

## STREET WISE 3: IS SINCERITY ENOUGH?

*“And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.” (1 Chronicles 28:9, NIV)*

**W**HEN TIGER WOODS WAS WINNING half his starts on Tour—and this was quite literal in his best seasons—it was often said by both commentators and fans that he seemed to will the ball into the hole. Nearly impossible putt? Nerve-crushing circumstances? A hot opponent? None of these mattered. When it came to crunch time, Woods would make the putts he needed. At will.

We can’t say this was absolutely true, of course. There is no way to judge one competitor’s will against another’s, no matter how often that old cheerleading standard runs through your head: “You’ve got to *want it to win it*, and *we want it more!*” But Woods made it look and feel and taste true. That was all most of us needed to believe it.

Now I wonder if you believe something else—that if you only want it badly enough, if you only believe it firmly enough, then any god you’ve found is the right god and eternity with that god is secured for you.

It’s a compelling apologetic to say that because nearly all the apostles, and a host of the early disciples as well, died for the sake of Jesus and the message of his gospel they were preaching, then Jesus must be who he said he was and the gospel must be true. It’s compelling, but even this is not absolute. It is possible for many, many people at once to chase a falsehood with conviction unto disaster. I read only recently of Nazi soldiers who fought unwaveringly for Adolf Hitler, yet these same soldiers received waivers from military balls because dancing was against their Christian convictions. What spiritual schizophrenia!

So what must we seek and in what order? We must seek truth. And when we find that in God, then we cling to him. We apply our whole heart to him. We give him reign (and rein!) as Lord of our life.

Every golfer knows that the most committed swing made in the direction of the wrong green is worthless. Hang on to that logic, for it applies in faith, too: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). All other aims go awry.

**Opening questions** Are there days when you really want to play golf well? Does it always work out? Why not? • Give an example of someone you knew who was sincere but misguided unto consequence.

**READING** Nehemiah 9:1-6; 2 Corinthians 11:1-4; 1 Samuel 1:1-20

### God in front (Nehemiah 9)

What demonstrations of devotion did the leaders and people make here? Who was the aim of their devotion and how was he described?

---



---



---

### Cares and concerns (2 Corinthians 11)

What level of concern did Paul demonstrate here? What had he seen for the good in the Corinthians and what did he caution them against?

---



---



---



---

### An example of fervency (1 Samuel 1)

What do you see in Hannah’s cries to God? Have circumstances in your own life ever led you to such fervent prayer? What difference would it have made if Hannah’s pleas were lifted to a different god?

---



---



---



---