

ARE YOU QUALIFIED? 2: HOW SIN DISQUALIFIES US

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! (1 Corinthians 5:1-2, NIV)

IT HAPPENS. A member who cannot control his habits or his words or his emotions gets sent packing. Suspended. Kicked out. Booted. The board steps in, the chairman writes a letter, and the member is a member no more.

Disqualification is golf's big tragedy. Often it happens by accident, when a player misreads his scorecard and signs for fewer strokes than he actually took. It can come too by way of blatant disregard for the rules. Or it can emerge, as in our opening scenario, when a person's behavior ignores the standards that have been established for a club or course where he plays. No one wants to be disqualified, and fewer want to be the one who bears the bad news.

Such was the case in the church of Corinth. The members there were so pleased at their "grace" that they were unwilling to hold a man accountable for behavior that dishonored the Lord. Be sure you know the context here: This man was a "brother," one who said he too believed and followed Jesus. So he was not unaware of the conduct that should mark a believer—a commitment to turn from sin and live in righteousness. But this man was unapologetically sleeping with his stepmother. It was into this set of circumstances that Paul bellowed, "Foul!"

To the Romans, Paul had written that we must not go on sinning that grace may abound (Romans 6:1-2). Then he went on to add that Christ's people must be dead to sin (6:11) and alive in Christ. There is no room for playing it both ways. We are all sinners and we all will yet sin. But this is not the way we who are in Christ are meant to keep on living. "Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature," Paul directed the Colossians, then he listed sins that stand between us and the life Christ would have us live (see Colossians 3:5-10). The killing off of sin, not the cultivating of it, should be the focus of those who say, "I am Christ's."

Are we then disqualified if we go on sinning without repentance or concern for the Lord's honor? From leadership—certainly. From the fellowship of believers, as with the man in 1 Corinthians 15—quite possibly, if the elders are up to the task. From salvation—yes, if our sin reveals that we are not really Christ's at all (Hebrews 10:26-27). Still and always, there is restoration available in the faithful love of Jesus if we are willing to turn again to him (Jeremiah 15:19).

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video is available at <https://youtu.be/SAPfxOxI36Y>.

Opening questions What is the saddest story of disqualification you can tell? Why do you think leaders are hesitant to take action against those who continue outside the rules?

READING Colossians 3:1-10, 1 Timothy 3:1-10

A life in Christ (Colossians 3:1-4)

How does this passage link our life with Christ's resurrection? What do you think it means to have your life "hidden with Christ in God"?

Taking off the old self (Colossians 3:5-10)

What sins define a person apart from Christ? Do you see yourself in need of repentance for any of these specific sins at this time? How will you put these off and put on the new self, renewed in Christ?

Ready to lead (1 Timothy 3)

What qualifiers/disqualifiers equip a person to lead in the service of other believers? Are you moving toward such maturity?
