

THREADS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, LESSON 11: ACTING JUSTLY

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?” (Isaiah 58:6, NIV)

EVERY GOLFER HAS A STYLE. It includes clothing, equipment, and the way they attack the course. Here’s a way to picture the varying styles in the game: Imagine Jason Dufner wearing Rickie Fowler’s attire and swinging Bubba Watson’s pink driver. Pretty hard to do! Dufner plays golf with the pulse of a reptile in winter.

But here’s the important thing: Dufner has substance. He’s a major champion who knows how to win. When it comes to success on the golf course, *your style* trumps *style* over and over again.

The ultimate biblical passage on style versus substance is Isaiah 58. Don’t go reading there unless you’re prepared to have your cover blown.

The trouble with being the people called Israel was that God was willing to hold you to account all the way to your heart. He did this through his prophets, those men and sometimes women who spoke boldly the words God gave to them. For this reason they weren’t popular with kings or peasants. And often God stripped them of their self-carved styles so that the substance of his word would come through loud and clear.

In Isaiah 58, God dispensed a word that cut right to the falsehoods of his people. They were living according to the letter of the Law—religious fasting—and missing what really mattered. What mattered was that they would reflect the heart of God for those most in trouble: the oppressed, the hungry, the wanderer, the naked. And don’t think only little acts of mercy, a few coins of almsgiving. God wanted an overturning of the systems in place that cut people down. Work that went there, that really helped in his name—this was the enactment of justice that would truly honor and please him.

The world has not changed. Campaigns against sex trafficking, for instance, have brought us to see that injustice pervades every nation and every strata. Those who have attained earthly power, even in only a seedy corner, will do all they can to hold on tightly. This is where God’s people must not just talk the talk and send a check. This is where we must make every effort to ignite a godly change around us.

Opening questions How would you describe your golfing style? How about that of your golfing buddies? How do you demonstrate substance in golf, no matter what your style is?

READING Isaiah 58:1-14, Matthew 6:1-4

Empty religion

In Isaiah 58, what were some of the things the people were doing in order to appease God? Why was he not impressed?

What promises did God offer to those who acted in true righteousness? What would such righteousness look like in our time? How can you take steps to enacting justice around you?

Compounding the characteristics of God

How do Jesus’ words opening Matthew 6 challenge us to blend justice and humility? What are the advantages of secret righteousness?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2014 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today’s study at <http://youtu.be/EjVHryxRRts>