

AN ORDER TO IT ALL 5: LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 6:1, NIV)

MULL OVER THIS STATEMENT FOR A MOMENT: Those who would call a penalty on themselves do so because they love the game; those who would hide a penalty from others do so because they love themselves.

There are exceptions to this idea, of course. I might call a penalty on myself because I think others would consider me a noble guy and I would soak up their accolades. But Bobby Jones dismissed the validity of this attitude long ago. In the 1925 US Open, Jones called a penalty on himself when he accidentally caused his ball to move in the rough. When lauded for his actions, Jones said, “You might as well praise a man for not robbing a bank.”

Jones’ adherence to the rules was a given. He loved golf and competitive golf played rightly is played by the rules.

All of this leads to the powerful and personal question of why we obey God. But ahead of this is a question even more vital: Do we obey God?

Different expressions have been used through time for those who call themselves Christians but who aren’t motivated to obey God by living as he outlined through the words of Jesus and the apostles (often echoing the Old Testament commands): “casual Christians,” “carnal Christians,” “antinomians.” Such people, we might say, are like those who play golf non-competitively, not following the rules as we find them in the rules book. It’s nearly impossible to defend this approach to the Christian life. It’s devoid of two key components of discipleship: a love for the one who discipled us (Christ) and respect for the things he is teaching us.

If, on the other hand, we love Jesus, our heart is motivated rightly and we are pleased to exercise righteousness. True righteousness blesses God, blesses others, and ultimately blesses us. The latter happens not because others notice us and praise us. Rather, it happens because God gets the glory and we reap the rewards of a life lived without the weight of guilt and the fear of judgment.

No one will get righteousness down pat this side of heaven, but if you have no interest in learning what Christ would have you do and in obeying God, you have to ask yourself whether you love him at all.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2018 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/wcUFICbPo9A>.

Opening questions Would you classify yourself as a casual golfer, a competitive golfer, or a bit of both? In what ways has golf “rewarded” you for the love you have shown it?

READING 1 Peter 1:8-9; John 15:9-11; Romans 16:17-19

A love for Jesus (1 Peter 1)

According to this passage, what ignites a love for Jesus? How does it express itself? Do you recognize this kind of love for Jesus in your own heart? How might your love for Christ increase?

Love and obedience (John 15)

How did Jesus establish the connection between love for him and obedience to him in this passage? What was Jesus’ stated rationale for sharing this principle with his disciples?

Obedience lived out (Romans 16)

How does this passage encourage you toward obedience? What part does resistance to wrongdoing play in the outworking of our obedience? And what part does wisdom play?
