



Links Players

Advent 2025 | For The Love of God and The Game

We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Have you ever sensed that the game of golf chose you? I know! This idea strikes us as nonsensical. You initially recoil, “You are personifying golf— golf has no volitional capacities.” After some reflection, you react, “I have a great many sporting options, and I chose golf.”

All this seems reasonable. After all, we live in a culture that has elevated “freedom of choice” to the Pantheon of gods. Human autonomy is an inalienable right! We assume “freedom of will” is the most fundamental reality of life. The moment we felt the pleasure of a “nutted” drive, we made our choice.

For many Westerners, it is an unexamined truism that whatever our life has become is entirely the consequence of earlier choices! The idea of living in The Matrix belongs exclusively in the fictional world of Hollywood.

For most of us, Jim Carrey’s movie, The Truman Show, while thought-provoking, is beyond the pale. We convince ourselves, like William Henley’s Invictus, that each one of us is “the master of my fate, the captain of my soul.”

We quickly survey the choices we have made throughout life— where I chose to go to college, who I decided to marry, what polo I bought, what shot I played—and, from a smattering of examples, we conclude, “life is entirely what I make it.”

All the while, forgetting that we did not choose our parents, the country we were born into, our inherited ethnicity, the cultural influences that shape us, the history of ideas that influence our assumptions, the experiences that shape our outlook (both good and bad), or, among other things, the physiological, psychological, and biological makeup that determines our athletic abilities [or lack thereof].

Not to mention the supernatural forces that influence our thinking, often going unnoticed or denied; naively, we go through life as if the objective or external world of creation and culture has little to no impact on our lives.

Like Adam, humanity (Adam’s descendants) has been fleeing from God ever since Adam’s first rebellion. It is important to remember that God, in love, pursued Abraham, David, Peter, Paul, and every other biblical figure — not the other way around.

Most people toggle back and forth between philosophical determinism (freedom of choice is an illusion) and philosophical libertarianism (external influences are impotent), unaware that both positions are flawed and incompatible ideologies.

As C. S. Lewis explained in The Screwtape Letters, “Your man has been accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to having a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head.”

Biblical realism teaches us that God’s love, demonstrated through the historical sending of his Son and the experiential work of the Holy Spirit, races to find us, running as fast as we can away from surrendering our lives to His authority.

It is through the encounter with his love that our hearts are changed, and with changed hearts, new desires and restored wills emerge.

The Spirit of Christ conquers our radically insubordinate hearts and recalcitrant minds by his wooing love.

Prayer: Jesus, conquer all rival claims to the throne of my heart by your redeeming love.

READING: Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Ephesians 2:1-10; Titus 3:3-7; 1 John 4:19.

1. Whether it was a single moment or a sequence of events, recent or from a long time ago, something happened that made you love this game. What was it?

2. Knowing what we were like before placing our faith in Christ, what event first led you to experience the love of Jesus Christ?

3. Application: Since it was the love of Christ that brought us into the kingdom, and since it is his love that sustains us and helps us grow in maturity, how can we position ourselves to receive more of his love?
