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LOOK IN THE MIRROR

Are there things you tell yourself to avoid confronting an uncomfortable inner reality? What are they?

What would change if you accepted the truth about yourself? Would you let God change you?

Often, the lies we tell ourselves are defenses against deep fears. What response do you need from God to confront the fears that underlie the false beliefs that hold you back from being your best?

2 Corinthians 13:5 – Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, you fail to pass the test!

1) **Only You...**

We think we know each other. We watch and listen, discuss various topics and consider our reactions. We are sure we know each other's motives and inner thoughts. But we don't. Try as we might, we are only making educated guesses as to what is in another's heart and mind. We struggle to communicate well, and we often don't trust each other to say precisely what they think. This interferes with our ability to navigate the world. It's a blessing as it relates to our spiritual development. We cannot judge each other's heart. We can judge our own. It puts the focus of our desire for the ideal version of humanity back on ourselves. Only you can be the subject of your searching.

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♦**Be honest:** Just because we can know our hearts does not mean we do. We have learned from the master of self-deception. We may believe lies that feel good. We may make excuses and justify what we know is inappropriate. We may not take the issue seriously. Only when we decide to be honest with ourselves and look in the mirror do we have the power to grow in spiritual maturity. Then, “examine yourselves (2 Corinthians 13:5).” Don’t waste time affirming your deceitful wishes with a show trial. That can only harm you. Muster your courage and look closely at the real you.

♦**Ask why:** Take advantage of your unique ability to know your heart and mind. Everyone can know whether your words and actions fit the rules of society. You can look deeper and know your motives. Ask why you say and do the things you do. You do not need a lie-detector to know if you are telling the truth. You can “see whether you are living in the faith (v5).” That is defined as living in the manner of Jesus because you believe He is the Son of God.

II) Know The Content...

Jesus reinterpreted holiness as a life lived for the glory of God. Not a life lived by rules, or for one’s reputation, or for safety and longevity of life, but for the glory of God. No one can know if our behavior is intended to glorify God or ourselves. No one, that is, except us, because we know the content of our heart. We know whether our generosity is the result of belief in an abundant and loving God, or an attempt to be known as generous.

♦**Personal accountability:** One of the transitions from childhood to adulthood is the decision to take personal accountability. We don’t rely on our parents, teachers, and bosses to make us do what we know needs to be done. We set our own alarm clock, pay our bills, put vegetables on our plate (and eat them). God does not instruct us to go to a priest to be examined. He says, “test yourselves (v5).” We develop the habits to achieve whatever we pursue seriously. No one can make us do them. Neither can anyone else know whether we have invested our best effort.

♦**Litmus test:** Physical science tests the purity of a substance. One example is the litmus test, which measures the acidity of liquid. Acidity, how many hydrogen ions are contained in a substance. The question we answer by the test is “Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you (v5)?” How much of our inner being is the Holy Spirit? Notice that the test is of the purity and fulness of our beliefs, not a percentage of right or wrong actions. What we do will naturally result from who we are.

III) Of Your Heart...

This is not a hard test. It does not take cramming late into the night to prepare for all the questions. You will not be marked down for poor grammar or not showing your work. It’s a simple test with one question. Most of us will find that the hard part is uncovering all the things we have been trying to hide from ourselves. Those dark parts of your heart that you don’t acknowledge and justify when they come out. Once you see yourself completely, the test is complete.

♦**No need:** Most of us know what it is to be tested on something we do not know. Sometimes there is a chance to fake it. But if the test is a blank sheet of paper, it’s hopeless. The grader will clearly see we do not know the subject. We should examine our hearts to see where they are not yet committed to the belief of Jesus as Lord and Savior. “Unless (v5),” we already know we are not committed to the belief. It’s obvious to us.

♦**Pass-fail:** The good news is that this is a pass-fail test. If you do what you do because Jesus is your Lord and Savior, you pass. Any errors are covered by your faith. The examination is not to find fault with yourself, but to increase your ability to glorify God, which is your heart’s desire. The bad news is this is a pass-fail test. If you are not committed to belief in Jesus, “you fail to pass the test (v5)!” There is no partial credit. Being a good person, a (mostly) rule follower, a (sometimes) kind and generous person, a good church member, doesn’t count. Believing in the mind without acting in the body doesn’t count, either. Your spiritual reality is the intersection of what you believe and how that determines your thoughts, words, and actions.

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