

## IS YOUR MINISTER A CLERICAL CADDY? – May 2006

"I know what your problem is", was the quick assessment from my friend with whom I was playing golf. "You're standing too close to the ball after you've hit it!"

This led me to ponder two things. The first involved calculating how many homicides occurred on golf courses. The second was considering how much golf can teach us about ministry.

If you know absolutely nothing about golf (and want to remain in that condition), or if you are an absolute genius at the game, everybody understands at least one basic principle. Namely, players need to have the right equipment. No doubt you will have noticed golfers wandering around with huge golf bags filled with golf clubs of all shapes and sizes.

Occasional golfing kleptomaniacs aside, most golfers have accumulated a wide variety of golf clubs. This enables them to hit the ball in locations as varied as sand-filled holes (bunkers), smooth lawn (green) and long grass (rough). Different clubs are used for hitting short or long distances.

The choice of club is crucial. A golfer could conceivably play a round of golf using just the one club. It could be done but it would not be pretty and frustration would be close to the surface.

Just like Christian evangelism. Inevitably we keep meeting up with people in all sorts of places with all sorts of presuppositions and questions. How can we help them? The choice of a 'ministry club' is vital.

Do I give them a book like Chappo's "A Fresh Start" or Lesley Ramsay's "What Women Really Need"? Do I share a gospel outline such as "Two Ways To Live" or go through "Christianity Explained" or "Simply Christianity"? Perhaps I should take them through a simple Bible study programme like "Just For Starters"? Or maybe we should read the Bible together. My choice of 'ministry club' should be determined by the person's understanding, the time available with them and their needs.

So the next time a non Christian provides an opening in a conversation to talk about Jesus, or a friend at church expresses a desire to do learn more about the Bible, what will you pull out of your 'ministry golf bag'?

Have you considered seeking some basic training in a variety of ministry tools? It's amazing how much time we will allow to be trained in sporting, cultural or recreational interests but not allow ourselves to be equipped to share the gospel or help another's maturity in Christ.

Over the years it would be great to accumulate a variety of 'clubs' (tools) which enable you to share the gospel in different contexts. Why not ask your minister/pastor to train you in a gospel 'club'/tool. If it is appropriate, ask him if you can accompany him next time he goes somewhere to share the gospel with someone.

Let's make sure that we are not handicapped by any unwillingness on our part to be better resourced servants.