



# Links Players

## THE LAVISH LOVE OF GOD

*“I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the sovereign LORD, and you became mine.” (Ezekiel 16:8b, NIV)*

**Y**OU KNOW HOW GOLF CAN BE. One day it can be the most beautiful athletic experience of your life. The shots smoothly fly into the air, the putts track straight for the hole. It’s bliss.

The next day it is a wretched foray into the deepest, darkest jungle. Almost literally. You spend more time hunting balls than hitting them, and if it’s not a tournament, you utter several “I’m dones,” as you lean over to pick up your ball and put it in your pocket.

I present this dichotomy because it’s much like what we read in Ezekiel 16. Spend the several minutes it takes to consume this prophetic chapter and you may be shocked. It is one of the more graphic passages in Scripture, as it lays quite bare the profanity of a wife who runs wild in forsaking her husband. It’s an allegory of the unfaithfulness of Jerusalem, and if you’re reading through the Bible with your kids, you’ll need to stop to deliver some parental guidance.

But as we do with golf, we look to the better, even the best. And that is given to us in a remarkable run of seven verses that display the love of God.

In them, beginning in verse 8, we see that God’s love is not whimsical. Rather, it is bound up in covenant. This is an irreversible vow, an unbroken promise. We may be grossly unfaithful; God will never be. He may—as he did with the idolaters of Jerusalem—remove us from our comfort zone to get our attention. But even in this, he remains faithful. Why? Because he cannot, will not, break his covenant.

Next, God displays his affections in lavish blessing. The allegory speaks of colorful garments and leather sandals and fine linen and costly jewelry, of rich provision and elevated position. Here was a queen for the king. God wanted his beloved to have it all. She forsook it.

So often when we read passages set in historical context, it’s hard to know what we are supposed to gather from their presence in Scripture. Not Ezekiel 16. It was an exposé of Jerusalem; it is an extreme caution to us. God loves us. He wants to give us every good thing. But then what will we do with it? Will we wear our robe with honor, or will we say to God, “Thanks, but no thanks”?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International.

**Opening questions** Do you enjoy golf more often than not, or is it the other way around? | What is the value of a vow in today’s culture? How do you know you can really trust another person’s word?

**READING** Nehemiah 9:16-17; Ezekiel 16:9-19; 2 Timothy 2:11-13

### Sinners and God (Nehemiah 9)

How great is the contrast here between people and God? For what can we count on God in regard to his character?

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### Faithfulness and unfaithfulness (Ezekiel 16)

What is the depth of God’s love as described here? What is the depth of his bride’s unfaithfulness? Why do you think we are like that bride, prone to unfaithfulness even though God is faithful?

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### God holds fast (2 Timothy 2)

First of all, God is for God. But he is also for us. How do these things fit together? What covenant can we make with God today?

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