

THINK LIKE A PRO, PART 7

Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.” (Exodus 16:4, NIV)

AS A YOUNG GOLFER, I was blessed to have a couple of professionals at my father’s club committed to the development of the juniors who were hanging around. One of the avenues they used to build our games was a sort of skills development program, complete with tests and rewards in the form of stickers for a plaque we each had. It was kind of like merit badges for “Golf Scouts.”

By way of these tests, we were challenged to move up the levels in driving distance, driving accuracy, iron play, pitching, chipping, sand play, and putting. If my memory still serves me, there were three levels in each of these disciplines, so we had plenty to work on, and several of us spent hour upon hour improving our skills, hoping to land the next reward.

In essence, these tests were stops along the way to golfing maturity. It wasn’t glamorous, but as our scores dropped because of the practice we had been doing we gained respect for the work and confidence in what it was producing.

It is intriguing, then, to recognize that the account of one of the more mundane requirements of the early Hebrew people follows a similar arc. As the Israelites were heading from Egypt to the Promised Land, God supplied manna, a kind of “bread from heaven” that tasted of honey. “What is it?” the people asked, and that name (*manna* in Hebrew) stuck. By gathering enough for each day, the families were fed as they needed.

But in the same way that those junior golf tests were about so much more than a few colorful stickers, so was the supply of manna. As we read in today’s verse, the people were being put to a test. This was not a matter of whether they would fill their bellies, but of whether they would obey the Lord. Greater still, it was a question of trust. Sadly, some of the people did not pass this greater test. They gathered more than a day’s worth, figuring they possessed more savvy than God possessed concern for them.

Spiritual maturity is often built in the simplest acts, repeated faithfully in humble service God. When we obey and follow God today, he produces more maturity in us for tomorrow. Pretty soon, even we can look back and say, “Wow!”

Opening questions How did you learn to play the game? What aspects of practice do you find boring? What do you find most helpful? • How do you assess whether growth has occurred in your life?

READING Exodus 16:1-36, Luke 16:10-11, Psalm 1:1-3

Trust and calculation (Exodus 16)

How did the people demonstrate their trust or distrust for God? Why would Moses become angry at the people? Where does calculation war against trust in your own life?

Measures of faithfulness (Luke 16)

How did Jesus say a person’s faithfulness is measured? How can you increase your own faithfulness?

A fruitful tree (Psalm 1)

What led the man depicted in this psalm to maturity? What picture is given of his mature state?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today’s study at <https://youtu.be/jR45Vy7TcPw>