

STANDING BY ONE ANOTHER

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts... (1 Corinthians 12:12, NIV)

IF I WERE TO OFFER A CONCLUSION TO OUR RECENT SERIES about the ministering actions of Jesus, it would be this: as brothers and sisters in Christ, our lives are to be deeply entangled. Maybe we should not be surprised, then, that the Lord has led us to this very spot in our study today, which was first intended to be the introduction to a new series from the pages of the 2016 Links Players Magazine.

When Jeffrey Cranford and I sat down to begin filming the opener videos for this series, we had to take a few minutes to catch people up. That’s what happens when the doctors give you one of *those* diagnoses. It’s like hitting your ball in the weeds—everything comes to a halt and your group starts searching together until the matter can be resolved.

This is to say that the story of my cancer this year has never been my own story. It has also been the story of the now countless people who have come around me. Many of these are medical people, of course. I was told just before my first surgery in July that as many as 30 different people would be in the operating room! In times like that, it’s ridiculous to talk about the “most valuable player” on the team; you want and need them all.

But from the time of the first doctor’s phone call telling me I had this mass in me that did not belong there, so many more have been there. And these have been brothers and sisters in Christ. They have listened and prayed and written and prayed and called and prayed. They have put their physical and spiritual arms around me and my wife and my parents and my children. They have been the body of Christ.

I almost hesitate to use that expression, *body of Christ*. It’s biblical, of course, but it’s also one of those labels so commonly used among Christians that it can be glossed over. The glossing ends, though, when we return to the passage from where the label comes, and see 1 Corinthians 12:26: “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

If your relationships in Christ are not that interconnected, it may well be time for you to focus your efforts on two things: First, live more openly in strength and in weakness before others. Give them a chance to care for you, to minister. Second, live more willing to suffer and rejoice with friends who are hurting and succeeding. We must put ourselves aside to do either of these things—and it is so good when we do.

Opening questions What are some ways golfers, both partners and fellow competitors, help one another on the golf course? • What is one of the most meaningful ways someone has helped you in your life?

READING 1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Romans 12:15-16; 1 Samuel 20:42

The body metaphor (1 Corinthians 12)

What details catch your attention from Paul’s extended metaphor about the body of Christ? What calls to action do you find in this passage?

Harmonious living (Romans 12)

What would have to change in your perspective and your practice for you to live out the directives of this passage?

Sworn friendship (1 Samuel 20)

David and Jonathan were forced apart by King Saul’s murderous intent toward David, yet Jonathan (Saul’s son) stood by his friend. How does a friendship this close inspire and challenge you?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International. A four-minute introductory video is available for this study at <https://youtu.be/zrjyXlJp04K4>