

## THREADS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, LESSON 17: ACTING IN LOVE

*Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:8)*

I WANT TO RECOMMEND THAT YOU TAKE GOLF LESSONS. Yes, it's true that we live in a culture that offers a bit of extra praise for those who are self-taught and successful. Moreover, with the assistance of YouTube and other online video smorgasbords, you can likely find very fitting help on the screen right in front of you. Still, the reason I want you to take a lesson is because I have a certain teacher in mind. Let me introduce you.

The golf teacher I am thinking of has never hit a golf ball. He has never watched the game on TV or live on the course. In fact, he has never been to a golf course, *per se*, though he did once attend a wedding reception at the local country club. This teacher has never read a golf book and when told of Ben Hogan's Five Fundamentals, he retorted, "I can't stand guys like that—always beating people over the head with their biblical morality!"

Now are you ready to call me out of my mind? Why would I recommend such a teacher? In fact, I would not—that is, if I am keeping in mind the principle that you cannot give out what you do not possess.

Links Players president Jeffrey Cranford makes a point of sharing this principle every time he emphasizes the vital role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And one place that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is absolutely critical is when it comes time to love others. This is something we just can't do purely without the love of God first residing in us. In his classic *Renovation of the Heart*, Dallas Willard credited St. Augustine with recognizing that the opposite of love is pride, then Willard added: "Love eliminates pride because its will for the good of the other nullifies our arrogant presumption that we should get *our way*."

Now imagine making such an anti-I choice without God's resident love in you. We will not argue against the fact that nearly all people make altruistic choices from time to time, for, having seen around them acts of true love, they are spurred to loving actions. This is an example of what theologians call "common grace," where the light of Christ pervades the darkness even when the darkness does not expressly invite it. But if love will not fail—that is, wane unto uncommonness and then its death—it must be sustained by God himself. And if love is to be rendered one to another, in spite of our self-honoring instincts, then it must be ignited within by the Spirit of the one who is himself love.

**Opening questions** Where have you found the most help for your golf game? How do you decide whose help is worth listening to, in golf and in other endeavors?

**READING** 1 John 4:7-16; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

**God and love**

How do you see these themes come to light in 1 John 4:7-16?

The origin of love \_\_\_\_\_

New birth and love \_\_\_\_\_

The evidence of God's love in Christ \_\_\_\_\_

The impetus of our love for one another \_\_\_\_\_

The Holy Spirit at work in us \_\_\_\_\_

**Living love out**

In the accompanying video for this study, Jeff Hopper suggests that we could spend the rest of our lives working on living out 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. In what ways does this suggestion resonate with you? Could biblical morality be enacted by attending uniquely to this passage?

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Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today's study at <http://youtu.be/4c-ViNJTdEA>