

THE PROCESS OF PERFECTION, PART 2

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Ephesians 5:1-2, NIV)

FOR SOME YEARS NOW, a popular teaching method for golfers trying to strengthen their game employs the use of video. First, a player’s swing is videographed from a couple of different angles. Then the teacher will look at the video with the student and point out various positions and moves that are good or that need adjusting. But this process can be taken a step further with the addition of side-by-side shots, where a player’s swing is matched up against the swing of a tour player. Now we’re getting to the upper level of development!

When we first say *yes* to Jesus, we are much like the beginning golfer. The help we need is basic: *here are the fundamentals, work this new practice into your life.* All the while the Holy Spirit is there, bringing us along at the perfect pace. But because it is the Holy Spirit, he has an end goal in mind: that our character would look more and more like the character of God. So in keeping with that progression, what he most desires to reveal to us are the very elements of who God is, so that we might imitate God.

What a challenge! We know that in our sinful natures we are so far from God’s character. And yet the calling is set before us: “Be imitators of God.” We should not shrink from this any more than we shrink from layering a professional’s excellent golf motion into our swing. Will we attain that professional’s success? Unlikely. But we make an honest push in that direction.

You might want to know, then, where you should start. On your knees is a good place, asking the Lord specifically, “Please make me as you are.”

But this does not mean we progress blindly, for our Ephesians passage today provides some real help. We are to live a life of love—certainly that is godly. So we look to learn of love from God’s own Word. We find directions in places like 1 Corinthians 13 or John’s first epistle. Then we live that love. Of course, we also see examples of love, most powerfully the example of our Savior, whose love was not limited even by the prospect of death on a cross.

The call to perfection is surely great, but the idea that we can bring a fragrant offering to God presses us forward.

Opening questions If you were to model your golf game and behavior after a particular professional, who would it be? • What aspect of imitating God presents the biggest challenge for you?

READING 1 John 4:11 & 19; John 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Motivated to move
In Ephesians 5:1, what motivating identity pushes us toward imitating God? How important is this identity? How do 1 John 4:11 and 4:19 echo this motivation? Do you find this motivation in you?

Our shining example
How does passage in John 14 establish Jesus as our example in imitating God? What aspect of Christ’s character would you most like to start imitating today?

The love chapter
Consider the components of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 one by one. How might each be applied in your life?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today’s study at <https://youtu.be/-h2sEhEyA10>