

## FROM THE BEGINNING 1: GETTING STARTED

*“If you obey my commands, you remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.” (John 15:10, NIV)*

THE TEXTS ARE STILL COMING. My high school golf season as a coach ended three months ago, but I have a nut on my hands (you know like I do that when it comes to golf, being a nut is a good thing!). This young man has been playing just about a year now, and he’s seeing enough success and enjoying it so much that’s he’s even undaunted by our 100-degree days. I’ll find him on the range in the hottest part of the afternoon.

It’s in the evening, though, that his texts arrive. He reports his birdies—at this stage, they’re still a really special occurrence. And he’s got questions. The latest: *Where exactly is the grip supposed to rest in my left hand?* You see, he’s moving beyond the beginning stages of getting the ball airborne and avoiding the three- and four-putts. Now he’s refining.

The process of faith is much like this. Though “the hour I first believed” is beautiful and life-changing, there are so many hours after that to be lived. What am I supposed to do with them?

As we get started, however, the impetus of faith is quite different than the impetus of one’s golf development—or that of any other hobby or game. The introductory questions about a hobby might be these: What do I enjoy about this, and what do I want to get out of it? You don’t have to be an Olympic swimmer or a master painter to enjoy, and even discipline, yourself with regard to swimming or painting.

With our faith, the questions come from a different direction. They come from Jesus. “Do you believe in me and what I am offering you? Do you love me? Are you willing to follow me?”

A lot of people will concede Jesus’ place in history. Many *like* him. But this is like saying, “Yes, we have a PGA professional at our club. He’s a good guy and seems to help a lot of people.” You can hear the stop sign in those words when they are left like that. Go on. Do you believe this pro is the one who will change your game? Do you love the way he goes about his business? Will you do what he tells you to do in order to get better? These are questions of faith and discipleship. They are the questions Jesus is asking you. If you’ve never thought through the answers before, today may be the most important of your life.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: [https://youtu.be/qLs\\_NzkH324](https://youtu.be/qLs_NzkH324)

**Opening questions** What would you tell a “golf seeker” is the best reason to take up the game? How would you advise this person to get started?

**READING** Acts 16:31-34; John 3:1-21; Luke 14:25-33

### The moment of belief (Acts 16)

What does the jailer’s turning in faith tell us about the speed at which belief can take over a person’s life?

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### Born again (John 3)

What do we learn from Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus about the changes that come to a person who believes the Son of God?

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### From belief to action (Luke 14)

In what ways do the demands of discipleship exceed simple belief? Does this make it harder to consider or talk about coming to faith in Jesus?

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