PERSONAL EVALUATION

“I’m looking At Me”

Lesson Prepared By

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Psalm 139:1-12

LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb.

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

INTRODUCTION

My first truck was a 1979 Ford F-150. I purchased it in 1987 while a sophomore in college. My oldest brother, who took on the responsibility to teacher us all about automobiles and minor mechanical work, advised me on how to perform pre-operational maintenance checks on the truck as well as how to perform upkeep on a used vehicle. He told me, “The fun part is sitting behind the wheel driving, but every now an then you have to open the hood and check the oil, fluids, etc. He told me that if I keep the oil changed properly and stay up to date on maintenance issues, the truck should last me a long time.

I took my big brothers advice and made a habit that I maintain unto this day. I change the oil every 3,000 miles. Rotate the tires every other oil change. Change the transmission fluid every 60-80,000 miles. And I make sure that all of the other fluids are maintain at operating levels and service according to manufacturers specification. In doing so, I have been blessed to with very few maintenance problems over the years other than the normal wear and tear. I have been able to drive vehicles to a much higher mileage than the average automobile on the road. My GMC has over 410,000 miles and I’m still rolling.

You may wonder why I bring all of this up. Well, I am convinced that if a vehicle works better and more efficiently when maintenance is performed properly after evaluation its mechanical system; I believe that Christians would do well to perform self evaluations and perform maintenance on the spiritual life according to the manufactures instructions. God is the manufacture and the Bible is filled with instructions for Christian maintenance.

Psalms 139:23-24 says, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

In order to evaluate the condition of an automobile, you need measurable tools and equipment. In oder check the oil level, you need a “dip stick” or “oil stick.” In order to check tire pressure, you need a tire pressure gauge. The list goes on. Each piece of equipment has a method of evaluation to perform a mechanical diagnostics to insure its proper function.

God serves as our diagnostic tool and His word provides instructions on testing procedures and correct level for spiritual functions.

In this lesson, I would like to encourage each of us to perform daily evaluations of our Christian identity and functions as members of the Body of Christ. Let’s begin.

First, we should make personal notes in each area in which we can improve. Ask yourself these questions.

1. Do I love God with all my heart, soul and mind? The simple answer is yes, but is that answer accurate? (Illustration: My wife and I were getting ready to Hattiesburg. My first question was, is there gasoline in the car? Her immediate response was “Yes!” My next question was, “Is there enough to get to Hattiesburg?” She responded, “I’m not sure.” She went from confident that gas was in the car, to not so confident in the acquired amount needed to reach Hattiesburg. Do you love God adequately based on where you’re trying to go?
2. Do my actions show that I love God? Stevie Wonder wrote a song entitled, “I just called to say I love you.” Those of us who have ever listened to R&B on the radio may have heard the song at some point. But if you would allow me, let me share with you the first verse of the song and you’ll understand Stevie’s mindset. I says, “No New Year's Day to celebrate. No chocolate covered candy hearts to give away. No first of spring, no song to sing. In fact, here's just another ordinary day. No April rain, no flowers bloom. No wedding Saturday within the month of June. But what it is, is something true. Made up of these three words that I must say to you. I just called to say I love you. I just called to say how much I care. I just called to say I love you. And I mean it from the bottom of my heart.” Love is not based on holidays, happenings, or here afters. Love is not based rituals, rhetoric or responses. Love is not about the designated day or the date. Love is an active response to an intellectual, emotional and spiritual conviction shared and show towards the object of your affection. Does your actions show that you truly love God if you disconnect the benefits? Do you love God based on what He’s done for you lately or would you love Him if He did nothing more?
3. Am I worshipping God as I should? How would you define your worship? Is limited to the Sunday morning experience? Do you worship God when you’re not in the presence of other worshipers? Do you worship God in the way you walk, talk, live, serve, etc.? All of these question deserve an authentic answers from the worshiper, but the most important answer needed is based on John 4:23, 24; 14:17. True worshipers must worship God in “spirit and in truth.” This requires a relationship that is receptive to His word. It’s impossible to worship God and reject the word. And it’s impossible to accept the word and reject a relationship with God.
4. Is my communication with God what it should be? Communication with God involves listening, responding, asking, accepting, acknowledging, questioning, and obedience. Most of us are guilty of praying with earplugs. We make our request known, but if the response from God conflicts or fails to comply with our request, we turn a deaf ear to God and ask Him again as if He did not hear us the first time. Communication is not a one way street. It’s call and response. It’s asking and accepting, acknowledging God instruction even if questions arise. Communication can never be successful with God without being obedient to God. Hebrew 4:16 says, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Isaiah 1:18a says, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD:”
5. Do I love my neighbor as myself? Is ok for Christians to do unto others as they have done unto them? How do you respond to people who don’t like you or who may even hate you? Do you hate them in response to their hatred of you. 1 John 4:20-21 says, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother (fellow man), he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother (fellow man) also.” As a Christian we have only been given the option to love everyone and not a choice to love someone.
6. Am I kind and compassionate to others? I have been blessed with the privilege to have individuals in my life who test my patience, my compassion and my kindheartedness on a daily/weekly basis. I am convinced that God insert some people into our life to text our authenticity as Christians not as human. Humanistically, people can push us to the breaking point, but as a Christian we become more flexible even when we get bent out of shape. Ephesians 4:32 says, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” In recent years, I encounter one of the hardest challenges of my life that required my forgiveness. It was at that moment that I realized how far I had come in my Christian maturity and I never questioned if I would forgive because I immediately saw my need for forgiveness. With all of my faults, flaws and failures, God never once rejected my request for forgiveness. How can we not show that same compassion towards others!
7. Are my gifts being used for Godly purposes? There is a different between a talent and a gift. We have some talented people who use their talents in various ways. Talented musicians who don’t play at church. Talented teachers who don’t come to Sunday school. Talented singers who sing for crowds and not for Christ. The use of the talent often distinguishes it from a gift. Gifts are given to believers and function in conjunction with other gifts of other believers. The gift of tongue worked in conjunction with the gift of interpretation. The gift of teaching works in conjunction with the gift of discipleship (learning). The body of Christ is made up of gifted members who function together as one. The objective of every born again believer should be to identify their gift and use it for Godly designed and designated purposes. (Note: You gift will be something that you love, live for and filled most fulfilled when exercised. That does not mean the your gift will not test your faith or faithfulness.)
8. Do I love my enemies? Scripture teaches that to “know God is to know love (agape).” If we believe that love is unconditional and applicable for all, should it not be applied to those who stand in opposition against us? It’s easy to return love to those love us, but what about sharing and showing love to those who openly oppose us. This is exactly what Jesus did for sinners like you and I. We had hostile minds that rejected God and His word, yet Jesus loved us while we were stilling living as sinners. Romans 8:7 says, “Because the carnal mind is enmity (hostility) against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” And Romans 5:8 says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” This is the kind of love that we should strive for so that we can love all people as God loved us.
9. Am I studying the Word of God as I should? Every believer should study the Bible for several reasons, but one reason stands above the rest. 2 Timothy 2:15 sasy, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” When we study the Bible, we gain the approval of God. Jesus called twelve men to come and follow Him. The goal was to train them to become “fishers of men.” They were positioned as disciples (learners/pupils) and spend the next three years with the Living Word. Those who completed the training were committed to doing the will of God even unto death. Now we have the written word and God commands us to study the word so that we may be equipped to fulfill our calling from God. Study equips and empowers believers to give their best to God in service. When we give our best, we receive God’s approval.
10. Am I committed to the church and do I participate as I should? How many people do you know that identify themselves as Christians but are not regular church attendees? How many individuals do you know that serve in official position in the church, but are not there to fulfill their function? Now look in the mirror at yourself. If you can see the short fall of others, can you see areas of needed improvement in your own life when it comes to the church and your functions within the church? Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring [it] to pass. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This [is] the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. (Psalms 5:8; 37:5; Proverb 3:6)
11. Am I being obedient to God? The more I ask questions, the more I realize that God has the answer to them all. Does my answers and opinion of myself matches God’s? Doe God see me as an obedient servant? Obedience is more that being an “hearer of the word.” Obedience requires that we “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.’” When we are only hearers and not doers, we are “deceiving our selves” thinking we are righteous when we are not. In Leviticus 26:1-13, God gives us instructions to follow. Then God gives us blessings that will follow. What stands between the instructions and the blessings is obedience. God blesses our obedience.
12. Do I respect God’s authority to decide what is best for my life? There are times when we find ourselves in unpleasant places going through difficult dilemmas. We even wonder why we have to go through troubles and trials. If we believe what the Bible teaches, we should not be focused on the place we have landed, but the purpose for our being here. Psalms 37:23 says, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.” This text gives an action and a reaction. The actions (The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD) and the reaction (and he delighteth in his way). God orders our steps and delights in our way when we follow His orders. The willingness to go through difficult situations trusting God gives Him delight because He sees that we will trust Him in hard places. We will trust Him in the dark when we cannot see our way. We will trust Him when the pain seems more than we can bare. When we completely trust God, it pleases Him. So how do we answer the question; do I respect God’s authority to decide what is best for my life? Only if you are following God as He orders your steps and truly believe that God will never do anything to hurt you. God is always working for our good, for our growth, and for His glory.
13. Am I taking the time to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others? I was sitting the waiting area while Zandra received her monthly infusions. There was a gentlemen who came and had a look on his face as if something had him troubled. He looked at me and said, “I’m not having a good day.” I immediately responded, “I think you’re having a good day, but you have experienced some better days. This is day the Lord has made and we should rejoice in it even when it’s not one of our best days.” He said, “You must be a preacher?” I said, “Well that’s my assignment, but I’m a child of God first. Even if I wasn’t a preacher, I’m still accountable for recognizing the goodness of God when I’m experiencing not one of my best days. He said well how do I do that when I’m going through trouble on every hand? I said to him by believing that the same God who brought you to it can bring you through it. Put it in God’s hand and allow Him to do today what He’s done in the past. The man said to me, “Thank you for reminding me this battle is not mine, it’s the Lord’s.” Less than 5 minutes later, another woman sitting in the waiting room looked at me and said, “Preacher can I ask you a question?” I said certainly. She said, "I believe that God is angry with me and has abandoned me. I have been trying to quit smoking. I’ve prayed about it and it seems like God is not listening to me. I need to quit because I think cigarettes are a sin (and a sinful habit), but it seems like God is not helping me.” I said to her, do you only trust God when He does what you want Him to do the way you want Him to do it? God is not a tool to be used but a God to be trusted. God desire is to first deliver your soul from sin and then he will lead the saved from the sins that so easily lead them astray. I said to her work on you faithfulness to God and then you will see how faithful God is to you. I believe that when you starting your daily walk with God you will then find the strength you need to walk away from cigarettes and anything else that cause you to sin. In less than 20 minutes, a third opportunity came to me an the doctors office waiting room that presented an opportunity for me to share my faith and the gospel of Jesus Christ. God will provided the opportunities for believers to share the gospel, but we have to be alert to notice when He opens the door. Every day, someone crosses our path who need to know about God and His saving GRACE. The question is do we stand ready to share the gospel at any given time?

God’s Expectations

I have great expectations for my children. I feel that I have a right to have expectations of them after nurturing them, providing for their needs, sending them to college, and bring them up in a spiritual environment to know Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. I expect for them to love God with all of their heart, body, soul and mind. I expect for them to work, earn wages, give back to God and live within their means. I expect for them to treat others with respect, stand firm on their convictions and help those in need. I expect for them to wear my name with pride and never bring shame to the family. Most of you who have children, have some type of similar expectations I believe. If we place expectations on those who we invest our life, labor and love into; isn’t it reasonable to believe that God has expectations on believers?

Here are some of the things God expects of believers.

1. Love the Lord – Matthew 22:37 says, “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”
2. Worship God in Spirit and in Truth – John 4: 23-24 says, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father -- seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”
3. Love your neighbor – Matthew 22:38 says, “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”
4. Use your gifts for the work of God – Romans 12: 6-8 says, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.”
5. Loveyourenemies – Luke 6:27 says, “But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,”
6. Gainknowledgeofthe Word and do what it says – James 1: 22-25 says, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 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.”
7. Trust in God – John 14: 1 says, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”
8. Spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ – Matthew 28: 18-20 says, “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

CONCLUSION

This concludes Part 1 of “Personal Evaluation” of our Christianity. How are you performing so far? On Monday, I crank up my 1999 Dodge truck. I always let it sit a few minute and warm up before I pull off. As I listened to the engine and checked the gauges, it sounded and appeared to be idling properly. But as soon as I pulled it down and gear and started to drive off, I noticed a problem. The turbo that gives the trucks its power to perform when in motion was not working properly. As long as it was sitting idle it seem like every thing was good. But when I put it into motion (action) I realize that I had problems.

Some Christians don’t see their own problems because they are sitting idle. If they would start their spiritual engine and put their life in motion doing kingdom work, they might discover some personal works that need to be perform internally to become a better worker. Sometimes the gauges work give right diagnosis. When you put your life in drive, you might discover some weaknesses that need immediate attention.