

THINGS WE LOVE: OUR SPOUSES

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD. (Proverbs 18:22, NIV)

I BREATHED TWO GOLFER’S SIGHS OF RELIEF RECENTLY. On the first tee of a competitive round, I missed a shot to the right, toward a fence that lines the course. You know that means the other side is out of bounds. I hit a provisional and hoped.

I was glad to find my ball about a yard inside the fence—so glad apparently that I managed to make a mess of the hole all the same!

Seven holes later, having managed generally to recover, I tried to cut as much of the corner as I could on a dogleg right. The ball was looking good, sneaking its way inside the right tree line, when at last I heard the telltale sound. I had struck the branches of a large eucalyptus. When I went to find my ball, rather than its having dropped straight down as I expected, it had been thrown quite a ways to the right of the tree. Again, I was just a couple of yards in bounds.

Twice blessed I was that day by having found something every golfer wishes for—his ball, in play.

Solomon was a king with many wives. Indeed, it was too many, according to the warnings of the Lord. And yet we find in Proverbs that he still recognized the excellence in finding a wife. He saw in such a find the very favor of God.

It is possible in all our relationships to grow jaded, to see the weaknesses in those we know best and take pride in tolerating them. In our time, we might daresay this is true of many marriages. A man was happy to find a wife in the beginning; she satisfied his appetites, in the kitchen and in the bedroom. A woman found a husband who gave her a sense of strength and security. Then love grew old. Or cold. And what was good was now just bearable. This is a tale told sadly, with aspects of stereotype and extremism. But if even a measure of it has been true in your marriage, you’ve felt the pain.

It doesn’t have to be this way. I don’t mean you should go searching elsewhere. What I do mean is that you can turn to the Lord and seek newness. “Return to me,” Lord, the spouse of my youth,” you might pray. “And return me to her (or him), as one who sees beauty and goodness and favor in this precious one.”

Opening questions What’s the best thing that can happen to you on the golf course? • Likewise, what is the best thing that can happen between you and your spouse?

READING Proverbs 4:4 & 18:22; 1 Corinthians 7:32-35; 1 Peter 3:1-6

The spouse you’ve been given (Proverbs 18)

In what ways do you find the favor of God through the spouse you’ve been given? How does looking for God’s favor in marriage cause you to see your spouse differently?

Double devotion (1 Corinthians 7)

If the interests of a married person are “divided,” how can we maintain a balance of devotion both to our spouse and to the Lord? Do you have someone who can help guide you in keeping this balance?

Old ideas or enduring principles? (1 Peter 3)

Do the references and instruction here strike you as quaint or outdated? If so, how? At the same time, do you see enduring principles of love and concern that spouses should show for one another? What are those?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/Lv1hpYN6PKxg>.