



Links Players

OH, TO BE WISE 3: A TESTED HEART

*The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold,
and the LORD tests hearts. (Proverbs 17:3, ESV)*

EVEN THE BEST PLAYERS—THE ONES WITH ALL THE SHOTS—will tell you that there are holes that do not fit their eye. They stand on the tee and cannot “see” their shot shape in a way that makes them fully comfortable to take the club back. In moments like these, they are being put to the test: Can they really trust all those practice repetitions and swing freely?

Whether or not we are good players, we know the answer to that question. Sometimes yes and sometimes no. Sometimes you will pass the test and sometimes you will fail.

As in golf, we will be tested over and over again in life. Business tests our ethics, slow lines test our patience, relationships test our love. Every day we step into the furnace, where how we speak and act are put to the test. And to follow the metaphor of today’s noted proverb, we must ask ourselves whether we are coming out more refined, like silver or gold. This is a question that is harder to answer than a reflection on our golf game, for it is a question that requires a good look at our heart.

Staring down one’s heart is risky business. It requires coming face to face not only with how we see ourselves but with how God sees us. We will find things we don’t want to find; we will fail. But without admitting and addressing our failures, we cannot grow. We will not move any closer to God’s righteousness, to purity.

So how do we go about the work of testing our heart? First we must recognize, as today’s proverb does, that this is God’s work. Therefore, we must let him go about it. We must let him use our marriage and our children and the demands of our work, including its commute, to put our heart to the test. There will be much worthless dross there, but take heart—there will also be silver and gold. God wants us to see how we can have more of the latter, what we might even call “precious mettle.”

And then we must be willing to stand corrected and make changes. This is a deep exercise in humility. If God, by his word and by the counsel of those who have proper spiritual authority in our lives, shows us how we need to act differently, there is only one thing for us to do: act differently. No matter how proud we are of who we’ve been, we now humbly let him transform us into people with new hearts.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International. An accompanying introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/jyJufm7PsEs>

Opening questions What are some of the hardest tests you face on the golf course? Have you come up with a way to handle these? How often does it work?

READING 1 Samuel 16:1-7; Psalm 139:23-24; Proverbs 20:9

Our view and God’s (1 Samuel 16)

Even though Samuel was a prophet, he was prone to assessing people through human eyes. How does God’s view of people differ from ours? If others could judge you on the basis of your heart, what conclusions might they draw about you?

A willingness to be tested (Psalm 139)

What approach was David taking to allowing his heart to be searched? If “offensive ways” are revealed in you, how should you respond? What are some marks of “the way everlasting”?

A key question (Proverbs 20)

How would you answer this proverb’s question? In light of this question, what is the worth of trusting in Christ for forgiveness and salvation?
