

The Back 9: “Life Lessons Learned Later in Life”

Hole #10, “Gratitude”



“Golf is the closest game to the game we call life. You get bad breaks from good shots; you get good breaks from bad shots – but you have to play the ball where it lies.”

--Bobby Jones, Champion Golfer

I love the game of golf. I hate the game of golf. When I hit a long straight drive down the middle of the fairway, I love golf. When I miss a 2-foot putt, I hate golf. The challenges and frustrations of attempting to hit a little white ball into a 4.5 inch hole on green grass surrounded by water hazards and sand traps 400 yards away has left people loving and hating this game for centuries. Yet, something about the game, I find deeply spiritual. Golf is very much like life. At the end of a round, I often feel a deep sense of gratitude for this season of my life.

There are 18 holes in every round of golf. The front nine holes are where golfers make their way out on to the course. The back nine holes are where they make their way back to the clubhouse. The snack shack is usually at the turn of the two nines where golfers catch their breath; get a cool drink and a hotdog in preparation for the final nine holes.

If Bobby Jones is right and golf is like life, then during the “front nine” years, we focused much of our energies on education, marriage, family and building a career. In middle age, we arrive at the turn, catch our breath and take time to reflect upon the first half of our round. We seek to make adjustments in order to make the round more enjoyable. The front nine holes are behind us. We are now making our way to the 10th Tee to begin the back nine of our lives. The 10th hole can be the beginning of a season of gratitude in our lives. The Lord has many life lessons for us to learn in our later years.

Hole #10, “Gratitude”

Gratitude is *“the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness to someone.”* The later years can be our best years. As we step on the 10th Tee of our lives, we catch ourselves reflecting on the beauty of the surroundings and enjoying engaging conversations with good friends. We realize we are now on the back nine holes of life. The final number on the scorecard is not as important to us as it once was. Grumbling over bad shots has given way to a deep sense of gratitude for simply being able to enjoy all that God has created in the beauty that surrounds us and the relationships that enrich us.

Psalm 118 captures the essence of the 10th Tee of Gratitude. The Psalmist teaches us that we cannot change our past. It is gone. The future is not here. All we have is the present day to enjoy all God has made. The Psalmist is overwhelmed with gratitude and thankfulness for the goodness of God he sees every day. A deep sense of gratitude fills his heart as he reflects on the personal, intimate way God cares for each one of us. The Psalmist is on the back nine holes of his life. On the 10th Tee of Gratitude, he realizes the same God who created spectacular sunsets, vast oceans and starry nights, cares deeply about each one of us.

*“This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.”*

(Psalm 118:24)

For many of us, the golf course is where true character is developed and life skills are learned. The thousands of hours I have spent on a golf course in my lifetime have taught me many life lessons. For the next eight weeks, I would like to invite you to join me on the back nine holes of life and discover the life lessons our God has to teach us in later life. I just missed a two-foot put on the 10th green. I hate golf. I will see you on the 11th Tee...

