
Words of Truth

The Problem With Self-Estimating

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When I fractured my hip in October of last year I had to stop running for a while. In the recovery process I started gaining weight. After gaining a little more than fifteen pounds, I had to figure out how to stop gaining. I had begun working out and rehabbing the injury, but was still gaining weight. I remembered how that when I lost a lot of weight in the past I realized that I was always eating way more calories than I was estimating. So, I went back to accurately counting and logging every calorie I was eating. It is startling when you realize you're eating way more than you estimated. As I adjusted down in my eating, along with working out, I began to slowly lose the weight I had gained. The "eyeballing" of my calorie intake was my problem. I ate much more than I thought I was.

Spiritually speaking, a lot of people estimate where they are in growth, faithfulness, stability, etc. Most estimate incorrectly and will not find that out until the Judgment Day. Consider this for thought: *"And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last"* (Luke 13:22-30).

In the lesson Jesus gave, those people overestimated their relationship with the Lord. There is a reason Jesus taught that. Many think they are faithful, but really are not (Matthew 7:21-23). Those people have estimated their faithfulness to God incorrectly. What about you? What about me? Are we honestly examining ourselves with the Lord's measuring stick or are we just estimating where we stand with Him? Let's consider how we must honestly measure ourselves.

Honestly Measuring Our Standing With The Lord

We can have a proper confidence in our salvation (I John 3:20-21 and I John 5:13-20). Proper confidence does not come through self-commendation (I Corinthians 10:12). To have a

proper confidence in your salvation you must make sure that it is the Lord that is commending you and not just yourself or others whom may have bias opinions of you (II Corinthians 10:18). So think for a moment on that. If it is the Lord's commendation you need to have assurance of your salvation, how are you going to get that commendation?

You know that you are going to be judged by the words of Christ which He and the Apostles taught (John 12:48, Romans 2:16, II Thessalonians 1:7-9, and James 2:10-12). Thus, when you open up the Scriptures you know that the New Testament, as much as applies to you today, will be the standard by which you will be judged. That is your measuring stick! When you perform self-examinations as you should (Lamentations 3:40, Ezekiel 18:27-30, I Corinthians 11:23-32, II Corinthians 13:5, and Galatians 6:4-5), the New Testament is the standard you must measure yourself with.

So, since we have thought about measuring a bit. Consider an illustration with me for a moment. If you were going to custom build yourself a bookshelf to fit into a certain tight area of your living room, how good of a job do you think you would do if you “eyeballed” every part of your construction process? Let's say you have to fit this bookshelf in an area that is 3.5 feet wide and 8 feet high. You don't know that, because you didn't measure. You just “eyeballed” it. You eyeball your wood cutting. Your bookshelf ends up being 4.15 feet wide and an uneven 7.9 – 8.2 feet tall. Will it fit? NO! Now what? You've built this bookshelf. It doesn't fit. It is uneven in measurements. You should have measured your spot. You should have measured your wood before cutting and assembling. Now think for a moment, how does that apply to spiritual things?

Measure First!

If you want to prevent yourself from improper self-examinations, you must spiritually measure your thoughts before you allow them to turn into words or actions (Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 4:4, Ephesians 5:10, Colossians 3:17, and I Thessalonians 5:21). To act, even in matters of the conscience with regard to liberties we have, we must first know we are right to act (Romans 14:23). Our words and actions cannot be according to our own will (Proverbs 16:25 and Romans 10:1-3).

Just as a wise person building something will measure twice, we should be extra cautious that our spiritual measurements are accurate. Remember, we can get in our own way when we think we're right (Proverbs 21:2). God has given us safety measures. For example, in addition to the Scriptures, we have brethren to help us make proper decisions. Use the wise counsel of the faithful to keep yourself safe (Proverbs 11:14). Even the Apostles that were guided by the Spirit, such as Paul, depended on other brethren for counsel and wisdom (Acts 15:1-35).

Conclusion

You do not have to guesstimate when it comes to spiritual matters. You can make your calling and election sure (II Peter 1:3-11). Whether you are measuring yourself or you are asking faithful brethren to help you do so, make SURE that God's word is the only standard being used. His word is able to give you that inheritance we all want (Acts 20:32).