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Finding the Sweet Spot

By Pastor Doug Winne

There are few things as enjoyable as driving a golf ball 225 yards or more in the correct direction. That can happen when one finds the "sweet spot" on the club. Hit the ball too much with the toe of an open-faced club and the ball will likely slice to the right; hit it with the heel of a closed-face club and it will likely pull hard to the left. The sweet spot is that middle spot...the middle of the club, meant to be hit square on.

To go down the road we started last Sunday (and this will be the end for this trip), there is a sweet spot that we, as followers of Jesus, need to find between understanding and conviction in regards to what is going on in our world these days. Let me explain.

It is hard to understand the life of anyone who is not like us – be it because of their race, or because they are in a very different financial situation than ourselves, or maybe because they struggle with some addiction problem that we can't even relate to. There are many such factors that potentially distance ourselves from others. Because of the hype and media coverage of the death of George Floyd, and the riots that followed, Black Lives Matter (BLM) has been in the news a lot lately. Cities like New York are painting the words "Black Lives Matter" on some of their streets. My impression is that Black Lives Matter is a VERY BROAD umbrella covering some folks who are upstanding citizens as well as some that are the exact opposite. Because of the more nefarious element, it is easy to dismiss BLM. I think the better thing to do is try and understand why BLM ever got started. What led to its formation? What do they want? Why would even some solid Christian black pastors associate themselves with BLM? Presumably if everyone associated with BLM had been happy and satisfied the organization would never have come into existence to start with, right? So on the one hand there is a need for trying to understand.

On the other hand there are these things that we call "convictions" – our deep-seated beliefs. Take for example the issue of homosexual practice. One may try and do exegetical gymnastics to get around the clear teaching of scripture, but it will not work. From beginning to end, the scriptures reject "sexual immorality" (including homosexual behavior) as an acceptable "lifestyle" for any Christian. That is the teaching of scripture and that is, therefore, the conviction of every true Christian. As a pastor, the counseling of those who have struggled with their sexual identity has been one of the most difficult forms of counseling I have ever done. Probably nothing, not even one's race, is as basic to a person's self-identity as is their understanding of who they are sexually. But just because a person struggles in this area is no reason for us to lose our convictions.

Some – even some within the church – are so singular in their convictions that they come across as unbending, unhearing, and unsympathetic to the struggles or plight of others. These are those that are hitting the ball off the head of the club...and with that going to the right, the far right.

Others, in trying to understand – to relate to, to come along beside, to truly "bear the burdens" of another (Galatians 6:2) – seemingly do so as if there are no convictions to be adhered to. These are those that are hitting off the heel of the club, and with that pulling to the left, the far left. Political parties can come to be characterized by these two different directions. Somewhere in the middle is the sweet spot, the spot that I am convinced Christ desires us to find: a place of trying to understand (and so we dialogue, and listen, and truly try and bear another's burden) while at the same time holding fast to our convictions of God's absolute truth. This is where we need to be. May God help us to find that place.

Yep, nothing like finding that sweet spot and watching that ball fly!