

THE OR SERIES 9: FOR SEEKERS OR BELIEVERS?

Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:17, NIV)

IN THE COURSE OF OUR LIFETIMES, we have seen some significant walls come down in the golf world. Specifically, clubs whose doors were closed to particular groups of people—women, people of color, Jewish golfers—have opened those doors, sometimes in compassionate understanding, sometimes by compulsion. It is by no means a finished process and socioeconomics will always play a part, just as it does in differentiating between the clientele at restaurants and hotels, but we're finding our way as a golf community. Indeed, we have been doing so since the turn of the last century, when amateurs were lauded and professionals disdained.

Tragically, there have been times and places where fellowships of believers in Jesus have looked like staunch clubs. They've built walls around themselves and smiled only on those they consider worthy.

Again, this is no new thing. The Jewish leaders of Jesus' day were experts at drawing boundaries that included their friends and shunned the rest. These weren't literal walls but religious ones, with each stone a law or restriction that "shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces" (Matthew 23:13).

At Links Players, we want to help you change the conversation with the men and women at your club. One of the ways this occurs is through the vehicle of Links Fellowships. These are small groups where study and discussion and prayer happens. And vitally, these must be a safe place for anyone who walks in the door.

But few people will walk through the door of a "Christian fellowship" by accident. Normally they will have been invited by someone. Now let me ask a critical question: What kind of someone would you respond to if you were asked to consider something completely outside your comfort zone?

The answer is twofold. People will go somewhere new if they perceive they are like those already there. Or they will go somewhere new if they perceive they will be helped with a need they have.

Alongside these considerations, we find healthy fellowships, where sinners come to meet the doctor, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. For seekers want the same thing humble believers want: a cure for what ails them, the disease in their heart.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: https://youtu.be/Zyb_-3DnXDA

Opening questions How hard do you look for a lost golf ball? Is your answer different under tournament conditions? Why? • What might it mean when we say, figuratively, that a person is "lost"?

READING Mark 2:13-17; Luke 15:1-10; Philippians 2:3-5

Sickness and health (Mark 2)

What kind of sickness was Jesus referring to in this passage? What does it take for a person to admit to their spiritual sickness? What cures might we seek besides Jesus?

Seeking the lost (Luke 15)

What level of urgency is displayed in these parables? What level of joy? How does this dual understanding strike home with you in terms of recognizing what God does for you and what he wants you to do for others?

A winning way (Philippians 2)

What traits are commended in this passage? How would these be helpful in making you a "winner" to one who is still seeking?
