

## SHARING YOUR FAITH, PART 3

*“Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up.” (Mark 4:3, NASB)*

**M**OST GOLFERS HAVE A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP when it comes to birds on the course. It’s a beautiful thing to see an egret in flight across a shimmering lake; it’s not so nice to scrape away goose droppings so you can play a low, running shot up to the hole. It’s a wonder to watch a soaring hawk on the winds above the open expanse of a wide fairway, but we also remember the time Tom Kite lost out on a chance to win the FleetBoston Classic when his ball struck a bird in mid-flight and fell into the water for a late-round penalty.

If we say nothing else, it’s this: birds are very much a part of our game. And we can certainly agree that we love birdies, eagles, and albatrosses!

Perhaps surprisingly, birds also played a role in the parable that is the focus of our current series of studies on sharing your faith. Before we get to those birds, it is important to recognize that in Jesus’ story the seed was broadcast—that is, it was strewn widely, with intent that it would take root, but also with the understanding that there would be some casualties in the sowing. Even among the seed that germinated, it would not all grow equally.

The first fate of the sown seed was that it fell beside the road, where birds came and ate it up. Simple enough. But the disciples knew there was a meaning behind this story, as with all Jesus’ parables. And they asked about it. Jesus told them, “The sower sows the word. These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them” (Mark 4:14-15).

If you are committed and active in sharing your faith, this can be a discouraging explanation. *You mean some of our work will be in vain, quickly sabotaged by the enemy?* That is the case. But it is also informative in those times when we are sowing seeds one by one. Then we may find ourselves sitting with someone who has no interest at all in salvation. This is when we may turn from sowing today to prepare the soil for another time. We can make sensitive comments and ask sensitive questions, like this: “Maybe I’m sorry to have brought this up. Did you have a bad experience with religion somewhere along the way? I know plenty of people have.” In this way, you can keep the conversation going, build the friendship, and pray for an opportunity to sow into better soil at another time.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International. You will find an introductory video for this study at <https://youtu.be/fK.m7t4q3ud8>.

**Opening questions** What is the most memorable animal encounter you’ve ever had on the golf course? • What are some reasons people are resistant to hearing the message of Jesus?

**READING** Romans 10:14-15; Matthew 7:6; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; James 1:19

### Bringing good news (Romans 10)

What part are we meant to play in helping others believe in Jesus?

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### Dogs and swine (Matthew 7)

What might we do when we encounter firm resistance to the word we bring?

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### Morals and messages (1 Corinthians 5)

What does this passage teach us about staying in the conversation with willing unbelievers?

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### Listening and speaking (James 1)

How does this verse inform our methodology in sharing the Gospel?

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