

A LIFE LIVED IN FELLOWSHIP, PART 1

“Follow me,” Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him. (Mark 2:14, NIV)

I SAT AT LUNCH JUST A FEW DAYS AGO TALKING GOLF with one of my former high school players. He’s now one of those friends I can talk with about any facet of the game: practice routines, innovations, tour players, fantasy sports, television coverage. It’s a lot of fun.

On this day, our conversation turned to those days when you have no idea what’s coming off your club. The first drive goes hard left, the second goes hard right, and the rest of the round is anyone’s guess. What do you do at times like this? Great players, we recognize, figure out how to put a reasonable number on the card even when this is happening. “They just know how to score,” we say of such players.

Part of this ability to overcome is grit and part of it is creativity. But two other traits also present themselves through good golfers: a recognition of what’s expected and a commitment to routine. Might we say this is also true of those who have given their lives to Jesus?

It is easy in almost any of life’s worthwhile pursuits to lose track of what counts. In golf, it’s getting the ball in the hole in as few strokes as possible. Whether the ball is flying with the trajectory you most desire doesn’t really matter. On good days and bad, the objective remains the same: Find your way to par.

In our spiritual walk with Christ, the object remains the same as well: We are to follow him. This is true wherever he has placed us and whatever circumstances we may face. In the arena we’ve come to call “Christianity,” we will often find ourselves pursuing good but lesser things: exact theology, meditative journaling, prayer meetings, scripture-memorization programs. All of these kinds of things can contribute to our growth or they can simply add to the stack of activities the keep us from seeing and hearing the Lord.

At times like these—when we recognize the loss of excellence in the midst of distraction—we would do well, like those golfers who just know how to score, to commit to the simplest of routines. Return to the Word of God, looking not for nuances and systems but for God himself, shining through Father, Son, and Spirit. When we know who God is and how he shows himself, we are best prepared to see his qualities and hear his voice. It is through this plain recognition that we can follow him as he leads us.

Opening questions How do you manage your game when your swing is producing shots that are atypical for you? • What part of where you have landed in your life at this stage would you say was unexpected?

READING Mark 1:16-20; Mark 2:13-20; John 10:1-5 & 22-30

Responding to the call (Mark 1)

How did these first disciples respond to Jesus’ call to follow him? In what ways is it easy for you to respond to Jesus’ call? In what ways is it hard?

The power of distraction (Mark 2)

What was of greatest concern to the Pharisees? How did this keep them from seeing Jesus clearly?

The voice of the shepherd (John 10)

What picture did Jesus supply in referencing those who hear his voice? How do you know when you’re hearing him? How can you more closely attend to his voice?
