

THINK LIKE A PRO, PART 1

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. (Hebrews 5:12, NASB)

IF ALL OUR GOLF CONFESSIONS WERE TRUE, they would include this one: We are no better at golf than we are because we aren't that willing to work at it.

Sure, every club has its range rats. But some of those too aren't great players because they fall in love with watching the ball launch off the clubface and soar toward its target—a target, that is, in the middle of a field without consequences.

To be a truly accomplished golfer, you have to be able to compete in all regards: off the tee, from the fairway, out of trouble, around the greens, and with the putter in your hands. You can't, like the fellow in that quirky golf commercial, have a bag full of drivers and call it good. That ad, you'll note, is for financial services, where we also know there is great importance to diversifying our investments.

So how about when it comes to your spiritual walk? Do you also there make a habit of establishing no good habits at all? You see, that's really what we're talking about: the commitment of regular discipline.

When the writer of Hebrews spoke of maturity, his words came with an admonishment. "You're not nearly as far along as you should be," he told them in essence. When it comes to other fields, we might respond with an excuse: "You know, I've never been very good at math," or "I'm sorry, but this chronic pain I've been living with keeps me from getting things done." Spiritual growth, however, is of a different nature. Its practice does not require special skills, and sometimes our greatest growth comes in the middle of our most challenging weaknesses.

Where might you start, then? With prayer, certainly. No matter how young or how broken or how unlearned you are, you can open conversations with God every day. You can talk to him openly about the triumphs and troubles of your life; you can speak of relationships and pressures and even desires. Add to your prayer the reading of Scripture. If you are too weak, or not a good reader, ask a friend to read aloud with you, or listen online (you'll find several free audio Bibles available). Learn the truths God has revealed in his own Word.

Start with these two disciplines. Commit to them daily. Then see how you grow.

Opening questions What part of your golf game do you like to practice most? Least? • Where in your life do you find yourself most committed to discipline and practice?

READING Hebrews 5:7-12; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Jesus' suffering (Hebrews 5:8)
What aspect of maturity came even to Jesus through suffering?

For mature audiences (Hebrews 5)
What do you think makes people "dull of hearing" when it comes to spiritual things? What role is presented as the destination for mature believers? What do you think it takes to get to that position? What needs to change in your life to extend your maturity?

Weakness and power (2 Corinthians 12)
How did Paul describe his trouble? What end did he see them producing in him? How does this help us understand the way that maturity can come to us despite our difficulties? Are you yet willing to say to God "whatever it takes" in his maturing of you?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today's study at <https://youtu.be/GPW18dHPIWI>