

LEARNING TO LOVE, PART 2

And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13, NIV)

OVER TIME, AS YOU OBSERVE YOUR FRIENDS PLAY GOLF, you come to recognize their way of carrying themselves on the course, as well as cataloguing how they make their swing compared to others. So much do we recognize each other that we can watch a foursome from far off and identify the players. “Oh, that’s Kim. And I think she’s playing with Tony and Jennifer.”

But here’s something else, we can often tell—especially if the players are walking—how they are playing. Why? Because when things aren’t going well on the course, we take on the same characteristics as we do when things aren’t going well in life: we hang our heads and walk slowly, as though our feet are extra heavy today.

What a silly irony! Here is the game we love, dragging us down. In fact, golf is so good at this that you will hear players after the round talking as though they can’t stand the game. What kind of fool would say to his wife, “I really do not like the food at that restaurant, but let’s go there again this week and eat some more”? Yet this is often our relationship with golf.

All of this sounds ridiculous because if love produces anything it is joy. This is not something unthinkingly said. For we know from too many places, and most severely from the cross, that love can also cause us great pain. To love someone fully, sacrificially, with patience and kindness and goodness and gentleness and faithfulness and self-control, is to sit ourselves in the seat of risk. In love, there is great potential for pain.

So we ask the Lord for foresight. We ask him to allow us to endure, knowing that love endures all the more. And if we are honest, we would all admit that endurance has nothing to do with “sticking it out through the easy times.” Endurance means facing and overcoming difficulty.

Will you love when it’s hard to love? That is the example of Jesus. Will you love without waning? That is the example of Jesus.

That is the example of Jesus, and it is hard. But when we last through what is hardest, we find—here it is—the greatest joy.

Opening questions How would you describe the idiosyncrasies of a few of your golf partners? • What is the hardest part of loving someone well?

READING 1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Traits that last

What does it mean to you that faith, hope, and love last? Why do you think love is the greatest of these?

How does one learn to love well? How do you then act on what you’ve learned? How do you do this consistently and with longevity?

Sacrificial love

Consider Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9. How is his method of reaching others an act of love? What freedoms might you surrender in your personal context in order to render love that draws others to Christ?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today’s study at <https://youtu.be/gAsXkMIN75CI>