this conversation, the second friend thought about it for a week and said to me (in the middle of a golf round, of course), “You know, that guy doesn’t need endurance so much as he needs to disconnect.” Now, I’m going to go with God before I go with the advice of a buddy. If God says you need endurance, you need endurance! But this second friend was right in identifying a step along the way. If we are going to endure, to persevere, in the faith, we need to separate ourselves from past events, good or bad, and press on into the calling that matters most—the calling to walk with Jesus, now and into eternity.

Opening questions How would you describe your prevailing detrimental attitude on the golf course? Does this attitude cross over into other areas of your life? When you think of endurance, what comes to mind?

READING Luke 9:57-62; Philippians 3:4-14

Hand to the plow (Luke 9)

What excuses are given in this passage for delaying in following Jesus? What excuses have you heard (or made) for not taking up the work of the Lord?

A shift in perspective (Philippians 3)

What exchange in perspective did Paul make that reoriented the focus and course of his life?

How does a proper mindset contribute to excellent action?

What actions would be involved in pressing on in your walk with Christ?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 7-minute video accompanies today's study at <https://youtu.be/iLlYjUiqk8>