

## BACKWARD THINKING, PART 6

*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1, NASB)*

**V**ISUALIZATION IS THE FAITH OF ATHLETICS. Jack Nicklaus wrote of it many years ago in his classic, *Golf My Way*. It has been picked up in most every sport and even had a place on a painter’s easel in David Cook’s *Golf’s Sacred Journey: Seven Days at the Links of Utopia*. PGA champion Jason Day noticeably uses it, as does US Amateur champ Bryson DeChambeau.

The idea is simple: when you see something happening first, you have a very good chance of pulling it off in reality. Except this: you’re the one who has to make it happen. No wonder it works for top players and not so much for me!

You see, as much as we might want to connect the faith of an athlete in his or her own ability and the faith of a man or woman in God—and in both cases there is an aspect of believing what cannot be seen—there is a fundamental difference between the two approaches. The difference is the object of the faith.

Near the end of John’s gospel, we find a famous exchange between Jesus and the disciple Thomas. It was Thomas, you’ll recall, who asked to see Jesus for himself before he would believe the others that the Lord had indeed risen from the dead. When Jesus came to show himself to Thomas, to let him touch his hands and side, Thomas praised Jesus: “My Lord and my God!” Jesus went on to tell Thomas that he had believed because he had seen, but those who believed without seeing would be all the more blessed.

We are among those, of course, who have not seen Jesus with our own physical eyes. You might think this would be to our detriment, and certainly we have all longed at times—in our aloneness or pain—for the actual presence of Jesus. Yet there is Jesus’ promised blessing. And it is faith, that hope of what is to come and the aspiration to attain it, that secures the blessing, because Christ himself is secure. A faith in him, though we have not seen him in the flesh, is “the assurance of things hoped for.”

So as we have been considering for several weeks, we do well not to slip into nostalgia, attaching our hearts to past achievements or former comforts. These are only earthly memories, distant from today, and infinitely distant from the upward calling that ends in eternal life. They are not at all like the faith that sees Jesus.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today’s study at [https://youtu.be/k2D518xK\\_2s](https://youtu.be/k2D518xK_2s)

**Opening questions** Have you tried visualizing shots on the golf course? How has it worked for you? • Generally speaking, do you have faith that things will work in your favor? How about eternal things?

**READING** Matthew 8:5-13; Acts 3:1-16 ; Mark 4:35-41

### Seeing and trusting (Matthew 8)

What could the centurion see through faith that others could not? How did Jesus respond to the soldier’s faith?

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### The object of our faith (Acts 3)

At the conclusion of this passage, Peter assessed the miracle. What was Jesus’ role in this miracle, even though he was not present? What does this tell us about where our faith should be placed?

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### Faith and Jesus’ power (Mark 4)

What role does faith play (or not play) in this narrative? How does seeing Jesus’ power in this past event fortify your faith in him today?

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