



Links Players

Shrewd Yet Blameless

*Look, I am sending you like sheep among wolves, so be shrewd as snakes and blameless as doves.
(Matthew 10:16, The Newer Testament)*

The current edition of the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf book is about 525 pages. This is roughly the same length as the English version of the New Testament.

The Rules of Golf book provides detailed explanations of how to execute a rule properly. This begs the question, “Why are the rules of golf so complicated?”

Reading the scriptures often prompts a similar set of questions. I don’t understand ... what does this mean?

Today’s scripture might be one to elicit such questions – sheep and wolves; snakes and doves? It doesn’t make sense. Or does it?

At this time in his ministry, Jesus sends out his disciples to share the kingdom of heaven with the lost people of Israel. He sends them with a warning: they are like sheep among wolves, so they must be wise as serpents yet innocent as doves.

Jesus used two similes to teach the disciples how to be and behave in their ministry.

Be vulnerable and gentle (sheep) in a hostile world (wolves.) Have practical wisdom, be strategic and clever (serpent), while being innocent with a good conscience (dove).

Jesus was a gentle person, but he also took a whip to the moneychangers and chased them out of the temple (John 2:15) Jesus was wise in how he taught through parables and he escaped many traps set by his adversaries.

Here’s a few more ways to untangle these paradoxical scriptures.

Be aware. Be open, understanding, and compassionate, but not naïve about opposition, manipulation, or danger.

Think strategically. There is a right time, place, and way to act. Knowing when to speak and when to stay silent, when to engage and when to withdraw.

Be resourceful. In difficult situations look for creative solutions rather than being careless.

Read People. Not all people are safe. Be discerning who is trustworthy versus who means harm.

Self-Control. Take a pause. In emotionally tense situations, learn to respond thoughtfully and deliberately instead of reacting impulsively.

An article at gotquestions.org summarizes Jesus' words better than I can.

“Successful Christian living requires that we strike the optimal balance between the dove and the serpent. We should strive to be gentle without being pushovers, and we must be sacrificial without being taken advantage of. We are aware of the unscrupulous tactics used by the enemy, but we take the high road. Peter admonishes us, ‘Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us’ (1 Peter 2:12).”

Prayer: Lord, help me integrate more of who you are into my own being today.

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