
Words of Truth

Be A "Tough Judge" Of Yourself

By: Brian A. Yeager

Are you counting on others to tell you when you are right or wrong with the Lord? Do you think if no one is correcting you that you must be doing everything right? Have you considered that people may not see in you, what you know about yourself? Have you considered that others may be more involved in their own self-examination than to think about everything you say or do? I am not trying to downplay the importance of brethren correcting one another. If a brother or sister errs, we are commanded by God to correct them (Galatians 6:1-2 and James 5:19-20). We do have a responsibility toward the salvation of one another (Hebrews 3:12-13). However, your salvation is not everyone else's primary concern.

The word of God says: *"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"* (Philippians 2:12). The Apostle Paul could not be everywhere all of the time. He wrote epistles. He sent evangelists (I Corinthians 4:17, Philippians 2:19-23, etc.). He made it a significant goal to see brethren but was often hindered (i.e. I Thessalonians 2:18). In his absence, as we have read, he instructed the brethren to work out their own salvation. No person, including the beloved Apostles, could ever personally make sure any other person was fully faithful to God. No one can be in your life and mind 24/7, except you (I Corinthians 2:11)!

The word of God tells us the following: *"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway... But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another"* (I Corinthians 9:27 and Galatians 6:4). You need to first be concerned about your soul, as I too must have my soul as my first concern. Frankly, you cannot even begin to teach another if your life isn't right anyway, for that is the sin of hypocrisy (Matthew 7:1-5). Brethren, we must take the time to be critical judges of ourselves.

Judging Ourselves

In a context wherein Paul was teaching about the proper observation of the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:16-34), we read this: *"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world"* (I Corinthians 11:31-32). The inspired Apostle Paul showed the way for us as Christians not to be condemned by the Lord. The instruction, as you have read, is to judge ourselves.

We should be able to search and try our ways (Lamentations 3:40). If we are failing, we need to urgently turn back to God (Psalms 119:59-60). Words, which show us how much thinking is involved, are important. Consider what it means to "consider yourself" (Haggai 1:5 and Haggai 1:7). However, what about people who are strangers to themselves?

Know Yourself

Some people do not know who they are, whose they are, and what they are. Some have convinced themselves that they are someone different than who they really are (Proverbs 30:12-13 and Galatians 6:3). So, knowing yourself is going to start with being honest with yourself. Can you step back and consider your ways without putting a spin on what you see in yourself? If you can take an honest look at yourself, using the Scriptures as a mirror that will reveal the real you (James 1:21-25), think of how that can help you properly judge yourself.

Who can know you, better than you, outside of God? Obviously, no one can know you better than you if you are honest with yourself. Consider, for a moment, an application to this point. If you have internal concerns about your spiritual well being, what does that tell you? Here is the Scriptural answer to that question: *"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God"* (I John 3:20-21).

One passage of Scripture on this subject matter has, for a long time, stuck in my mind. The Psalmist said: *"Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still"* (Psalms 4:4). Another Psalm speaks in a similar manner. Notice: *"I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search"* (Psalms 77:6). Think about what it means to "commune with your own heart". The Hebrew word used there appears 4338 times in the Old Testament (Strong's # 559). It is translated, in different ways, such as "said", "speak", "command", "tell", etc. Therefore, we are left to understand these verses show one needs to communicate with him/herself.

In the New Testament we read: *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates"* (II Corinthians 13:5)? There are a lot of things to consider in this one verse. First, self-examination is the point we have been addressing throughout this whole study. Secondly, knowing whether or not you are in the faith. Most are deceived in this point alone (Matthew 7:21-23 and II Timothy 3:13). Then, we found we are to prove [test] ourselves (Ephesians 5:10). It is amazing to me how many realize they are to test others (Matthew 7:15-20 and I John 4:1), but they do not apply such to themselves. Don't be that person! Then, we read Paul question if they knew their own selves. Think on that for a moment. Put that question to yourself. Do you know you?

If you have not examined yourself, communed with your heart, and opened the Scriptures up as mirror to see the true spiritual state of yourself; what are you waiting for? The Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32) shows a man who came to himself and returned to his father. What if your "wake up" moment is too late? Know who you are, whose you are, and what you are (I John 3:1-10).

Conclusion

We are all INDIVIDUALLY going to stand before the Lord on the Day of Judgment (Romans 14:11-12). We are all INDIVIDUALLY going to be judged based about our actions during this life (II Corinthians 5:10). You have the standard we will be judged by (John 12:48). Use that standard in the here and now so that you are not condemned there and then!

Milkshakes – Introduction

By: Brian A. Yeager

I cannot imagine all of the thoughts that could be racing through your mind as you read the title of this short lesson. Do not worry. I am not losing my mind and writing some kind of recipe series on making good milkshakes or something. The purpose of this new section of the weekly lessons I put out called “Words of Truth” is intended to be a short weekly article covering some first principles of the oracles of God. I am not sure how long I will continue this series of articles. I am sure that it will be for a little while at least.

All Christians must reach a point wherein we need to be capable of learning more than just first principles [milk of the word] (Hebrews 5:8-6:3). The congregation here in El Paso has long ago moved beyond the milk of the word. Our studies on Sunday morning in Jeremiah are certainly more than just first principles. The classes that I hold, that most here are capable of being a part of, are even more “meaty” than our studies in Jeremiah.

For example, in a recent class we just had studying Ephesians 3:9-10, we discussed how angels are part of the church (Ephesians 3:15 and Hebrews 12:22-23). We discussed many more Scriptures and almost everyone in the class said they learned things they never heard taught before and were hungry for more. Most were fascinated and edified in considering how angels are our brethren in Christ (Revelation 22:8-9). Some in the class have been Christians for over fifty years and had never learned these things. Why? They are meaty and many cannot even begin to grasp what we learned in that Tuesday night class. (*Note – the referenced class was in March and these articles I write are done far in advance).

Seeing as how we have more meat being served in our classes than we do milk, I have sought to find ways to also deal with some matters of milk. There are two reasons why this is necessary. For one, we have several brothers and sisters in Christ that are babes in the Lord and need these types of lessons (I Peter 2:1-2). Secondly, all of us need reminded of the first principles, so that we do not fail in them as we pursue greater depths of knowledge (II Peter 1:1-13). Therefore, if you are a mature brother or sister in Christ, do not put off these studies because we all need reminders (II Peter 3:1-2).

I do not want to “dumb down” our Sunday or Tuesday studies together. I work hard to try and work in milk and meat to every sermon that I preach. Therefore, there is no way to continue preaching things for all of us if I turn to preaching first principles. My “job” is to teach what is needed (Jude 1:3). I also know that many of you spend, and appropriately so, hours studying through the Scriptures in each article produced every week. Having thought through all of these things, adding another page to the weekly article I write was the only place wherein I thought I could squeeze in some first principles that all of us need.

Now that your minds have been, hopefully, put at ease. Beginning next week you can look forward to an article each week that will focus on some first principles of the oracles of God. I will keep these articles to one additional page. I am aware of the amount of material we already cover collectively. However, I also need to make sure that I am doing my work for the Lord appropriately by covering all the counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27). I do not want to leave anything unsaid that needs said. Therefore, next week we will start with covering some basics of biblical authority.