

Dear HRBC Family,

At the age of 36, Columbia, South Carolina native, Dustin Johnson clinched his very first green jacket at this past weekend's Masters Tournament in Augusta. This year's Masters was postponed from spring to fall because of the COVID-19 pandemic. There were no "roars" from the traditional galleries and gone were the azalea blooms of spring. In spite of such a different environment, the world's best golfers did not disappoint, especially Dustin Johnson, who set a course record of twenty under par.

Since turning pro back in 2007, Johnson has played in ten Masters. The green jacket has eluded him until this year. One of the aspects of his game that is credited to his success is his putting. He is pretty quick off the tee and fairway. But he is slow and methodical on the greens. Whether he is putting from two feet or twenty feet, his putting routine is the same. As a Golf.com writer points out, "Next time you see DJ on the greens, watch his pre-shot routine closely, and you'll see that during his practice strokes, he'll take his left arm and clasp it over his right arm. He'll do one-handed practice strokes like this, holding his right arm. Once he's done, he simply steps up to the golf ball, places his right hand on the club, and then hits the putt."¹



Johnson makes putting look easy. But he has countless hours in practice. Malcolm Gladwell writes, "Practice isn't the thing you do one you're good. It's the thing you do that makes you good."² As a spiritual discipline, prayer requires practice. I am not insinuating that there is a formula for success in praying. There is no competition or trophy. Perhaps our goal is "faithfulness" in prayer. By the grace of God, we can become more faithful in prayer. But we must do our part. Becoming a faithful "pray-er" requires practice, practice, practice.

¹ <https://golf.com/instruction/dustin-johnson-simple-drill-fix-putting-win-15-million/>

² Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers*, p. 42,

If you have read some of my recent articles, you are aware that I have been reading *Living Waters for Your Parched Prayers* by Rob Frost. Melanie's parents gave me this book twenty years ago. I have been rereading it to help me as I have struggled with prayer in the wake of my dad's death to COVID-19. Like many of us, Frost has experienced "dark nights of the soul" and has struggled in prayer. In chapter twenty-two, he provides some help for the practice of prayer:

- Scriptures such as the psalms – Psalm 7:17.
- The poetry of great hymns.
- Liturgical prayers from the *Book of Common Prayer*, for example.
- Traditional prayers like the Lord's Prayer or the Serenity Prayer.
- Music can also guide in prayer. Listening to Handel's *Messiah*, while praying is another help.
- Meditating on paintings, sculpture or stained glass.
- Praying while out walking or running.

Do you have some prayer "tips" that might be a help to other Christians? If so, I would love to hear them and share them. Just email or call me (see below) and let me know. Just as Dustin Johnson has a coach who has helped him develop his putting routine, you and I can coach one another in the practice of prayer.

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.³

God's blessings,

Pastor Bob

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³ The Serenity Prayer, attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr, (1892-1971).