

THE OR SERIES 3: ALONE OR TOGETHER?

...make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. (Philippians 2:2, NIV)

WHERE I OFTEN PLAY GOLF, the staff is now proud to announce they're providing a whole new fleet of carts, complete with USB ports to keep your smartphone—and presumably your golf course GPS—charged while you play.

This doesn't particularly excite me. I am a walker. Not only that, but I store my phone in my back pocket while I play so it can count my steps. Wait, does all that make me a golf nerd? Maybe so.

I'm not a legalist, though. I play plenty of golf where time with my golf partner matters more than my score. When that happens, I ride. In between shots, we talk. And sometimes the conversation captivates me enough that I even forget where I stand with par—which isn't easy for an old competitor like me.

In my everywhere-else life, I don't fear "walking alone" either. I'm frequently the only one in my office, which is conducive for thinking, planning, reading, and writing. The danger in this is that I can get wrapped up in my own world.

PGA Tour player Peter Malnati drew a lot of reaction this week when he commented on Sunday's exchanges between athletes and the President. In an interview on Monday, Malnati quoted writer Malcolm Gladwell in borrowing the Yiddish expression that "to a worm in horseradish, the whole world is horseradish." Neither athletes nor presidents may understand each other's world all that well. The same can be said across a thousand connections. We all need to get out more.

We certainly can't argue any differently from Scripture. The men and women of God were made for each other. We are called to a community of faith, where we pray for another, challenge one another, encourage one another, provide for one another, and serve one another. Somehow we do this in spite of one another, endeavoring to be "like-minded" even though we know we won't agree on every little thing. Spiritual loners avoid all this, but they miss what God really wants.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians that single purpose among a plural people would complete his joy, he told them so because this was the reflection of their being united with Christ himself. We now take up that charge. We look to one another's interests and live this life together with the attitude of Jesus.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/Em8BHDqKpa8>

Opening questions When do you prefer to ride a course? When do you enjoy a good walk? • What do you think keeps people from interacting with one another, whether in the church or away from it?

READING Ephesians 5:21; Romans 14:13-19; Philippians 1:27-30

Mutual submission (Ephesians 5)

What is the motivation for submitting to one another? What do you think this might entail?

Practicing deference (Romans 14)

How should we treat one another's consciences? In your circle of influence, what efforts can you make to establish peace and edification?

Together in suffering (Philippians 1)

What makes suffering worthwhile for a believer? How is shared suffering better borne?
