

## Professional Confessional

by Mark Bergin

Confession is no easy task. Tuning in to watch Tiger Woods give it a go the other day was nothing short of painful. In a highly controlled environment, the world's best golfer attempted to restore some measure of good will to his tarnished image with an admission of guilt, apologies, and promises of change.

The whole practiced exercise, complete with staged hugs, contained all the textbook elements of public repentance but somehow smacked more of public relations. There was no power in it, no vulnerability, no risk. Woods divulged no more than what was already known. He fielded no questions from a rabid press, addressed no specifics from his lurid trysts, and even made a farcical attempt to portray himself as protector of his wife and children—some protector, indeed.

Perhaps the most peculiar portion of the performance came near the end, when Woods pleaded with those who once believed in him [quote] “to find room in your hearts to one day believe in me again.” What could he have meant? No one has ceased believing in Woods' golf game—many, in fact, hoping he will return soon to dazzle them yet again. More likely, his request was aimed at sparking an uptick in public image, the kind needed to keep Nike, Gatorade, and other major endorsers writing checks. How cheap.

But before this self-righteous diatribe goes any further, I must admit that I empathize with Woods. Full disclosure of sin without reservation or regard for reputation is among the most challenging endeavors in the human experience. To truly not hold back, to avoid all spin, to set aside any deflection, any justification, any excuse, it's excruciating. Like Woods, I am prone to minimize and obfuscate, rather than fully confess. And I can only imagine the weight of that compulsion under the scrutiny of a global audience.

Of course, Woods doesn't really owe the world a full confession. He owes that only to his wife, to himself and to his maker. But think of the opportunity missed. Had this fallen star resisted the temptation to hide behind prepared statements, had he faced the blunt force of media scrutiny, and opened himself to the embarrassment of hard questions, where now would he stand? My guess: he'd stand free, with no more need to avoid public appearances, no more need to break from golf. Disgrace wields no power over the unashamed.

The church would do well to believe as much. Like many Christians, I often fall into the trap of thinking my life's witness to the power of God depends on my projection of righteousness. In fact, there is far more power in the full confession of wretchedness. Christians need not participate in the insanity of trying to be impressive. We are everything in Christ, and free then to be nothing in ourselves.

I hope one day that Woods can taste that kind of liberty. I recognize his present misery, an all too familiar condition from my own life's seasons of misguided self preservation. What a terrible way to live. For Primetime America, I'm Mark Bergin.