

MAGAZINE INSIGHTS 7: ABSORBED IN OUR GIFTING

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Timothy 4:15-16, NIV)

BRYSON DECHAMBEAU AND EMMA TALLEY ARE HARDLY SEASONED VETERANS. Truth is, they spent much of 2016 laboring at making the big tours. DeChambeau worked at it with sponsors' exemptions, hoping to win enough to gain exempt status for the 2016-17 season on the PGA Tour. Meanwhile, Talley stayed through her senior year of college at Alabama then headed for the Symetra Tour, attempting to climb the ladder high enough for LPGA access next year.

Perseverance is never an easy road. As a professional athlete, you can occasionally catch lightning in a bottle, as they say. But even those who win early must learn to last. One way to do this is to become absorbed in our gifting.

Each man and woman in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells is given a functional attribute we call a spiritual gift. These may include administration, knowledge, wisdom, faith, generosity, healing, mercy, teaching, pastoring, encouragement, and more. We may all possess *a measure* of all of these, but the Lord seems normally to enrich us individually with one or two of these gifts.

You may be able to discern for yourself how God has equipped you. Commonly, your own suspicions will be confirmed through the observations of a believing friend, who may say something to you like, "You have a real way with opening the ears of others to the gospel. You're doing the work of an evangelist."

But being equipped and being absorbed are two different matters. When Paul challenged the Corinthians to "run in such a way as to get the prize," he wanted them to become absorbed in the work of Christian ministry. This was no light jog, but a push for enduring faith.

Many things can hold us back from such a heightened pursuit, but the greatest is likely what you will hear referred to as "the fear of man." We may wonder what non-believers think of us, or worry that our work will not match up to that of those who are *really* spiritual. This view, however, lacks the critical recognition that it is God who has called us and God who equips us for this calling. We do not need to fear what others think or do; rather, we do our best when we do what God has made us best at—and when we do it with all our heart.

Opening questions In your current work context, what does diligent work look like? What is the hardest thing for you to do day in and day out, even though you know it is of key importance?

READING 1 Timothy 4:15-16; Romans 12:3-8; 2 Timothy 1:6-7

Essential components (1 Timothy 4)
 What comprises your life? your doctrine? How do you go about watching these closely in service to the Lord?

Humility and gifting (Romans 12)
 What part does humility play in using the gifts given to you by the Holy Spirit? What do you think one such gift is in your case? According to 1 Corinthians 12:7, what is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

Better than fear (2 Timothy 1)
 How might you "fan into flame" the ministering gifts that God has given you? What has God given you in the place of fear?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International. A six-minute introductory video is available for this study at <https://youtu.be/XdTKSd1s10w>