

THREADS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, LESSON 15: GOD OF LOVE

“But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.” (Nehemiah 9:17, NIV)

THE PGA TOUR NOW OFFERS A HOST OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION on every player’s performance. Some of these stats can be drawn from scorecards alone, while others depend on laser measuring or a walking stat keeper entering information into a remote device after each shot is played.

Through all of these add-ons, one of the scoring statistics that has enduring is the “bounce back” percentage. It offers a look at a player’s resiliency, measuring as it does how often a player makes a birdie or eagle immediately after a bogey or worse. The leaders in this category each season bounce back about 26 or 27 percent of the time. But the odd thing about this stat is that it is entirely dependent on failure.

In the midst of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked openly about the love of the average person and the love his followers are to demonstrate. “Even pagans,” Jesus said, love the loveable. They serve those who give them no trouble and demand little of them. “But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:45).

Love to the degree of God is shown against a backdrop of undeservedness. “It is the sick who need a doctor,” Jesus responded, when confronted about eating with tax collectors and sinners. The plainest of logic supports God’s grace.

This was true from the beginning. Adam and Eve, though beholden to only one restriction, transgressed the will of God. They sinned. And God stepped in to love them, promising a victor for all who would follow in their footsteps—which is, of course, all of us.

It was true again when God chose Israel not for their size or their merit, but simply because he loved them.

Love still finds its most glorious context when it is given against all reason, when it is delivered to someone hard to love, even someone who has acted against us. This is the love God has demonstrated throughout time, but it climaxed in the giving of his Son for those who don’t deserve it, for us: “But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him” (Romans 5:6, MSG).

Opening questions Do you keep stats on your own golf game? If so, what do you learn from them? How good do you think you are at bouncing back in golf? in life?

READING Psalm 13; John 3:16; John 13:34-35

Love at tough times
What were David’s concerns expressed in Psalm 13? How did the assurance of God’s love bring satisfaction to him?

Love in Christ’s sacrifice
Where do John 3:16 and Romans 5:6 cross over in what they convey? How meaningful is this act of love to you? How often do you thank God for it?

The transfer of Christ’s love
According to Jesus’ teaching in John 13, who is responsible for demonstrating his love to others? How might we best express to others the gift of God’s love for us?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2014 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today’s study at <http://youtu.be/RmSdzB5-kI8>