

MATTERS OF THE HEART, PART 9

Hear, O Israel. The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5, ESV)

YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FAIRWAY vacillating over your second shot into the par-5. It's right on the edge of your maximum yardage to carry the water. Should you go for it or lay up? The answer depends on several variables—wind, quality of the lie, and your confidence. It is a risk/reward opportunity with two potential outcomes: a putt for eagle or the slippery slope into disaster. Is the risk worth the potential reward at this point in the round?

Every golf shot presents us with multiple choices: lay up, go for it; play it short or long, left or right. While we always get to choose which shot we hit, we don't ever have control over the outcome. Good shots can end with a terrible bounce, and bad shots can result in a birdie. Frustration is an experience shared by all golfers alike because of the unknown once the ball is in the air.

As we have journeyed through our nine-week series on matters of the heart, we have shared that God's heart grieves, that he knows our heart, that our heart has a problem (it is deceitful), and that there is a solution to this great problem of our heart—which is Christ in us.

Here we find ourselves staring down the fairway of our lives. And again we have two choices. But this is so much more than risk/reward; this is life and death. Will we say *yes* or *no* to God's free gift of a new heart through Jesus in exchange for our old, deceitful one? God is wooing us to go for it. Waiting on the other side is an eternal life that begins the moment we say *yes*.

When we say *yes* to the Lord, he gives us one directive: love him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our might. The key word? *All*. A golfer who is going for the green can't be half-committed. She has to put every bit of mental and physical effort into the shot. And so it is with Jesus. We are to give *all* of who we are: emotions, passions, thoughts, deeds, and strength. There is no layup option to loving God.

Here are some closing thoughts to stir your heart. God's love is like a rushing waterfall. It is powerful. It is living water. It is refreshing. It is real. It is playful. And it is available to all who are willing to jump in and get wet.

Opening questions How often do you find yourself with a risk-reward shot in golf? Which way do you typically lean? • In assessing your heart, would you say you've given it fully to God? What's holding you back?

READING Matthew 22:34-40; Deuteronomy 8:1-5

The greatest commandment (Matthew 22)

Why do you think Jesus chose to reiterate Deuteronomy 6:4-5 when asked what the greatest commandment was?

How does the second greatest commandment also demonstrate what is going on in our heart?

A proven heart (Deuteronomy 8)

How did God use the wilderness experience of the Israelites to test their hearts? What experiences has God used to prove your heart? What would you like him to do in your heart going forward from today?

Written by Tracy Hanson ©2015 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today's study at <https://youtu.be/ANgWe-fcwck>