



Links Players

STRAIGHT LIVING IN A CROOKED WORLD

...that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” (Philippians 2:15, NIV)

AS TELEVISION NETWORKS STARTED NAVIGATING how to present tournaments without fans in attendance, the producers found themselves challenged to provide a viewer experience that captures what is going on. Their first option was to get the microphones as near as possible to the players and caddies, bringing viewers in on the decision making and sometimes other conversation that happens “on the ground.”

For a couple of reasons, this is not always the best option. First, players are not always as interesting as producers and viewers might hope. They talk in clichés or hold their tongues altogether. Second, their words are salty, not fit for TV. At least that what the Federal Communications Commission would say. A lot of fans don’t mind such talk and have even suggested it be allowed. “It’s reality,” they say.

I don’t know about you, but I balk at this suggestion. If I’m paired with someone who uses this kind of language on the golf course, I understand it. I don’t like it, but I live with it. At the same time, I don’t want to be peppered with such salt when I’m relaxing on my couch on a Sunday afternoon. Why? Because it’s not *my* reality. To me, and most of the people I hang out with, F-bombs still get my attention. They resonate with the thunder of the world.

It’s a hard sermon to preach, the one where we pronounce our generation to be “warped and crooked.” But when F-bombs are dropped with no more thought than a used gum wrapper, that’s where my mind goes: *The world is way out of whack.*

We do need to be careful here. Paul’s quote comes from Deuteronomy 32, where Moses was originally addressing the waywardness among God’s own people. “It is time for judgment to begin with God’s household,” Peter wrote in his first letter. Spiritual scrutiny must be aimed inward first. What do I need to do to be sure I am in right standing with the Lord? But Peter went on: “...and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”

There should be a marked difference between God’s kingdom and the world around it. Yet the message to both is the same: Get to Jesus. Get salvation. The gospel is that simple. Cleaning up the F-bombs is no match for having your heart cleaned up by the great Savior. May he work in us *and* in our mad, mad world.

Opening questions How comfortable are you with “colorful language” on the golf course? Do you have this same level of comfort when watching golf on TV?

READING Deuteronomy 32:3-6; Philippians 2:12-16; Matthew 5:14-16

Bad and good (Deuteronomy 32)

What are markers of depravity (corruption) that you see around you today? Do you see some of these in your own heart? How far is such crookedness from the excellence of God described in this passage?

Children of God (Philippians 2)

What role does God play in moving us to righteousness? What do you think it means to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”? How is the life of a child of God different than that of a person still living in the world?

Lights for God’s glory (Matthew 5)

Where and how can your light shine that others may glorify God?
