

LEARNING TO LOVE, PART 5

Love... always perseveres. (1 Corinthians 13:7, NIV)

TWO THINGS ARE TRUE ABOUT TODAY'S SECOND ROUND of the U.S. Open at Chambers Bay. First, approximately half the field will fail, missing the cut and going home. Second, not one of these players will say, "That's it. I quit. No more golf for me."

For an accomplished golfer, especially those who qualify for the most important golf events, learning the game is an ongoing process. A bad round today doesn't cause them to walk away forever. They may take a few days to get their head together, but even then they are thinking of how to make it better when they put the club in hand again.

Eventually the end of growing in the game does come, though. When Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, and Gary Player tee it up for the par-3 contest at the Masters, they are not in competitive mode. Oh sure, they love to hit a good shot or sink a long putt like the rest of us, but they're not sweating the outcome. They're not muttering under their breath, "This is so bad. I've got to fix this."

As followers of Jesus, however, there comes no such day. We endeavor to grow 'til we go.

In recent weeks, we have been talking about learning to love. There are, we know, many other godly characteristics to be learned by study, prayer, and experience: patience, faith, mercy, joy, and more. And we would not say of any of these, "You know, now that I'm 65 years old, I've got this trait locked in. No more thinking about this for me."

Perseverance is a trait of the mature believer, too. And its importance resides in its connection to all other traits. Will our kindness last? Our grace? Our love?

Love, like so many other things in life, is accomplished not in one fell swoop. Rather, it is practiced and developed in a thousand little ways every day. It does not matter if you do not "feel up to it." God's idea is that you be like ants, who day by day make ready for the future, despite their apparent limitations: "Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer..." (Proverbs 30:24-25). Little in love today does not make you little in love tomorrow, not if you are willing to persevere.

Opening questions What are you working on in your golf game these days? How long do you think it will take for you to get where you want to be? • What have you learned most about love in this series?

READING Mark 12:29-31; 1 John 4:19-21

Loving God

What do you think is involved in loving God with all your heart? with all your soul? with all your mind? with all your strength? How will you work on increasing this love?

What does it take to love another as you love yourself? How will you work on increasing this love?

A complete love

Considering 1 John 4:19-21, how does love for God and love for others make for a full demonstration of love as God would have us render it?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today's study at <https://youtu.be/xofs8zg0UjY>.