



Links Players

LOSSES AND GAINS 8: LOVE

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8, NIV)

IT WAS OF THE SILLIEST PLAYGROUND REJOINDERS WE KNEW AS KIDS: “If you love it, why don’t you marry it?” It could apply to anything. If I said I loved the applesauce in my lunch that day, someone was sure to say, “Well, if you love it, why don’t you marry it?”

In truth, many of us who love the game of golf understand that this isn’t just a facetious question. In a way, we’ve married it. We spend big bundles of money and time and thought for golf. We speak of it with a gleam in our eye and a deep appreciation in our voice. And even when it betrays us, we welcome it back with full forgiveness and tee it up again tomorrow. We’re helpless romantics.

Love is the closing topic, a sort of climax, in our studies of what can be lost during a time of trouble. And what a topic it is, for in it we are reminded that love really cannot be proven except in the face of hardship. It’s easy to love when everything’s coming up pars and birdies. It’s life’s double bogeys that put love to the test.

One of the reasons that trouble threatens love is that trouble pushes us toward isolation. This is true not only in times of quarantine or social unrest, when it’s safest to stay behind closed doors away from others. When pain comes upon us in the loss of a loved one, say, we can shrink back into our personal space and stay there alone, wary of being hurt again. Many grieving believers can’t even bring themselves to go to church. Too many sideways glances, too many platitudes.

Into this very context you may hear echoes of Tennyson’s well-known line: “’Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.” There is a price to be paid when it comes to love, and often that price is painful. Ask Jesus.

When Jesus Christ went to the cross, shedding his blood to cover our sins, he did not do so in an ethereal sense, as if he felt no pain or anguish. Rather, the beatings bruised his face, the scourging shredded his skin, the crucifixion pierced his body and slowly took his breath away. But there was more. He was there as an innocent man, bearing instead our sins, dying for us as sinners. What a weight!

When trouble comes, you can stop taking the risks of love. Or you can call on God to carry you through as he carried Jesus, with all his love still intact.

Opening questions How would others know you love golf without even asking you? Has what you love most about golf changed or expanded over time?

READING John 13:1; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 1 John 3:16-18

Jesus’ endless love (John 13)

From what you know of the Gospel accounts, what all was involved in Jesus’ loving his disciples “to the end”? Still, Jesus’ love does not end. How do you know that he loves you, too?

Characteristics of love (1 Corinthians 13)

Which traits here stand out most to you? Is this because you have seen them demonstrated well, or because they need attention in your life? What can you do to move closer to this standard?

Love received, love given (1 John 3)

What does it mean to you that you should “lay down your life for others”? What are some things that hinder you from giving and receiving love? How does knowing Christ change your motivation in loving others?
