

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Examine Yourself

"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail the test?" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

The unruly Corinthians had given the apostle Paul fits, while overlooking their own sins. Yet, Paul turns the tables on them that they must be more concerned with examining themselves than him. The objective test is if Jesus' personality is truly being formed within themselves. Failure would result in the tragic results of wasted life.

In 1 Corinthians 11:28, each Sunday at the Lord's Table is a commanded time for "a check-up from the neck up." As I contemplate His great sacrifice for me at the Lord's Supper, I must look inside my mind to see if Jesus really means everything to me. I must examine my heart to see if I am honestly and openly living for Jesus as first in my life. Accurate self-examination is a key to spiritual self-development. No one else can do this for me. Self-awareness is when I stand apart from myself and evaluate myself as I really am. We are not helpless pawns of our environment or conditioning.

Yet, a completely candid self-examination may not be a pretty sight! There are 3 views of self: how I see myself, how others see me, and then how God sees me. Others may have only a partial view of me, or even a skewed one due to my self-serving desire to fake an image better than my true self. Or, I may rationalize and distort how I see myself to flatter and protect my fragile ego. This denial of my real, flawed self is being out of touch with reality. However, if I can honestly see myself more clearly, as God does, it is like I can begin a new and better life, as God intended me to be. We need the courage to recognize that only "the poor in spirit" (those penitent sinners who see themselves as a holy God does) qualify for God's kingdom (Matthew 5:3-4). "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way" (Psalms 139:23-24).

Candid self-examination can be a wake-up call for the soul. This is illustrated by the intriguing story of a rich Swedish industrialist name Alfred. One morning in 1888, this inventor of dynamite was shocked to read his own obituary! The newspaper had made a simple but profound mistake. It was Alfred's brother that had died, but the reporter had carelessly reported the death of the more famous but wrong brother. Instead of being enraged, Alfred became very sober and introspective. He saw himself as the world saw him, "The Dynamite King." He was only seen as the great industrialist who had made an immense fortune as a death merchant. This, as far as the general public was concerned, was the entire meaning of Alfred's life. As he read the obituary with horror, he resolved to make clear to the world the true purpose of his life. His personal ideals would be manifest through the final disposition of his fortune. The last will and testament of Alfred Nobel created the annual award called the "Nobel Peace Prize." The turning point of his life came through seeing himself as he came across to others.

If someone accurately wrote your obituary, what would it say? What would your co-workers say about you? What would your children remember most about growing up around you? In marriage, I must ask myself, how would it be to be married to me? Am I demanding my spouse to do ALL the changing for us to have a better marriage? Although we will not be around to read our obituaries, we can begin rewriting by starting today to examine and change ourselves by God's Word.

First, I must use God's Word as a mirror to see my authentic self, in order to improve my personality (James 1:22-25). Second, it is most helpful to have a mature and gentle friend who will honestly help me evaluate my flaws and how I come across to others (Romans 15:4; Proverbs 27:6). Such loving honesty may hurt at first, but we can heal. We'll be better for it. We can make the world a better place for Jesus' sake, when we authentically make a better self.

- W. Frank Walton, via *Gospel Power*, 11/03/2002

Burdens Children Shouldn't Bear

I recently watched a television commercial that was meant to make me chuckle but instead depressed me. It was an advertisement for sandwich meats where a little girl runs a sack lunch out to her mom who is pulling out of the driveway. The intended humor is to portray the child as the "mother figure" who is watching out for her mom and making sure she doesn't forget the things she needs. I suppose the humor would have worked on me if I didn't know of children who are having to fill that role. In reality, the reversal is tragic.

The Bible places parents and children in distinct roles:

"Children obey your parents in the Lord, . . . fathers. . .bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." ". . . for the children ought to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." (Ephesians 6:1ff; 2 Corinthians 12:14b).

Parents are to be leaders, teachers, providers, and protectors. It is unnatural for children to have to deal with adult decisions and pressures. Though, it is good for children to be tested and challenged, there are some burdens that children ought not to bear.

Children should not have to navigate the moral dilemmas of life without a standard. Our Society encourages everyone to determine what is right for them. While that may be liberating for some sinful adults, it leaves a child lost. Children should be taught there is a God who loves but judges all. They should be taught His word can guide them in every decision.

Children should not be left to fend for themselves while parents are occupied with other things. I know of a thirteen-year old who had to learn to balance her mom's checkbook because of her mom's irresponsibility. Some kids cook their own meals and wash their own clothes because there isn't a parent around to do it. A child needs to learn responsibility but not by being totally responsible for all his needs.

Children should not be stuck in the middle while two parents fight it out in the aftermath of a divorce. One of the most unnatural things for a child to have to do is to choose one parent over another. Even in a peaceful divorce (Have you ever known of one?), kids are in an awkward position. Parents are responsible for their marriages, not the kids. In a divorce though the kids bear as much pain as do mom and dad. It is a burden kids should not have to bear and woe to the parents who cold-heartedly place it on their little ones.

- Phillip Mullins

STUDY GOD'S WORD

WHY? It sanctifies us and makes us free. (See John 17:17 and John 8:32).

HOW DOES IT SANCTIFY US AND MAKE US FREE? It keeps us from the wages of sin, which is death. (See Romans 6:23). But how does it accomplish this?

1. It develops and increases our faith which saves us from sin. (See John 20:30-31; Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:8-9 and Hebrews 11:6).

2. It tells us what sin is so we won't sin. (See Romans 3:20 and 7:7).

3. It tells us what truth is so we won't sin by teaching false doctrine. (See 2 Timothy 2:14-18).

HOW MUCH? Day and night. (See Psalms 1:2).

We must know what is right in order to do what is right. (See Romans 3:20 and Romans 7:7). We must do what is right in order to go to heaven. (See Matthew 7:21 and Hebrews 5:9). So study God's word! Let us all love God's law (Psalms 119:97), studying it (2 Timothy 2:15) day and night (Psalms 1:2), so we can defend it (Philippians 1:17), in a manner indicating we love God with all our heart, soul and mind! (Matthew 22:37).

- Patrick Donahue, via *The Instructor*, December, 1983

Our Two Great Loves

Matthew records an occasion where the Lord was asked a significant question:

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:36-40).

His answer identifies the two greatest commandments from God to mankind, both involving love.

The Holy Scriptures teach much regarding these commandments (Deuteronomy 6:5; 11:13; Joshua 22:5; Psalms 31:23; John 14:15, 21, 23; Romans 8:28; James 1:12; 2:5; 1 John 4:8, 19, 21). The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) formed the practical means of demonstrating these two greatest commandments. When loving God, the Israelites demonstrated it by keeping Him as the priority, opposing any form of idolatry, not taking His name in vain and remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy. When loving their neighbors, the Israelites demonstrated it by honoring parents, refusing to murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, or covet anything belonging to another.

Even though the Ten Commandments of the Old Covenant do not apply directly to us, all of them, or their equivalent (except the Sabbath commandment) were taught in the doctrine of Christ (the New Covenant). If we love God with all of our being, employing our highest faculties in devotion to Him, our lives will clearly demonstrate the honor and respect we have in our hearts as we advance His glory in our lives (cf. 1 John 5:3). The heavenly Father must be the priority of our lives. If we love others our behavior toward

them will be entirely righteous, doing good deeds to and for them from a benevolent heart (cf. Luke 10:25-37). The character traits that enable us to deal with an enemy as the good Samaritan did and as our Lord did from the cross, praying for those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34), is what is taught.

Keeping these two commandments results in man living to his highest potential: keeping all of His commandments as required by Scripture. The weighty question for us is this: do we love God genuinely and with our whole being? It will be discovered by our lives!

- Gary Smalley

* "He who aims at nothing is sure to hit it!"

* "Pride is the only disease that everyone around you suffers from except yourself!"

* "People who lack courage think with their legs!"

* "Be humble or you'll stumble!"

* "Those who seek faultless friends remain friendless!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)