



Links Players

OH, TO BE WISE 7: LOVING DISCIPLINE

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid. (Proverbs 12:1, NIV)

THE GOLF COURSE CAN BE A DANGEROUS PLACE. I was playing with my high school team many years ago when we started to hear reports from another hole. A college player had been hit in the head by an errant tee shot and went to the ground, knocked out. Today we'd run him through a concussion protocol.

Long before that, while swinging a cut-down 4-iron in our backyard, a neighbor boy caught me flush in the chin. I lost a tooth and needed eight stitches to sew the wound closed.

Thanks to scenarios like this, we learn early on that one of the game's most fundamental "rules" is this: be aware of your surroundings. This is true whether you are the one standing around watching or the one swinging the club. So we teach new players to stand back and to keep their eyes open for what's happening around them. It's a discipline that protects them (and us) from harm.

The title of today's devotion may cause you to first process *loving* as an adjective, in the way that we might correct children with loving discipline. Instead, it is meant here as a verb, something we do—in maturity, we take up the attitude of loving discipline, just as we read of it in today's proverb, where those who love discipline do so because they anticipate the benefits it will bring. In the context of athletic training, we've even come to adopt the expression "no pain, no gain."

Now here's a greater question. Maybe our muscles have to be tested and stretched in order to be strengthened and enlarged, but does that same principle apply elsewhere? Specifically, does it apply to our spiritual lives?

When we come to trust in Christ and make a decision to follow him in the things we say and do, we expect that some things will need to be changed. A few of those changes come supernaturally, as a seemingly instantaneous, "easy" switch from wrong to right. But most changes come over the long haul, with difficult discipline along the way. God uses discomfort and suffering to move us off our stubborn marks toward a closer reflection of his heart. He is in this way correcting us, and because God is the one doing the correcting—even when he uses others as his agents—we are "stupid" to oppose him and "love knowledge" when we allow him to make us more like him.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International. An accompanying introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/P7VfvZBIDxk>

Opening questions What is the worst accident you've witnessed on the golf course? Could it have been prevented with greater awareness of the surroundings?

READING Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:7-11

Serious discipline (Deuteronomy 21)

This passage shows how serious the Israelites under Moses were to be in addressing those who refused to be corrected. Does the punishment remain in effect today? How about the principle? How does this passage make you examine your own willingness to be corrected?

Accepting correction (Proverbs 3)

Have you ever been rebuked? What difference does the person rebuking you make in your willingness to accept the correction? If you know correction is coming from God, are you more willing to accept it?

The rewards of discipline (Hebrews 12)

What rewards does this passage point to? Does an awareness that God is bringing goodness help you accept the hard training it may require?
