

I used to be an avid golfer. Growing up, my dad and my grandpa (my mom's dad) were both excellent examples and teachers for me. They were both very even keeled, calm and in control. I never, ever saw them get upset on the golf course. My grandpa especially stands out to me. When he would hit a bad shot (which was not often), he would let out a loud belly laugh – like someone told him a funny Ole and Lena joke. I never understood that as I would get upset and let bad shots culminate in my head, leading to more and more bad shots. But I still watched, paid attention, and learned. I have never forgotten my grandpa's example. In high school, I worked at the golf course in my hometown during the summer months and when I was not working, I was golfing (of course). Later in life, when I returned home to work for my dad (he owned a Chrysler, Plymouth, Dodge, Jeep dealership), we would hit golf balls into a net he set up in one of his work bays during the winter months. I watched my dad and continued to be a student of golf as he was. I subscribed to magazines, watched golf tournaments, and hit more golf balls with my dad as we discussed and tried new grips and swings. I eventually improved to achieve a 6 handicap – shooting 2 over par a couple different times.

After I accepted my first call to Jackson, MN, golf began to take a backseat, but I still played as much as I could. Eventually, though, children came along. When Mayah came home in 2013 I did not swing a club again until this past spring – about 8 years between rounds. That first nine holes was ugly. The second nine was a little better, but still nothing about which to write home. In short, I stopped being a student of golf - I stopped abiding – and that round a couple months ago showed that truth.

In the Gospel text for Reformation Sunday, John 8:31-36, Jesus says, ***If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*** The Greek word for “abide” denotes a snapshot event and has the sense of staying in a condition that you have entered. This simply means to enter the Word and stay there. It is only in being a student of the Word that you will know the Truth better and better, and it is only in knowing the Truth that you will know true freedom. Disciples do that. Once you step out from being a student, you begin to drift from the truth; losing muscle memory as I did with my golf game. Does that describe you? Has your Bible reading, or Bible study been lacking recently? Have you felt distant from God, from the Truth of your salvation? Well, enter and abide in the Word, then

stay there. Be a life-long student – a disciple – and know true freedom. Do not let anything get in the way. Abide in the Word, always, and stay put.