

## LIVING AN AUTHENTIC FAITH, PART 3

“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.” (1 Corinthians 8:1b, NIV)

HERE’S A FUNNY HABIT YOU DON’T HEAR MENTIONED OFTEN: talking a good practice.

You read that correctly. Commonly we’ll joke about those who talk a good game, telling us they’ve really got it together but then demonstrating something altogether different every time we play with them. But there are also those who let you know how many buckets of balls they’ve hit and how long they spent on the putting green. Though again, if it comes to no apparent good, it is practice for practice’s sake, with little translation to performance on the course.

This may be reason for a wry laugh in the context of golf, but inauthenticity brings no laughter when it comes to matters of the faith. Disciplines that look good on the outside but ignite no fire within—oh, believer beware!

It’s possible to read the Gospels with a judgmental eye toward the legalistic practices of the religious leaders of Jesus’ time. These men craved position among their peers, and the way to get this was through posturing and pretense.

Jesus, however, saw into their hearts—as he does into ours—and what he saw revealed a lifelessness. These men and their studies demonstrated a circular existence: they studied to be esteemed and they were esteemed for their study. The tragedy is that, all these centuries later, “they” have too often become “us.” We, too, can fall into an insular culture of quiet times and reading lists, studying to say we have studied. Meanwhile, our hearts are unchanged. The fire, if lit, remains dim.

Paul warned the Corinthians that “knowledge puffs up.” Of course it does! And while Paul’s statement was made in a particular context, we know there is crossover to all contexts, for beginning with the grade school classroom, knowledge comes with a checklist: *How many did you get right?* The moment we assert our knowledge, we say, “I’ve got an advantage over you.”

The context under which Paul recast knowledge was the rule of love. If your knowledge is going to carry any worth in the kingdom, it must be sought and dispensed with love in mind. Will your knowledge win others to a beginning with Jesus? Will it spur them to love and good deeds as committed followers of him (Hebrews 10:24)? Only if it is delivered in love. Only if we hold no stake in knowing for knowing’s sake.

**Opening questions** In what area would you consider yourself especially knowledgeable? Where did this knowledge come from? In what arenas and with what spirit do you dispense your knowledge?

**READING** John 4:10-14; 2 Timothy 2:15 & 3:14-17; 1 Timothy 4:13-16

**Life in us (John 4)**  
What causes life to rise up in us? What should we do with this life?

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**The purpose of the word in us (2 Timothy)**  
Where should we seek approval for the study we do?

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**Life and doctrine (1 Timothy)**  
How does this passage affirm the discipline of study? How are life and doctrine intertwined? What is the result of life and doctrine closely watched?

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Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today’s study at <https://youtu.be/fdcecdSTwqw>