

A LIFE LIVED IN FELLOWSHIP, PART 3

The glory of young men is their strength, gray hair the splendor of the old. (Proverbs 20:29, NIV)

THERE IS LIKELY A SPECIAL PLACE IN YOUR HEART for the person who brought you to the game. Golf is very much a passed-on sport, being given from parents to children and friends to friends. Some would say this constitutes a sharing of one's burden, but we'll let them wallow in their own cynicism. Instead, we can choose to be sentimental and appreciative that we play golf because someone wanted us to enjoy it, too.

My dad brought me to the game, as he was an avid player himself, but there were others who convinced me as well of golf's pleasures: professionals, coaches, fellow juniors, dads of friends, and even random members at our club. I have fond memories of all of these people, but it's not just mushy feelings or even the pleasure of good stories; it's a recognition that the game is best when shared.

True Christian fellowship is the same. It goes beyond the pot lucks at the church hall or the children's programs at holidays. Those things have a pleasantness to them, sure. But when fellowship envelops us in full, it teaches us and challenges us and supports us.

For this to happen, no matter the setting, a measure of voice must be given to all those in the room, young and old, for at the same time Scripture says, "Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31), it also says, "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise" (Psalm 8:2). There is righteous wisdom to be gained by the young when they listen well to the old and a song to be joined by the old when they listen well to the young.

Two errors can be made when we avoid such round-the-room fullness of God-honoring voice. One comes from pride, the other from comfort. Both lead to the same place: exclusion of those God would otherwise have us hear.

So we must be intentional in our pursuit of broad fellowship, because our natural inclinations spur us to hang out with those who are "as bright as we are" or those who "let me be me." The church is not like this. Christ opened the doors to all, cutting across ages, races, nationalities, interests, income, and politics. This doesn't mean we are to *tolerate* one another; it means we are to *honor* one another as brothers and sisters committed together to hearing God's voice through us all.

Opening questions Who are some of the people instrumental in bringing you to golf? • Do you have a friend from "outside the norm" who holds an important place in your life? How did you make this friend?

READING Ezra 3:7-13; 1 Timothy 5:1-2; Acts 10:34-35

Strength and splendor (Ezra 3)

How were the ages and roles enlisted together to begin rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem? What did each "bring to the table"? In what way do these roles reflect Proverbs 20:29?

Across the ages (1 Timothy 5)

In what specific ways did Paul instruct Timothy to minister to the men and women of different ages? How was honor evident in these instructions?

No partiality (Acts 10)

The context of this passage is the first preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles at Cornelius' house. Into this hour, Peter spoke of God's impartiality (see also Deuteronomy 10:17-19). How does this passage lead us to listen to the voice of all God's believing people?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available at https://youtu.be/H_PUK1M-uFg.