

## OUR WORK IS STILL THE SAME

“... knew you not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49, KJ2000)

THOSE WHO REALLY WORK AT THE GAME—the professionals on tour and amateurs playing at the highest levels—often use an expression to explain how they maintain their focus and drive even when their scores are not as they would wish. They say, “It’s about the process.”

Golf can be such a mental-emotional game, especially since there is no way to escape the mirror. You cannot, in an individual sport, point to the errors or shortcomings of others as the reason for failure. Every disappointing result is an opportunity for lasting discouragement. *Will I ever escape this funk? Will my success ever return?*

This is where process is critical. Maintaining the same commitments to practice, and holding onto the same benchmarks for advancement, a player can forge progress even before it is detectable. If the process is trustworthy, then the work is the same, whether the day brings a celebrated score or an unwanted one.

I sat in a council of elders this week, and before “the work of the church” began, we chatted about the events of the day, which included the report that Russian leaders had asserted influence on American elections. There were questions among us about the President-elect’s connections to the Russians and what the coming years will be like with new leadership in place. This same conversation, with different details and concerns, takes place in any democracy when you enter those months of transition between an election and an inauguration. *What changes are coming? Will they serve us well?*

At this point in the discussion, it hit me: our work does not change. “The work of the church” is always the work of the church, no matter the winds of finance or medicine or politics. Whether they advance or retreat, we are, like Jesus, to be about our Father’s business.

Often we speak of sharing the gospel and winning souls like we do of athletic competitions, with our eyes only on the outcome. But outcome is the product of process. The practices of our process are these: belief, prayer, study, meditation, humility, contentment, service, testimony, love. If we adhere to these, we not only find a steady gait in uncertain times, but we see the results of our unwavering work in the changed hearts of others.

**Opening questions** Do you approach the game with a process, or is it more of a haphazard attempt to score? • How about matters of the faith—are you dedicated or counting on serendipity?

**READING** Luke 2:43-50; Matthew 6:25-34; Daniel 6:1-23

### Our Father’s business (Luke 2)

What exactly was Jesus doing at the temple, when he was “about [his] Father’s business”? What Father’s business practices do you need to institute with more regularity in your life?

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### Combating cares of the day (Matthew 6)

In Jesus’ teaching here, what does he say is greater work than worry? How is this different than just brushing things off?

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### A dedicated life (Daniel 6)

What unwavering practices of dedication did Daniel display? How did these practices serve to bear witness to God’s power at a desperate time?

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