

LEARNING TO LOVE, PART 1

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight. (Philippians 1:9, NIV)

GOLFERS ARE SOMEWHAT NOTORIOUS FOR BEING THE DEATH OF THE PARTY. We are found to be wanting when it comes to a range of conversational topics. Why? Because we love our golf so much.

I don't know how that love translates for you. Certainly, it is easy to get emotional about the game when we've had an excellent round. We may need to be especially careful at times like these not to bowl others over with our effusive delight in the game—if only because it's likely to be altogether different tomorrow!

We might do well in tempering our golf-crazed expressions by remembering what the game was like for us in the beginning. Our descriptors might look much more like FRUSTRATION and IMPATIENCE than LOVE. We have to grow to love the game, which leads us right to our idea today.

Even when we speak of “love at first sight”—which would be more duly named “attraction at first sight”—we are quick to admit that this first glance is only a seed. Without cultivation beyond the greeting, without spending time together in meaningful conversation and mutual activity, there is little chance of love flourishing. That infatuated first sight will die.

This helps us in regard to finding a full understanding of love. Its nature reaches far beyond any stoked emotion or even heady principle. To love is to layer in all kinds of commitments and deeds. And if we are followers of Jesus, it brings us to face the whole purpose of living. “No greater love,” Jesus told his disciples, “has someone than this: to lay down his life for a friend.” We can't expect to do this on the basis of a little bit of interest or concern. Love in its fullness demands far more than that.

The Bible writers agree that love develops over time. Not only that, but it can be intentionally learned and pursued. This is what Paul conveyed to the believers in Philippi. The Greek structuring of Philippians 1:9 points to a weaving together of loving and learning—not that we “love to learn,” as an educator might appreciate, but that we “learn to love.”

Do you have more to learn when it comes to love? We all do. And the Scriptures are the greatest place to start that learning.

Opening questions What are some things you love most about the game? How long did it take you to come to this love? • What is something very important you have learned about love through the years?

READING Philippians 1:9-11; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; John 15:12-14

The purpose of our learning
What were the reasons behind Paul's desire for the Philippians to learn to love? How would such learning translate into loving actions?

The love chapter revisited
Just a few weeks ago, we looked at 1 Corinthians 13 in one of our studies. How is this chapter valuable for assessing your own growth in love? Where in this list of God's traits for love do you find yourself needing to do the most love-learning? How will you do that?

Unto the end
When we think of loving to the end, we think of it as lasting to the end of a long life. Jesus' call to love to the end instead challenges us to give our all—even our very life—in love. How does this challenge make its way to reality in our lives as we grow in love toward others?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today's study at https://youtu.be/_umjj0eWwk8