

“Blessed is the man whose bogies the Lord does not count against him.”

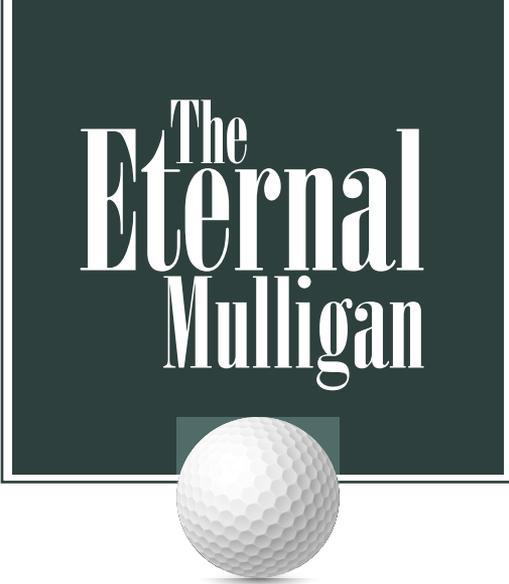
- Tim Philpot



**T**im Philpot has retired from a career as a Family Court Judge, trial lawyer, Kentucky State Senator and President of CBMC International, a worldwide marketplace ministry. Now, he is a six handicap, happy to report that he has played golf in 28 nations. His joy now is several weeks each summer exploring golf in northern Scotland.

Tim and his wife Sue now live at Steelwood CC near Loxley, Alabama USA. He has authored two books, *Ford's Wonderful World of Golf* and a novel, *Judge Z: Irretrievably Broken*. Tim is a frequent speaker at CBMC and golf events around the world. He now concentrates on writing, including an upcoming novel set in Scotland entitled *Player's Progress*, which is a golfer's version of *Pilgrim's Progress*, a study of Proverbs and a journey in search of wisdom.

This booklet is an edited transcript of a message which Tim has shared on numerous occasions around the world, including exotic golf venues like Kenya, South Africa, India, Korea, Japan, Australia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Honduras, Venezuela, Ireland, Scotland and Hungary.



The Apostle Paul was a golfer. We know this with absolute certainty because he told his young caddie Timothy, *"I have finished the course."* (II Timothy 4:11)

But even more obvious, listen to his letter to the Country Club of Rome:

*"I do not understand what I do... For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do. I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. No, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing."* (Romans 7)

Apparently, Paul had a bad slice or hook. Maybe even the yips or shanks. For sure, he was no better than a 24 handicapper.

As for me, being a golfer turned out to be one of life's great blessings. The game itself helped me to be a better lawyer, a better senator, a better judge, a better friend and even a better husband. Indeed, golf even helped me find eternal life and love. I know that sounds crazy, but please consider the following nine lessons from the game of golf that may change the trajectory of your life.



## Listen to the Pro

When you start to play golf, you should first find a competent teaching professional. Only listen to a real pro.

Never take lessons from someone as bad as you are. Many years ago I discovered that my wife, Sue, was getting golf lessons from her father, Billy. Her dear daddy had taken up golf at age 60 after thirty-five years as a missionary in Africa. He shot 120 on a good day, yet my wife was letting Billy show her how to grip the club. He was a great missionary—but a lousy golfer. Taking lessons from him was a bad idea.

So, if you want to learn to play golf, go to a professional, or at least somebody who can break 80.

The same is true in life. If you want to get better at anything, find someone who is better than you, with more experience as well. And then listen.

If I have any wisdom at all, it started when I was 31 years old. I got serious about reading the Bible. I started to rise early every day. I listened for at least an hour each day to readings of Proverbs and Psalms, and to the words of the greatest people in history: Moses, Peter, Paul and especially the red letters spoken by Jesus Himself.

Perhaps you don't spend much time reading at all. Remember, it's never too late to start. Use audio books if necessary. In golf, listen to the pro. In life, listen to the Source of all life. Read the Word of God.



## Imitate the Pro

You should listen to the professional, but even better, imitate a pro.

When I was a kid, even though I never had a formal lesson I taught myself to play by imitation. Some of that was negative because I was swinging like my dad, who could not break 80. But I found smooth swinging Gene Littler on TV and started to pretend that I was him as I swung the club. Swing mechanics can leave you confused, but imitation is usually a great place to start.

Al Geiberger produced a best-selling video series using “psycho-cybernetics.” It was all about the rhythm and the “swish” of the golf swing, using a metronome.

You may recall the old Nike commercial with Tiger Woods on the practice range hitting perfect shots to music, in perfect rhythm. An entire row of golfers starts to imitate Tiger, hitting great shots. But then the music stops, and Tiger departs. As soon as he leaves, the golf balls start flying everywhere. As long as Tiger was there to imitate, all was well.

In life, you also need someone to imitate. For me it has been simple. I chose to imitate Jesus Himself. He kept it simple when he said to everyone, *“Follow me.”*

Remember Payne Stewart winning the U.S. Open in 1999? He wore a bracelet that said, “WWJD.” Those initials stood for “What Would Jesus Do?”

Payne was no saint. He was quite a wild character, but just a few months before that U.S. Open he had started to follow Jesus. He wanted all his

friends to know that he was now a Jesus imitator. He was still a unique character as God had made him, but now he had a purpose that was bigger than just golf. When he made the winning 15-foot putt on the 18th green at Pinehurst, he instinctively thrust his arm to the sky for all to see his bracelet: "What Would Jesus Do?"

And then, just for good measure, Payne went to his playing partner Phil Mickelson and told him that being a father is the greatest thing that he will ever experience. He was imitating Jesus when he told his friend about the joys of fatherhood.



## 3 Prepare, Don't Plan

Nobody has ever been good enough to truly plan a round of golf.

In his prime, Jack Nicklaus was close. Tiger, too. Maybe Hogan. They could all say in their pre-round planning, "I will hit driver down the left side and then an 8-iron to the green."

But not even Jack, Tiger or Hogan could truly plan a round of golf. Errant and unplanned shots happen. As Mike Tyson once famously said, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face." And golf punches you in the face, time and time again.

The good news is that even though you cannot plan a round of golf, you can prepare. You can practice. You can maintain routines and disciplines. A serious round of golf really starts about ninety minutes before you hit the first ball. Indeed, preparation and practice are the keys.

This booklet is dedicated to  
Jeff Hopper, whose passion for  
writing about golf and God has  
inspired me.



Hopper and Philpot at Brora Golf Club, August 2019

# The Eternal Mulligan



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