

LIVING AN AUTHENTIC FAITH, PART 1

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean.” (Matthew 23:27, NIV)

MAYBE YOU HAVE WONDERED WHETHER it’s really worth the money to spend big dollars on your golf equipment.

If you’re a once-in-a-while player, you probably don’t need to sweat your equipment any more than you sweat your score. But if you play regularly and you’re in line for an upgrade, should you be buying the good stuff or are the knockoffs OK?

That, you might have guessed, depends on the knockoff. Components supplied by reputable manufacturers and assembled by a careful clubmaker (even a hobbyist) can match up to the name brands—and might actually be better if they are made to fit your swing. But if you hop online and order even name brands from a shady foreign supplier, you may find yourself in possession of clever imitations so cheap that a perfect swing can’t hit them consistently.

No one likes to be fooled, God included (as if that were possible!).

When Jesus moved between the Galilee region and Jerusalem, he often found himself face-to-face with the religious leaders. And what Jesus saw in these men concerned him greatly. If your impression of Jesus is “gentle Jesus, meek and mild,” you may be taken aback by his heated conversations with the Pharisees and Sadducees. In a word, he called them out as fakes.

These were men of careful religious practice. They studied thoroughly and were mindful of God’s words. What they did not have was the living, beating heart of God in them. They missed the person of God and therein missed the point.

Some of them, like some of us, were leaders in this pretentiousness. They knew they were phonies, but the lure of power kept them from humbling themselves before God. Others, like others of us, were simply willing followers, ignorant of what really mattered, but checking off the right boxes for the sake of acceptance. Sadly, neither was—or is—authentic. We must possess what is real, or we become time bombs packed for disaster, much like those ersatz clubs that send the ball sideways or separate at the hosel. Time tells a fake. It also reveals who is authentic.

Opening questions When have you been burned in buying something it wasn’t advertised to be? • What would you say are marks of authenticity in one’s faith?

READING Matthew 23:23-28; Galatians 6:7-8; John 13:35

Real hypocrisy (Matthew 23)
When would you dare to call someone a hypocrite? Would you be thinking of similar behavior to what Jesus was seeing? Do you see layers of hypocrisy in your own life? What can you do about it?

Sowing and reaping (Galatians 6)
How does the way we live our life today affect what comes our way tomorrow? How does this fit the idea that God will not be mocked?

Identifying true disciples (John 13)
What is the mark of an authentic disciple of Christ? To what measure must this trait be given to us by God? To what measure can it be cultivated by our attitude and actions?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today’s study at <https://youtu.be/DCJvKRfvUY>