

OH, TO BE WISE 8: EQUAL BEFORE GOD

Rich and poor have this in common: The LORD is the Maker of them all. (Proverbs 22:2, NIV)

LISTS. THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. Top 10, Top 20, Top 100. Restaurants, books, movies, songs, golf courses. Somehow we've managed to make most everything a competition. Or a debate.

On the golf side of things, though, I've played a whole lot of places, and you probably have, too. Some are in the woods, some along the shore. Some have severe greens, others deep bunkering. Some charge \$12 to play, others \$500. And plenty won't let you play there at all unless you know a member. There's no such thing as "all things being equal" when it comes to comparing golf courses.

Honestly, it's hard to even speak of equality out in the open these days. It's like striking a match to dry tinder.

But what does the God's word say of equality? Is God for it or against it?

Let's start with today's proverb, which speaks of the rich and the poor. It instantly assumes an inequality in the world, that some have more money than others, sometimes *much* more. But then it turns just as fast to equality: rich and poor have something in common. What is it? They were made by God.

Perspective often works like this. It comes by way of complete reduction. Let's go back to our beginnings. If you're better than me in one way and I'm better than you in another, it hasn't always been like that. Back in Mama's womb, we were being formed as God would have us, without our silly claims to superiority in wealth or intellect or musicianship or vision. Back in Mama's womb, we were known only by God, really, and we sought neither to establish our advantage or leverage it.

God's word looks at life this way often. In Scripture's written context, men and women did not have equal opportunity, some were masters and some were slaves, and when Jesus walked among his people, the Romans were the power brokers, while the Greeks influenced the culture. Democracy and rights were seized and surrendered. Into this arena, the apostles wrote of a greater truth: Christ makes us one, no matter our background or our present standing. Not equal in the world's eyes, but equal in God's. You have to go all the way back to remember that, perhaps, but it's vital to seeing things rightly from any direction.

Opening questions In your own opinion, what is the best course you've ever played? How about the worst? What made these courses more equal than they looked?

READING Acts 10:23-48; Ephesians 2:14-18; Galatians 3:26-29

The gospel for all (Acts 10)

Before Peter's visit to Cornelius, Jews and Gentiles were regarded as unequal recipients of God's favor. Now through the gospel of Christ, they were seeing that "God does not show favoritism" (v. 34). If the gospel is for all, how does this change your view of others? How does it change your view of ministry and missions?

Christ's great work (Ephesians 2)

What reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making them equal before God? How does such reconciliation still matter in our time?

One in Christ (Galatians 3)

This passage acknowledges differences in society but elevates the oneness we can have in Christ. Why is this such a difficult balance to strike?
