

## SHARING YOUR FAITH, PART 5

*“Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.” (Mark 4:7, NASB)*

IT'S NOT ENOUGH, when you are paired with a friend for an important tournament, to just show up and hope your game does too. We would call that a nominal commitment to a significant endeavor. And we just might compromise our friendship if we go about it that way.

Sadly, this is what many people have done ever since the time of Jesus when it comes to their relationship with him. Wilbur Rees is credited with a little poem that begins like this and captures the silliness of going only partway with God:

I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please.  
 Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep,  
 but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk  
 or a snooze in the sunshine.

A later line in this poem says, “I want ecstasy not transformation.” It reminds me of the casual golfer who lazily shoots a hundred every time out, but who can with greatest pleasure recount every detail of his 10-year-old accidental hole-in-one.

In his parable about the seeds and the soil, Jesus noted that there would be those who heard the word of God as it was spread and who received it well enough, but then “the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mark 4:19).

In a word, such people let their faith fall into nominalism. It fit an ad hoc need once, but when the suggestion comes that their commitment deepen so their faith might flourish, they step back in contentment and wait until another hour of desperation. Then they'll check in with God again.

The work of those who share their faith does not end with a gospel message. If our faith is as rooted and full as Jesus wants it to be, then we should desire this same fullness for others. As a matter of fact, Jesus said that those who make a commitment without counting the cost are foolish. We should not shy away from explaining—when we “give 'em the Gospel”—that following Jesus means more than a nod of the head. It may start there, but where it leads is far grittier and far grander than any accidental happiness that comes our way.

**Opening questions** How would you define the difference between a good partner and a bad partner in a golf tournament? • What are some of the “worries of the world” that take a bite out of your faith?

**READING** Matthew 6:25-34; Colossians 3:1-3; Luke 14:25-33

### Worries that get in the way of faith (Matthew 6)

What categories of concern did Jesus address in this passage? How might we accomplish “seeking first” God’s kingdom?

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### Things above (Colossians 3)

How can we actively set our mind on things above? What might a list of such things include, and how do these things trump earthly pursuits?

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### Serious commitment (Luke 14)

This passage uncovers the difference between giving Jesus a head nod, as it were, and really following him. How is the idea and practice of true discipleship both demanding and appealing?

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Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International. You will find an introductory video for this study at <https://youtu.be/ZZR3AtriQfM>.