

Spiritual Lessons from Golf

by Wayne Goff

I began playing golf at 16 when my father brought home his first set of golf clubs given to him by Paul Lusby, his close friend and spiritual mentor. I have been attempting to play ever since, with much varied results.

Honesty

The first lesson anyone will learn when playing golf is how honest you are and how honest are your playing partners. Much of golf is based on an honor system, and I have seen professional golfers call a “foul” (stroke) on themselves when nobody else would have known. But there is also the temptation to “fudge” on one’s score, or not count a shot done over a second time (called a “mulligan”).

In recreational golf, buddies often “nudge” the golf ball from a poor lie, give away free mulligans, and limit the number of strokes on a hole. All of this is understood and acceptable. But keep in mind that in professional golf, the rules must be strictly adhered to, and there are stiff penalties for failing to do so. For example, even signing the wrong scorecard, intentionally or otherwise, will cause a pro golfer to be disqualified. This could cause him thousands of dollars in earnings!

Christians must learn to be honest with themselves and with others. If you think you are an honest person, then pay more careful attention over the next week to your behavior! You may discover that you have gotten used to a certain amount of “dishonesty”! “...Provide things **honest** in the sight of all men” (Rom. 12:17, **KJV**).

The Rules

The true rules of golf are determined by The United States Golf Association and R&A Rules Limited (Britain’s governing golf body). The most recent edition is the 33rd, effective January, 2016. There are 121 pages of rules, and these rules are strictly adhered to by professional golfers, and a bit less stringently by the casual golfer. Rules govern the type of clubs, type of balls, the order of play, and even the etiquette expected. If you watch much professional golf, you will often learn a new “rule” from an unusual lie of a player’s ball. I’ve played golf for forty years and still don’t know all the rules!

Professed disciples of the Lord often make a mockery of the rules of the Lord (New Testament). They solemnly affirm that the rules are not intended to be followed, or that “fudging” here and there is not a big deal, or even that there is “no pattern” for the Lord’s church, etc. Just so long as you are honest and sincere, everything will work out fine. Imagine using that attitude on the golf course! Even the most refined golfers would wind up in a fist-fight during the first round of play! Jesus Christ warned of such “disciples”(?) and said that they would be dealt with harshly on the Judgment Day, Matthew 7:21. “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does** the will of My Father in heaven.*”

And if you think that’s **not** correct, and that nobody you know follows the rules carefully, then read also James 1:22! “*But be **doers** of the word, and not hearers only, **deceiving** yourselves.*”

Finishing The Game

“*And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules*” (2 Tim. 2:5). In the game of golf, a golf course is comprised of 18 holes and the general rule is 72 strokes for the course. This is what is meant by “par,” as in “par for the course.” I have

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