



# Truth on the Driving Range...

## Thanks to Jack Nicklaus

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Even if you barely understand the game of golf, you probably realize that perfection is a golfer's goal for every shot on the golf course. Golfers at every level know, however, that only the best golfers in the world are able to make perfect shots with any regularity . . . and there is a reason for that.

Golfers become highly proficient because they know that "practice makes perfect." The best golfers in the world are those who have perfected their skills through thousands of hours of practice. This practice is done primarily on the driving range and the putting green - two locations that are typically far removed from adoring fans, commentators, and camera scrutiny.

Many years ago, I was reminded of spiritual truth by observing the practice regimen of Jack Nicklaus, one of the greatest golfers in history. On that day, Jack had completed his round in one of the world's most recognized golf tournaments and then decided that his "after round" practice would be at another golf course miles away. This secondary golf course was predictably vacant, since golf enthusiasts who regularly played there were spectators at the nearby tournament.

A friend of mine, the head of the pro shop at the vacant course, allowed me on the deserted driving range to hit a few balls. I had the practice facilities all to myself! There was no one else in sight!

After hitting a few balls, I heard someone approaching behind me and when I turned around, I recognized Jack Nicklaus preparing to practice in the next tee box! Needless to say, I stopped my feeble practice efforts and asked Jack if I could watch him. Much to my surprise, not only did Jack welcome me to watch him, but he suggested that I sit where only the privileged few would ever be allowed to sit during his practice. As an audience of one, I was invited to sit about ten feet directly behind the ball that Jack would be hitting. As golfers know, there is no better place to observe any golfer practice and, especially, one of the best golfers in all of history!

From that privileged vantage point, I received another surprise in that Jack spoke to me. He told me that his practice routine would involve hitting ten times with every club in his golf bag. Not only that but, before many shots, he told me what he planned to do with the ball's flight. Specifically, he would tell me if he planned to fade the ball to the right (a baby slice) or to the left (a baby hook). He also told me when he planned to hit it straight.

I was amazed even further when I realized that his target was HIS CADDY! This brave soul stood out on the practice range and would casually dodge the balls that were hit at him by "his boss." Before Jack hit various short iron shots, he would tell me of his intent to hit the ball over the left or right shoulder of his dodging caddy . . . talk about bulls eye golf! Evidently, this was a regular practice routine as both Jack and his caddy obviously knew what they were doing.

I was in awe. After witnessing a display of golfing expertise that I could only dream about, I realized why Jack Nicklaus was a master of his profession. He practiced, practiced, practiced . . . and had done so for decades.

In recognizing what Mr. Nicklaus has accomplished in the world of golf through faithful practice, I was reminded of an obvious spiritual parallel that is stated in Hebrews 5:14.

**Hebrews 5:14**, But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. [*underlining added*]

The only way a golfer becomes better is by faithful practice. As the above verse indicates, the same is true for a believer's spiritual growth. In addition, just as the effectiveness of Mr. Nicklaus' practice depended on what he thought and planned, every believer's spiritual advancement also depends on one's thoughts and plans. In the following passage, notice the connection between how a believer should think and how a believer should live.

**Philippians 4:8-9**, Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

<sup>9</sup> The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. [*underlining added*]

In a more detailed passage, notice how faith in Christ is the entrance to a life that pleases God through the miracle of having a new nature that provides the opportunity for every believer to practice godliness.

**2 Peter 1:1-11**, Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup> Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; <sup>3</sup> seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup> For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. <sup>5</sup> Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, <sup>7</sup> and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. <sup>8</sup> For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup> for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. [*underlining added*]

In the golfing world, those who practice faithfully over a substantial period of time will improve. Likewise, in the spiritual dimension, believers who faithfully obey God's Word will grow in Christ and bring honor to the Lord.

**John 3:21**, But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God. [*underlining added*]

At the conclusion of your natural life on earth, your diligence (faithful practice) in following the Lord Jesus Christ will result in your hearing, "... Well done, good and faithful slave (*servant*). You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:21, *with explanation added*). There is no greater reward in the universe than hearing that divine commendation from our loving Heavenly Father, the Almighty Audience of One.