

THE OR SERIES 5: SERMONS OR SCRIPTURE?

...devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.
(1 Timothy 4:13, NIV)

WHEN BEN HOGAN FAMOUSLY GAVE AWAY HIS SECRET by saying it was in the dirt, he meant that you needed to spend time on the practice range if you were ever really going to understand how to strike the ball.

This doesn't mean Hogan was opposed to lessons. Everyone needs the basic understandings of posture and grip and balance given to them. Most beginners are aided in the early going by someone moving the club back and forward for them while their arms and wrists and shoulders move.

But if you really want to advance you'll have to, as Hogan said, dig in.

Which leads us to a very interesting question, because we have been given two common ways to learn of God: by his Word and by those he has gifted to teach his Word. So which of these is more helpful?

This may not be the right question at all, because these things are not mutually exclusive. We can—and should—learn in both ways. The Bereans (found in Acts 17) heard the teaching of Paul about who Jesus was according to the Scriptures. Then they went to those Scriptures for themselves to be certain that what Paul was teaching could stand up to scrutiny. For this effort, Luke called the Bereans “noble” (Acts 17:11). So we can benefit from either way of learning—reading for ourselves or listening to the explanations of a Bible teacher—but we do best to engage for ourselves and confirm what we have heard.

We should also recognize that we, as believers who have received the Holy Spirit, have an uncommon way of learning. The Spirit himself illuminates the Scriptures for us. When we sit down to read, we can ask the Lord to explain to our hearts and minds just what he means in the words we read. John wrote that the anointing of God on us “teaches [us] about all things” (1 John 2:27).

The presence of God in the midst of our learning cannot be ignored. Peter told his readers that God's “divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him” (2 Peter 1:3). That power shows up in the inspired Scripture, in the spiritually gifted teachers we are given, and in the Spirit's influence as we study for ourselves. Now, let's dig in!

Opening questions Is practice something you like to do when it comes to golf? How long can you concentrate on the range? • Are you more of a reader or a listener? How do you best remember the things you learn?

READING Proverbs 4:6-9; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15

Getting wisdom (Proverbs 6)

What charge do these verses provide, especially in the context of today's devotion? Where will you go to get wisdom?

Those who teach (Ephesians 4 & 1 Timothy 5)

How do God's gifted teachers contribute to our discipleship? How should we relate to them?

A competent worker (2 Timothy 2)

How do you become a worker approved and unashamed? What do you think it means to “rightly divide (or handle) the word of truth”?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/dwaxRWBh56U>