

Gospel Truth

Biblical Instruction and Encouragement for the Mission Field Worldwide.

WHO ARE YOU?

(The following account is a narrative of the event recorded in Acts 19:10-20, KJV).

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, ministered in the city of Ephesus for two years. He shared the wonderful message of salvation, the Holy Spirit, and the Kingdom of God. The good news of the gospel spread throughout Asia Minor to all the people, both Jews and Greeks. Confirming the message with healings and deliverances, the power of God rested on Paul in an extraordinary way. Paul would anoint and pray over handkerchiefs which were then taken to the sick and devil possessed. The sick were healed of their diseases and those with evil spirits were set free.

There were certain Jews who were exorcists that went about endeavoring to expel evil spirits and cure diseases by charms and incantations. When they heard how Paul cast out evil spirits in the name of Jesus, they added that name to their repertoire of sayings and practices. "We command you by Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out," they would say over possessed individuals. Sceva, a priest with authority among the Jews, had seven sons who coveted such power. Having heard of Paul and the power that was in the name of Jesus, the seven sons gathered around a man that had an evil spirit. With pomp and exaggerated authority, they laid hands on him and demanded, "In the name of Jesus, come out."

The evil spirit spoke from within the man: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" In other words, "I know the divine authority of Jesus as the Son of God and the power of His servant Paul, but you have no connection with God and no authority over me. Who do you think you are?" With that, the evil spirit left the possessed man and jumped on the seven exorcists. The power of Satan overcame them and possessed them. Yelling and hitting themselves, the men writhed and foamed at the mouth. They tore off their clothes before running out of the house naked and wounded.

When all the Jews and Greeks of Ephesus heard the account, there was great fear among them and the name of Jesus was magnified. Many people confessed the evil in their lives and were saved from the power of sin. They brought their books of magic, incantations, and charms and burned them in a great fire, knowing they were not of God. The Word of God spread mightily as the works of the devil were renounced.

Reading the Scripture of these wonderful events is inspiring and encouraging, but it should also bring a godly fear and respect upon the reader. There is power in Jesus, but that power is only available to those who are truly acquainted with God and are pure in heart. Satan himself knows who Jesus is and he knows the true servants of the Lord. Satan also knows those who are

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"The evil spirit spoke from within the man: 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?'"

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WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT...

Word of God

2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matt. 24:35

Relationship of Love

Matt. 22:37-40; John 14:21-23; 1 John 4:7-11

Repentance

Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10

New Birth

John 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-4;
Eph. 2:1, 5-6

Freedom From Sin

1 John 5:18; Matt. 1:21; John 8:11

Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:2; Acts 15:8-9; Acts 1:8

Holiness

Luke 1:73-75; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16;
Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:22

Kingdom of God

Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36

The Church

Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col 1:18

Unity

John 17:20-23; Gal 3:28; Rev. 18:2-4

Ordinances

Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 26:26-30;
1 Cor. 11:23-27; John 13:14-17

Divine Healing

Luke 4:18; Isaiah 53:4-5; James 5:13-16

Sanctity of Marriage

Matt. 19:5-6; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3;
1 Cor. 7:10-11

Outward Appearance

1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 11:14-15; Deut. 22:5

End of Time

2 Peter 3:7-12; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10;
Matt 25:31-46

Pacifism

Luke 6:27-29; Luke 18:20

Worship

John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19; 2 Cor. 3:17

Great Commission

Mark 16:15

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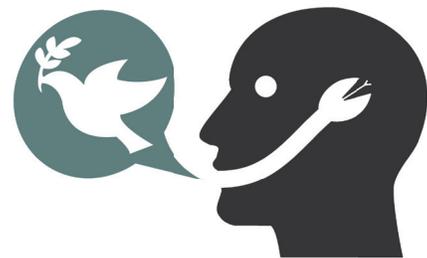
not saved. He knows the secret sin and evil dwelling in the heart of mankind. He knows the hypocrites and those preachers who are as the seven sons of Sceva. The evil spirit asked a question that should be thoroughly examined by every individual. Who are you? What is your identity? What are the true facts of your character?

Many people identify themselves by their name, tribe, race, religion, congregation, or position. These things are unimportant when compared to spiritual identity. Spiritual identity is not defined by one's spiritual reputation or position of leadership in the church. It is defined by the reality of the heart and conduct of the life.

Are you really a child of God, living in consistent holiness with a daily desire to please the Lord? Do you call yourself a Christian and perhaps even fellowship with godly people, yet have sin in your life? Do you appear righteous on Sunday and yet live and dress worldly through the week? Do you have the joy of the Lord? Are you honest or are there times that you lie?

Do you appear to be a loving husband or wife but mistreat your spouse in the privacy of your home? Do you abstain from evil in the light of day only to pursue the sinful pleasures of the flesh under cover of darkness? True identity is not defined by who you used to be or who you want to be. Who are you now?

One day, every individual will stand before God and be judged by his true spiritual identity. Let us therefore examine our own heart and ask the question: "Who really am I spiritually?"



*"Do you call yourself a Christian...
yet have sin in your life?"*

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

—James 1:25

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Editorial



Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. —Ephesians 4:13

When an individual is saved by the blood and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, he is then equipped to serve the Lord in holiness. There will always be things that the Lord is perfecting and areas in which a child of God will grow. Our purpose is to become more and more like Christ as we daily yield and surrender ourselves to the will of God. A saint of God need never be afraid of acknowledging a failure or a weakness. It is then that we can obtain greater victory and power. Never be discouraged when the Lord reveals a spiritual need. That is the mercy and love of God helping prepare us for the judgment.

This quarter, the subject is not as intensely theological as it is more exhortational in nature. The burden is to share some of the scripture relating to the necessity of self-examination. It is so hard for us to see ourselves, for we tend to view ourselves in the best light possible. We will not be able to grow in Christ if we are unwilling to examine our lives and be honest about the needs that exist. God is never going to ask us to change something without also giving us the grace and ability to change.

Our world is filled with people who profess the name of Christ but still live in sin. What would happen if everyone was to honestly weigh their lives by the Word of God without making excuses or pointing fingers at other people? Sinners need to recognize their sin, but I am more burdened this quarter with people who profess to be saints yet are living substandard to the Word of God. None of us are exempt from the instruction of the Word. Many people are acting as if they can set their own rules and standards and fit God in the middle of it all. God does not change; we must change our lives to be in accordance to His will. Only then will we find true peace and satisfaction in serving the Lord. It is a miserable condition to profess to be a child of God while covering up wrong, hoping no one will find out. It is sad that people are becoming more unashamed of their worldly living even while among God's people.

While it is needful to examine our doctrines and beliefs, it is even more important to examine our attitudes and affections. People can have the doctrines right and yet have attitudes or things in their lives with which God is not pleased. Let us open our hearts to the Spirit of God. Let us take heed when we read the Bible and hear messages from God's anointed vessels. As we examine our lives and follow Christ, we will experience more and more of His fullness.

Michael W. Smith

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Bible Study Guide

Subject: Self-Examination



Scripture Reading: *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. —2 Corinthians 13:5a*

Definition: Self-examination is the study and examination of one's own behavior, qualities, conduct, and motivations; introspection.

Summary: It is important to examine our own spiritual life lest we justify ourselves and become hypocrites, deceived, and ultimately miss Heaven.

I. Examine Yourself

- A. 2 Corinthians 13:5 Examination instructed.
- B. 1 Corinthians 11:27-31 Judge yourself.
- C. Psalms 77:6 Search diligently.

II. Importance of Self-Examination

- A. 1 Corinthians 10:12 Lest you fall.
- B. Romans 14:12-13 Account to God.
- C. Proverbs 21:2 Right in own eyes.
- D. Galatians 6:7-8 Eternal consequences.
- E. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Unrighteousness condemned.

III. Self-Delusion

- A. Proverbs 30:12 Pure in own eyes.
- B. James 1:22-25 A forgetful hearer.
- C. Galatians 6:3-4 Pride is deceitful.
- D. Matthew 7:1-5 Cast out the beam.

IV. Self-Justification

- A. Proverbs 20:6-7 Proclaiming one's own goodness.
- B. Luke 16:15 You justify yourselves.
- C. 2 Corinthians 10:17-18 Self commendation.
- D. Matthew 3:7-9 Trust not in heritage.

V. Self-Righteousness

- A. Matthew 5:20 Will not enter Heaven.
- B. Matthew 23:2-8 They say and do not.
- C. Matthew 23:23-29 Hypocrites. Outward righteousness.

VI. Secret Things

- A. John 3:19-21 Light reveals.
- B. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 God will judge.
- C. Proverbs 28:13 Covering sin.

VII. Judge Yourself by Your Fruit

- A. Proverbs 20:11 A child is known by his doings.
- B. Matthew 7:13-23 A good tree yields good fruit.
- C. John 10:27 Sheep follow the Shepherd.
- D. Titus 2:7-8 Show good works.
- E. Matthew 25:33-46 Good deeds.

VIII. Examine the Whole Man

- A. John 21:15 What do you love most?
- B. 1 Corinthians 6:20 Glorify God in body and spirit.
- C. 2 Chronicles 25:1-2 Motivation and heart.

IX. Seek God's Examination

- A. Psalms 26:2 Examine me, O Lord.
- B. Psalms 139:23-24 Search me, O God.

X. Acknowledge Needs

- A. 2 Samuel 12:7 Thou art the man.
- B. 2 Samuel 12:13 I have sinned.

XI. Maintain Clearness Before God

- A. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 Clear yourself.
- B. Acts 24:16 A clear conscience.
- C. 2 Corinthians 7:1 Perfecting holiness.
- D. 2 Peter 3:18 Grow in grace.

Conclusion

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. —2 Peter 3:11

The Benefit of Spiritual SELF-EXAMINATION

Knowing judgment day is coming, the Scripture places much importance upon the examination of one's own behavior, conduct, and motivations. It is much better to measure by the Word of God in this life while there is opportunity to change, than to wait until the judgment when it is too late.

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). One day, we shall all stand before God at the judgment and give an accounting of the life that we lived here on earth. We will not be judged based on how everyone treated us nor upon the circumstances which we faced. We will be judged on the condition of our heart and upon our daily decisions and behavior.

Examine Yourself

While it is much easier to see the sin and faults of others, Paul exhorted the church at Corinth to "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Look not at the lives of others but examine your own life and faith. Search your heart and soul diligently (Psalms 77:6) and prove your own experience with God. We are all human and prone to error and to get off balance if we do not take time for self-examination. Just because someone has served the Lord for years does not guarantee that he is today living pleasing to God. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but the LORD pondereth the hearts" (Proverbs 21:2). It is much easier for a person to assume he is correct and others are wrong than to sincerely examine his own life. God is in the business of examining not only the conduct but also the very heart of man. Hence, it is wise to honestly scrutinize our own lives that we may be what God desires and not what the flesh has accepted as permissible. Whatever we sow in this life we will reap in eternity. Be not deceived, we cannot fool God, for He knows all things (Galatians 6:7-8). The Scripture teaches clearly in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 that the unrighteous will not gain Heaven. All fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, drunkards, liars etc. will

suffer in eternity unless they turn to God and live righteously. The world is full of professing Christians who are committing these sins. Their end is assured unless they repent. There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, and yet is not washed from its filthiness (Proverbs 30:12).

Danger of Delusion

Without self-examination in the fear of God, one is prone to delusion. It is not enough to hear the Word; we must be doers of the Word or we will be deceived (James 1:22-25). A head knowledge of truth and fellowship with godly people alone does not prepare us for the judgment. Some of the most critical people are individuals who have a beam in their own eye. "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:1-5).

Shun Self-Justification

It is a blessing to walk in integrity and to live faithfully. This is far different from those who proclaim their own goodness (Proverbs 20:6-7). A profession does not save nor does spiritual boasting bring power from God. Jesus said: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts" (Luke 16:15). Self-examination is not about self-justifying, "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Corinthians 10:18). So many people excuse things in their lives that are clearly not approved of by God. Some people trust in their family name, their tribe, church history and affiliation, or position of leadership. John the Baptist told the Pharisees: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father" (Matthew 3:9). They considered themselves righteous

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"Without self-examination in the fear of God, one is prone to delusion. It is not enough to hear the Word; we must be doers of the Word or we will be deceived."



“As individuals are honest and open before God, there will be continual spiritual growth.”

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because they were descendants of holy men of old. We may have parents or grandparents who labored for God. We may attend services with the “Church of God,” but that does not save us nor justify wrong doing in our lives.

Look Within

An outward form of religion and worship does not save us. “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). Jesus spoke extensively of the self-righteousness of the religious leaders of His time in Matthew 23:23-29. They spoke the right words, but they did not follow the law of God. They dressed righteously and yet they were carnal and full of iniquity. Jesus said they were hypocrites. Dressing modestly is important and needs to be examined, but even more importantly, the inward man must be examined. There are people who appear pious outwardly and yet are mean-spirited, proud, and hateful. Examine thyself.

Nothing Hidden

We must measure ourselves in the light of truth and not stay in the cover of darkness, self-justification, and self-righteousness. God will judge every secret thing (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Investigate your own life and do not excuse anything ungodly. When people cover their sin, they will not prosper. If they will confess and forsake it, God will have mercy (Proverbs 28:13).

Known by the Fruit

Proverbs 20:11 reads: “Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.” As a child is known, so we should identify ourselves in honesty by our doings. What kind of fruit are you bearing? Jesus said a good tree brings forth good fruit (Matthew 7:16-23) and that we would know others by their fruit—so we should know ourselves. What a blessing to examine one’s own life and see good fruit.

Jesus warned about wolves in sheep’s clothing. There are ministers all around us preaching and professing power with God, and in reality, they are spiritual wolves. The true sheep have confidence and security when they examine their lives, for the sheep know the voice and follow the Shepherd (John 10:27).

Examine Body and Spirit

The whole man should be examined, inward and outward. Jesus asked Peter: “Lovest thou me more than these?” (John 21:15). Do you really love God more than anything in this world? Are you seeking after the things of this world or does Christ have priority? We are instructed in 1 Corinthians 6:20 to glorify God in our body and in our spirit. When people look in the mirror they see a reflection of themselves. Individuals need to look into the spiritual mirror and examine their spiritual reality, measuring their lives by the standard of God’s Word.

Seek God’s Judgment

King David set an example for us in his prayer: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts” (Psalms 139:23-24). When David was confronted with his sin by the prophet Nathan, he acknowledged his sin and sought for forgiveness. Let us open our hearts for God to search and show us anything that is unlike Christ. It might not be a sin but a weakness which is hindering spiritually. Examine yourself and find victory in confession and change.

A Willing Heart

“Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). Clear yourself before God and daily exercise yourself as Paul to “have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men” (Acts 24:16). As individuals are honest and open before God, there will be continual spiritual growth.

Joy in Complete Surrender

There is wonderful peace when you know that your sins are forgiven, your heart is pure, and your desire is to please God. What a wonderful testimony to be able to say as Jesus concerning Satan: “[He] hath nothing in me” (John 14:30).

Knowing that the end of time is near, what kind of person should we be? Let us not hesitate to examine ourselves, for there is a God who is willing and waiting to minister to the needs of our lives.

—mws



Can you explain the meaning of the “sea of glass” spoken of in Revelation 4:6?

The scripture reads: “And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.”

Revelation 15:2 also refers to the sea of glass and paints a very similar picture. In focus, the extended verses portray the beauty and majestic glory of God on His throne. The saints of all time are gathered around the throne worshiping and praising the Lord God Almighty. These passages are worthy of study and understanding, but I will address the specific question at hand.

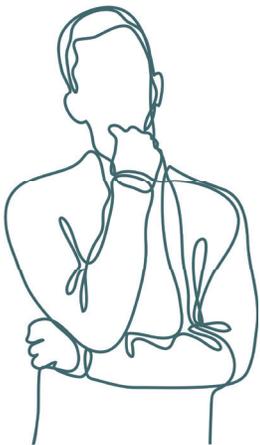
The sea of glass was like unto crystal and was spread out before the throne. It had a clear, glassy or transparent appearance. It was upon this sea that the redeemed stood and worshiped God. This is not to be understood literally but symbolically. It is fitting that around the throne is a sea of glass—clear, clean, undefiled, and pure. It represents truth, holiness, and transparency. The true church stands without spot and blameless, living in purity and love.

The saints today, while on earth, should also be standing upon a sea of glass where nothing is hidden or covered up. We are who we say we are and do not have to justify, hide, or excuse unrighteousness. If Christians, congregations, or ministers are not living with transparency, there is a problem and something is wrong. Let us lift our voices in praise and holiness and stand with clearness and purity in God’s righteousness.

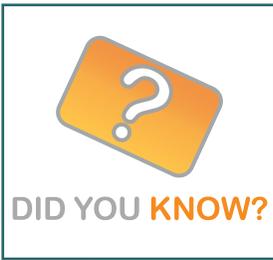


—mws

Examination Guide



	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	NEVER
Loving God with all of my heart?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obedient to the Lord in every area of life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking with grace and love?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forgiving those that trespass against me?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dressing with modesty and simplicity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faithful to attend worship service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diligent in prayer and reading the Bible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching or listening to things that I would be ashamed of in the presence of Christ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying to hide something in my life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Humble in my perspective of myself?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
As much of a saint at home as I am at church?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



The biblical use of the word “hypocrite” by Jesus is richer than the modern definition—someone who says one thing and does another, two-faced, phony. The root word in the Greek means “stage actors.” The actor, under an assumed character, acts to gain recognition, approval, and the applause of men. When no one is looking, and the audience is gone, the actor reverts to his true self which is usually quite different than his previous role.



RECEIVE YE ONE ANOTHER

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. —Romans 15:7

Christ extends friendship and warmth to people of all nationalities, tongues, and races. He has accepted people of diverse personalities and backgrounds. Christ received us in our brokenness and poverty. In His love, He reached down to us in our lost condition and raised us up by His grace. While salvation brings a radical change in our lives, we are all still left with our unique personalities and quirks. We are left with our human perspectives and weaknesses. With all of that, Christ still receives us and accepts us in His great love. We are no longer outcasts and foreigners but citizens of the Kingdom of God.

As Christ received us, so we are to receive one another. We are to open our hearts to fellow Christians and treat them with love and respect as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Christ did not receive us in our perfection but rather in our imperfection. How can we do less? We should treat one another with divine love and acceptance rather than separating and building walls over small differences of personality and opinion. If Christ were to receive us as we receive others spiritually, would we still be in fellowship with God?

We are not to spurn or cast off other Christians if we perceive them weak in faith and understanding. Paul advised: “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations” (Romans 14:1). Paul was referring to converted Jews who were still holding to some practices of the Old Law. The instruction was to receive and accept them in religious fellowship. He further instructed the saints to receive them without doubtful disputation. Do not discriminate against them or bring them in with the purpose of condemning them or debating with them harshly. Receive them with warmth and affection.

It is ironic that among some of God’s children, two people may each view the other as being weak in the faith. There is too much tendency in the small remnant of believers for people to view one another with suspicion and question. The Scripture teaches us to be more ready to receive than to cast off. “Receive ye one another.”



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HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD

—mws