

## MATTERS OF THE HEART, PART 3

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9, ESV)*

I HAVE HEARD MANY TALENTED ATHLETES say that golf is the most difficult game they have tried to play. Golf is difficult, yes, and we also make it more complicated than it needs to be. What we feel in our swing is not really what is happening. And if we rely on these feelings, our self-assessment will often deceive us about what went wrong (or right) with a golf shot.

I often hear golfers say, “I usually don’t play this bad; I’m not sure what is going on today.” Or, a player agonizes over his swing when the error is simply in his alignment, posture, or ball position. Exaggerated self-assessment creates frustration and takes the fun out of playing the game.

Likewise, the lack of genuine self-assessment toward the deceitfulness of our hearts can stunt our spiritual maturity. While Jeremiah conveyed “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick,” Paul confirmed, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing” (Romans 7:18-20).

Our natural tendency is to defend our own hearts. God, on the other hand, wants us to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). This begins when we turn our hearts toward Jesus and ask him to be our Lord and Savior. In addition, it’s important to live out our faith in a community with other compatriots who are willing to walk with us in honesty, confession, encouragement, and commitment to God’s truth. Believing friends who are close to you can help you make the correct assessment of your heart.

I struggle in my self-assessment in two ways. Most often I am extremely hard on myself and forget I am forgiven. I can also swing the pendulum and find ways to numb my feelings of guilt in order to convince myself what I did or said wasn’t that bad. This keeps my heart from feeling and is far from honest repentance.

Self-assessment in golf helps. In combination with a good golf instructor, it increases our awareness about where we can improve. More than that, self-assessment toward our deceitful hearts carries truth when we invite the Holy Spirit and our compatriots to join us along the journey of our spiritual maturity.

**Opening questions** Is your self-assessment of your golf game over or underinflated compared to your skill level? • Do you see any similarities in how you self-assess your heart?

**READING** Jeremiah 17:7-10, Romans 7:13-20, Philippians 2:12-18

### A deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17)

What does God do with our deceitful heart? What is the antidote for our sick heart?

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### Our problem (Romans 7)

What does Paul say is our problem? Who is lurking behind our problem? Who delivers us from our problem?

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### Shifting our focus (Philippians 2)

Who is working in us (our hearts)? What are two things Paul asks us to avoid in our lives? Who are we to be in the world?

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Written by Tracy Hanson ©2015 Links Players International. A 4-minute video accompanies today's study at <https://youtu.be/wOCMvqQT9tI>