

REAL WORLD GOD 4: GRAINS OF SAND

... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching (2 Timothy 4:2, ESV)

I'D LOVE TO KNOW JUST HOW INTENTIONAL broadcaster and writer Ken Brown was with his words. He is a professional after all. So there's reason to wonder with a statement like this: "If you do end up in Hell, you might be there for a while."

No matter how he said it, the context of Brown's words was set in discussion of the infamous large bunker on the fourteenth hole at St. Andrews. Any second meaning is something you and I might add.

This rests in due course, however, with the studies we have been undertaking lately, where we have recognized in the plain words of Scripture some intentional metaphorical applications to the world we live in—a world created by the same God who gave us the words on the pages of our Bible. Today we consider sand.

In the Old Testament, we come across several references to sand on the seashore likened to innumerable quantities, in the same way we might also speak of the stars in sky. In one of these instances, we read this: "And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured" (Genesis 41:49). Eventually, counting grains of sand becomes a wasteful, even futile, effort. Certainly this would be true for a golfer, whose purpose once in a bunker is to get the ball out, not to linger and explore the intricacies of the grains beneath her feet. You don't want this to be like Hell, where you are there "for a while."

The best way to prepare for a trip to golfer's sandy obstacles, however, is to practice. You'll never be good at confronting the difficulty of a bunker if you never go there. In fact, tour professionals are so well-practiced that, finding bunkers to be more consistent than the rough around the greens, they will commonly aim for the bunkers when it is their best option.

So what about our state of preparation? Are we ready for the challenges that come our way? This doesn't mean that we are good at unearthing arcane details. It means, often, that we are ready to converse. We must talk with ourselves, as it were, speaking gospel truths into our hearts and minds when the enemy would have us think otherwise. And we must talk to others, answering their questions about Jesus and explaining what it really means to follow him.

Opening questions Are you one of those golfers who would rather be in the sand than the rough? • How is your approach to obstacles on the course similar (or not) to your approach to obstacles in life?

READING 1 King 3:4-28; 2 Timothy 4:1-5

The wisdom of Solomon (1 Kings 3)

Where did Solomon's wisdom come from? How was he able to apply it to a difficult situation? How many applications might learnedness and wisdom have (see also 1 Kings 4:29-34)?

Talking to yourself

Of what wisdom from Scripture must you continually remind yourself, so that you are resisting temptation and walking in truth?

Prepared with the truth (2 Timothy 4)

Why is it so important to recognize and apply truth? Where do we go to encounter and increase in God's truth? How would you assess your own state of preparation for times "in season and out of season," especially as it relates to sharing your faith with others?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International. This study is accompanied by a 5-minute video here: <https://youtu.be/bcxt5KhHle4>.