

God and Putt-Putt Golf

Imagine that you are playing putt-putt golf with a small child. The child, only four or five years old, has never played the game before—never even picked up a putter. You watch as the child awkwardly holds the club like a broom and begins “sweeping” the brightly colored ball across the carpet.

Making the ball arrive at the hole is not part of the plan. Never enters the child’s mind. Instead, the child seems content to smack the ball—at first—in no specific direction. Then, after discovering what a nice sound it makes when the ball strikes one of the bright orange boundaries, the child starts to hit the ball against the wooden planks.

Eventually, after several hundred strokes, the ball accidentally goes into the cup. The child seems amused but also perturbed. Now it has to be retrieved so the game of smacking the golf ball against the boundaries can continue.

You don’t mind what is happening. At least the child is having fun. And you are thankful for the orange planks—otherwise, the game might be taken to the grass, or walkways, or out into the parking lot. Thank goodness for the boundaries.

But there is a problem. A line of other golfers has formed behind. And they seem a bit impatient.

You escort the young Tiger Woods to the next hole, where you explain some of the finer points of the game. Standing behind, you show how the club should be gripped and how it should swing like a pendulum, striking the ball and sending it in a straight line. You further explain that the object of the game is not to hit into the boundaries but into the cup.

With you standing behind and guiding the club, the child’s game improves dramatically. Eventually, the joy of a hole-in-one is shared.

This story has a lot to say about law and grace.

The bright orange boundaries represent the law. Thank God He placed them there. Without boundaries, there would be chaos.

But we are not supposed to concentrate on the law. We are not supposed to spend all of our time bumping up against it. The purpose of the game has little to do with the boundaries.

We learn this when our heavenly Father has mercy on us. He stands behind us—actually He steps inside us—and shows us how to play. We learn to rely on His wisdom and strength until we eventually are able to get a holiness-in-one.