

THREADS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, LESSON 2

“To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” (Mark 12:33, NIV)

WHAT WOULD YOU THINK OF A GOLF “EXPERT” WHO TOLD YOU that the secret to scoring was using blue golf tees on all par-4 holes? I’ll answer for you in unequivocal terms: *not much!* Silly secrets are no help at all.

Moreover, if you intend to be a great golfer, knowing the history of the game or its many rules might be helpful. But compared to knowing how to hit it and performing under pressure, your insight into Old Tom Morris and the restrictions that define amateur status would be near worthless. When it comes to greatness as a golfer, the formula is putting the ball in the hole in as few strokes as possible.

This is the kind of discussion Jesus had when a teacher of the law came to him and asked him to prioritize the Old Testament commandments. “Which is the most important?” he asked.

It was an intriguing question, for the religious leaders of the day would have insisted that the whole law was to be honored and kept. If this were so, how could one commandment be more important than another?

Jesus’ answer revealed something decidedly fundamental to our living as followers of the Son, who himself was the “exact representation of God’s being” (Hebrews 1:4). Jesus cited the Shema, from Deuteronomy 6: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” In pointing to this passage—which was to be carried on each Jew’s heart and taught from generation to generation—Jesus affirmed this: God is above all. He is even above the particulars of the law. This is why he could say that burnt offerings and sacrifices, though part of the law itself, were subordinated to loving God with all one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And Jesus went further in rounding out his essential creed. He drew from Leviticus 19 and aimed our God-honoring love at our neighbors as well. We must love God and love others. This is the righteousness that matters from Old Testament to New. The sacrifices that endure are those we make in surrendering ourselves wholly to God and giving selflessly to others.

Opening questions What aspects of golf interest you most alongside shooting good scores—equipment, history, clothing, rules, something else? How important is it to you to improve your game?

READING Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Luke 10:25-37, John 15:12-17

Loving God

Reflecting on Deuteronomy 6, what do you think it means to love God with...

all your heart _____

all your soul _____

all your mind _____

all your strength _____

Loving your neighbor

To what specific acts of love does the Parable of the Good Samaritan compel you today?

How did Jesus demonstrate the same kind of love to which he called us?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2014 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today’s study at <http://youtu.be/8ZWPY8brZps>