



Links Players

Good Through the Bag

For you were called to freedom, brother. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh., but through love serve one another (Galatians 5:13, ESV).

Ask most golfers what their strengths are, and more than likely, you will get a modest response. Ask those same golfers what their weaknesses are, and you will probably receive an emphatic answer. Perhaps with a collective shout, the answer often comes back—putting.

There are, as always, exceptions. Ben Crenshaw comes to mind. He made “EVERYTHING.” Maybe you are a world-class putter, but somewhere you have a weakness. Except for one man who lived two thousand years ago, we all have weaknesses.

This reality of strengths and weaknesses in golf has elicited some fun debates through the years. For instance, should we focus on our strengths, or should we address that part of the game that causes grief? Some have argued that if we focus on our weaknesses and neglect our strengths, then our strengths will become our weaknesses. What’s a golfer to do?

Learning the necessary skills to be “good through the bag” takes work. Multitasking is one approach. Intuitively, we know how to define multitasking. Here is a rough and ready attempt —multitasking is that ability to work on multiple projects simultaneously without neglecting any one specific project.

Attitudes toward multitasking range across a spectrum. On one end is the jaded one. We’ve all heard colleagues opine that multitasking is a corporate euphemism for getting employees to do the job of two people for the price of one. On the other end is the optimistic one. This attitude says, “I can do that!” The optimist is the person who loves to grow, learn new things, and serve the larger purposes of any organization, even when it’s not their strength.

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Should I focus entirely on that area at which I am good, or should I venture out into areas where I am uncomfortable and lacking in experience?

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Multitasking is one way to think about becoming “good through the bag.” For instance, if I can hit short irons with the best of them but am embarrassingly bad at hitting long irons or hybrids, then what should I do? Multitasking on the range might be just the ticket. That is, don’t just practice that area in which you are good; practice those areas that need attention.

To avoid hitting long irons, some golfers just move to the forward tees. Hence, reaching for a long iron is rare. I am not suggesting this strategy is wrong. However, the chances you will improve your long iron game are “slim and none, and Slim just left town.”

Now, how might this little thought experiment apply to our walk with Christ? No doubt you’ve discovered you have certain gifts that come to you both naturally and supernaturally. The following question often arises—

Should I focus entirely on that area at which I am good, or should I venture out into areas where I am uncomfortable and lacking in experience?

I want to suggest that the way this question is posed is flawed. This scenario does not have to be “either/or;” it can be a “both/and” opportunity. Suppose you are gifted at speaking, and someone ask you to get involved in a mercy ministry. It’s too easy to think or say, “That’s not my gift.”

I am not suggesting you give up your primary calling. I am, however, hinting that just like practicing four irons on the range, you could occasionally work at something other than that which you’re already good.

Could we possibly imagine Jesus teaching the parable of the Good Samaritan in such a way that has him saying, upon seeing the victim of thief’s brutality, “That’s not my gift”?

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