

IMPROVING OF LATE

Whenever we can, my daughter and I love to play tennis. If memory serves me, I think we took up playing tennis together about 4-5 years ago. During this time, Coral's skills have improved so much on the court. She is really good at hitting lobs over my head when I am up at the net, and her serve has improved immensely. Her ground game has improved considerably too, to the point that we have some pretty competitive rallies at times.

As for me, I would not consider my tennis game has improved during these past few years. My serve is not as good as it was when I played in my teens and my forehand can be inconsistent at times. For the past 4-5 years probably the only thing that improved about my game each year was my stamina. I would not start each new tennis season with good stamina, but running around the tennis court trying to keep up with my daughter always helped to improve my stamina as the season went on.

Since May 31st however, my tennis game has seen significant improvement. Earlier that day I had my first shingles vaccine. I read all the side effects and heard from one person who recently had this vaccine how she experienced flu-like symptoms. When I got back from the doctor's office, I was not feeling any side effects except for soreness in my arm. Coral had some time before going off to work so we decided to head to the tennis court.

That morning, I was hitting shots on the tennis court like I used to in my late teens. I was rushing to the net at times and lunging to make volleys. My reflexes at the net reminded of the days I used to play in goal at hockey. Coral could not believe the difference in my play. We joked with one another that it must be the vaccine that was contributing to my improved play.

We have played several times since May 31st, and it seems like my game just keeps getting better. We played on Father's Day and a couple of shots I made at the net might qualify me to begin playing on the "senior's tour." Every time I made one of these shots Coral would shake her head and say, "It has to be the vaccine." I can't say for sure what has made for this sudden change in my game, but Coral is worried that when I get my second vaccine on July 31st that I may be unbeatable on the court.

We are always pleased when we begin to see improvements take place in our lives. Just as I am pleased by the improvements I am seeing on the tennis court, I know of others who are just as excited when they see this

happen with respect to their golf game. But we are just as pleased when we see improvements made to our overall health and well-being. One area in our life that the Bible encourages us to make improvements in is to our spiritual well-being. In fact, making improvements and maturing in our faith should be our goal as Christians. Paul made this point when he wrote: **“We pray that you will become mature” (2 Corinthians 13:8).**

Just as parents want to see their children grow into mature adults, God wants us to mature and improve as believers. When it comes to golf, a person will know they are improving by seeing their score coming down with each round. On the tennis court I am aware I am improving by the quality of my shots as well as by my daughter's expressions. How do we know that we are improving as believers when it comes to our faith and walk with the Lord? The writer of Hebrews identifies that one way to evaluate the improvements we are making is through the choices we make. Throughout the letter of Hebrews, the author points out these and other choices that will indicate that we are improving with respect to our spiritual walk with the Lord:

- **Developing a depth of understanding rather than still struggling with the Christian basics,**
- **Doing self-evaluation rather than self-criticism,**
- **Seeking unity rather than promoting disunity,**
- **Desiring spiritual challenges rather than entertainment,**
- **Having an active faith rather than remaining passive,**
- **Walking in trust rather than living in fear,**
- **Evaluating our feelings and experiences in the light of God rather than evaluating them just by our feelings.**

We are encouraged as believers to keep improving when it comes to our spiritual maturity. This list of choices will help determine whether we have been improving with respect to our spiritual journey. Let's remember that just as it feels good to see improvements in other areas of our lives, the efforts we make improving our spiritual health will feel special as well.

I like the improvement I am seeing in my tennis game. I will let everyone know if it improves even more after I get the second shingles vaccine on July 31st. Hopefully my daughter will still play tennis with me if it does.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean