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# Chess' Values for Living

I have only played 3 games of chess in my whole lifetime.

However, I have tremendous respect for the power of the game.

Chess seems to be a good bit like the multi-tasking in which so many of us engage. The game entails at least 5 different pieces on what looks like a checker board. The fascinating thing: each piece has different rules for movement. (In this regard it is something like the nearly addictive computer game, Free Cell, I understand.) The challenge for players: to think 2, 3, even 4 moves ahead of the current move - or the game will conclude quickly! "Check mate!"

I recently saw a very inspiring movie about a chess team in a poor school in New York City. (Please pardon that I cannot recall the movie's name. Poor name recall is one of my "thorns in the flesh." Ted Danson starred in it. The teacher was very fond of chess and really excellent at it. In part as a survival-as-a-teacher move, he introduced it to his street-hardened students. They got really good at it despite poor economic resources. They went on to win a major competition—to the startle and admiration of an awful lot of people.

Now it would sing to my soul if our young people here would investigate the game and seriously engage in it. Like mathematics and other subjects, it would do wonders for their thinking skills development! Chess is a match of wits, nonviolent, played in 2's but can also be a team sport, an equalizer, has a protocol requiring great respect for one's opponent, and great discipline regarding focus.

It also would really sing to my soul if all of us and most certainly all of our leaders would play several games of chess. We would learn anew that starting a project is far from the end of it all. Other steps, helpful and hurtful, will inevitably follow, so blessed are they who plan ahead well and with flexibility across a couple possible outcomes.

Our KY Representative David Floyd demonstrated great chess skill in his reasons for his vote on a proposed textbook cost study. If we do it, what will we do with the study? Who will use it? What good/ill will it really do?

Chess pieces can also remind us that others might be operating by other rules that may not be bad, just different—but which rules impact where we all are trying to go.

Understanding the rules by which others operate is more important than we tend to think as we live our busy lives. Culture includes a lot of "rules." Certainly understanding other cultures is increasingly important these years as we become a global community. The good news is we have persons who have studied these cultures and can help the rest of us know and appreciate from where others are coming. Some seem to think that Catholics use "infallibility" a lot. Actually for us infallibility is very, very carefully defined and applies in very, very, very few situations. Thus there is always more to learn, to take into consideration, to appreciate.

Also in this chess game called life, analysis of a situation is heavily influenced by where one is "sitting" or "standing"—one's point of view. Getting a better grasp of almost any situation is aided by sharing these perspectives, respectfully.

As another public policy example, cuts in public programs can seem efficient if one is well off but very threatening if one is poor and/or has insecure means of income. Chess' call to "think the whole board" (or something close to that wording) is so very wise.

A haunting thought here: Jesus calls us to side with people who are poor and vulnerable; Jesus actually identifies with them.

I wonder when chess was invented? By whom?  
Chess, anyone?

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