

Words of Truth



Going Too Far With Examining Others

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It is not good for us to believe every word that is spoken to us (Proverbs 14:15). The Scriptures teach us to prove [test] all things, only to hold fast to that which is good (I Thessalonians 5:21). Thus, we have to be wise and examine people before we give them our ears. Jesus said: *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”* (Matthew 7:15-20).

Our examination of an individual might show us that he or she cannot be trusted. A good test is to see whether or not this person’s words agree with the Lord’s will. Regarding this, the Lord says the following: *“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”* (Isaiah 8:20). In addition to one’s words (we have to be cautious with words because some people are just bad communicators), we must consider one’s actions. You can tell whether someone is a child of God or a child of Satan by what they do (John 8:47, I John 3:8-10, I John 4:6, and III John 11). One’s actions speak louder than his or her words (Titus 1:16).

On the other hand, our examination of an individual might show us that he or she can be trusted. Their words might show that he or she has a good heart (Luke 6:45). Their actions, again speaking louder than words, must support their good words (James 2:14-17, Titus 3:8, and Titus 3:14). You can see the changes in Saul (the Apostle Paul – Acts 13:9) based on his actions. He went from persecuting saints (Acts 8:1-4 and Acts 9:1-2) to showing his repentance (Acts 9:18-31; cf. Acts 26:20). His work for the Lord speaks volumes about him (Acts 21:1-14, II Corinthians 11:12-33, Philippians 3:1-17, etc.). We can see the good or wrong in people with true testing. However, we have to be sure we don’t take that too far. One way people take this too far is by setting up the faithful for failure.

When Trying The Man Becomes Tripping The Man

What do the Scriptures say about setting traps? Notice how God defines those who set traps: *“The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts... For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men”* (Psalms 119:110 and Jeremiah 5:26). Based upon the Scriptures we just read, we find that those who set traps are called “wicked” by the Lord.

Brethren, there are those people who lay traps for righteous individuals. They turn aside the just person over nothing at all (Isaiah 29:21). The trap setter may deceive themselves into thinking

they're just "trying the spirits" (I John 4:1), but they're really setting up another for a fall. If someone is just waiting for another to fail, they'll find failure. Most of the time their findings will be based on inaccurate assumptions. Brethren, this is called evil surmising and such is sinful (I Timothy 6:4).

Outside of the traps set that cause evil surmising, there are those traps set that also use ignorance as the standard of judgment. The scribes and Pharisees set traps for Jesus to see if He would heal on the Sabbath Day so that they could accuse him of doing something wrong (Luke 6:7). They were ignorant in not realizing that healing on the Sabbath was not wrong (Matthew 12:1-14, Mark 2:24-28, and Mark 3:1-6). Let's never be guilty of twisting the Scriptures (II Peter 3:15-18) just to find fault in another.

Brethren, let's realize something very serious about trap setting. Most of those who think they are God's people, that are trap setters, think they're doing the right things. Again, to be very clear, those who are twisting righteous judgment into setting traps often think they're doing God a service (John 16:1-3). This makes it very hard for these individuals to see themselves for whom they really are. If you're one of these types, you must always check your motives when you're examining another person. You have to be sure you'll be testing words and works fairly and for the right reasons.

Using Righteous Judgments So We Don't Go Too Far

After Jesus was wrongly judged (John 7:14-23), He said: "*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*" (John 7:24). Righteous judgment is VERY IMPORTANT. Why? If you wrongly judge someone else you become an abomination to the Lord. Notice this Scripture carefully: "*He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD*" (Proverbs 17:15).

Using righteous judgment requires us to have real evidence before we come to a judgment. Let me give you an illustration. Let's say there is a man (Larry) who has had a past problem with adultery. He has repented of his transgression and has brought forth much fruit worthy of repentance (cf. Matthew 3:8). One of the brethren (Moe) sees Larry's car outside of the home of one of the unmarried sisters in the congregation. (Larry's wife had forgiven him of adultery and they are still married.) Moe asks Larry why his car was there and Larry denies ever being there. Moe brings another brother into the discussion per Matthew 18:15-17. Larry again denies being there. What Larry doesn't know is that Moe took a picture with his camera on his cell phone. Even with the picture, Larry tells Moe and Curly that he was not there. Moe and Curly bring this before the congregation. This is when Larry's wife tells everyone that it was she who borrowed Larry's car to visit the unmarried sister in the congregation. What a mess. Some think Larry's wife is covering. Others hate Moe and Curly. The congregation is in turmoil. Moe's trap (the picture on his cell phone) is not real evidence, but it was convincing enough for some. Brethren, many souls will go to Hell over like scenarios. We must never go too far in examining our brethren or anyone else! We are fruit inspectors, not twisted faultfinders!

Conclusion

*"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him... Doth our law judge any man, **before it hear him, and know what he doeth**"* (Proverbs 18:13 and John 7:51)?