



# Spirit of Grace Herald

THE MINISTRY OF DENNIS  
& BENEDICTA POLLOCK

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## Pursuit of Excellence

In his early years Ben Hogan was looked on as an oddity by most of the other tournament golfers. He was sooo quiet – he hardly spoke to anyone. And his fierce pride would not allow him to admit that they had any knowledge that would be of any benefit to him. He would rather find out whatever he needed to know by practice, and by trial and error. He later called this approach “digging it out of the dirt.”

In fact, Ben Hogan practically invented the idea of golf practice. In those days (1920’s & 30’s) most golfers assumed that the best and really the only way to improve one’s golf swing was to actually play golf – to go around the course and play eighteen holes, one after another in consecutive order. But Hogan was of a different mind. Instead of playing golf rounds, in his spare time you would find him almost always alone on the driving range. Whack, whack, whack – one shot after another for long hours of the day. He was the golf tour’s odd man out – weird, short little Ben Hogan, the man who drove the ball a mile, but who never won, never laughed, rarely talked, and never stopped practicing.

Eventually all that practice paid off – big time. Gradually, over the course of about ten years, Ben Hogan matured into the best golfer

of his day, and earned a place in golfing history. Golfers still read his golf instructional book and watch grainy videos of his golf swing, hoping to become the golfer he was.

**Perhaps the most obvious lesson from Ben Hogan’s life is the value of a quest for excellence.** Hogan was not so foolish as to suppose he could ever achieve golfing perfection, but he determined that he would get as close to it as possible. He once said, “*You simply beat balls until your hands bleed and your back aches, and then you beat more balls.*” He despised bad golf shots. Sam Snead said of Hogan: “*You get the feeling that Hogan hated, I mean hated the mistakes he made. The manner in which he talked about his performance when it was poor was so angry and unforgiving that you found yourself feeling sorry for him.*”



If Christian pastors, evangelists, Sunday School teachers, writers, and home group leaders ever gave themselves as completely to achieving a similar kind of excellence, the church might be a lot further along than it presently is. As a writer, a Bible teacher, and an evangelist I recognize that there are a lot more “moving parts” to achieving excellence in what we do in Christ’s name than what Hogan sought. I wish it were so simple as swinging clubs six hours a day for us to become as outstanding in ministry as Hogan was in golf. It is not. Nevertheless, a quest for excellence should play a significant role in every Christian’s ministry. In Colossians we read, “**Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord,**” and Paul instructs Timothy: “**Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.**” Whether we ever get to a world class level or not, it is our duty to give Jesus Christ the best we have in His service. He is worthy.

**It is an amazing thought that it took almost ten years for all that practice to really pay off in a big way.** For a number of years, it really didn’t seem to be doing him

much good, and many of the other golfers who would rather party and drink in between rounds were playing better golf than he was. Somehow Hogan was convinced that if he kept on doing what he was doing he would eventually strike gold. There is a saying that the definition of insanity is to keep doing what you have been doing and expect different results. There is a lot of truth in that but it is not always the whole truth.

## Pursuit of Excellence

Sometimes you just have to keep doing what you've been doing year after year with an expectation that a harvest will one day appear. In Galatians we read, "**And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart**" (Galatians 6:9). Hogan reaped a harvest from the hundreds of thousands of practice shots he hit throughout the decade of the 1930's – but that harvest didn't really appear until the 1940's. It is to his credit that he never gave up, never stopped hitting balls, and never stopped seeking the ultimate golf swing.

**As important as it is to strive for excellence in what we do, there is something which is far more important for those who belong to Christ.** We must grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. Talent, skill, achievement, success... these are all fine, but there is something greater – far greater.

God declares, "**Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me...**" (Jeremiah 9:23, 24). Like Hogan we must take our quest very seriously. The tools of our trade are not five-irons, three-woods, drivers, and putters. We pursue excellence in the Word of God. We grow and develop in praying the prayer of faith. We seek not trophies or winner's checks, but the crown of life, and the abundant fruit Jesus has promised to all who abide in Him. As it was for Hogan was with his golf practice, we must become convinced that our efforts of seeking God will eventually pay off big time. The Bible tells us that those who come to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

### *THIS MONTH — MISSION TANZANIA*



**We have scheduled a mission in Tanzania in this month. As we normally do, we will be preaching the gospel of Christ in an outdoors venue in the evenings, and teaching believers the fundamentals of the Christian faith in the mornings.**

After our last mission we shared with you about how we had incurred debt from unpaid flight bills. **Thanks to the loving generosity of our partners, we have been able to pay that debt, Praise the Lord!** This has freed us to plan this October mission.

At present we need around \$4,500 to cover our expenses, and not go into any debt this time. Your designated contributions toward this mission are vital. Please pray about joining your hands with ours, and

sending us a generous check (or contributing through our website) to help us with this outreach.

We preach in Africa because God's great program of the gospel is for all people. Jesus declared: "**Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.**"

Please pray about partnering with us in our mission toward the people of the continent of Africa.

And don't forget to pray for us, and for this mission!

**Thanks for caring!**