

Theological Equipping Class – Self-Examination

What is it?

“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” - Psalm 139:23-24

“When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies” - Psalm 119:59

“Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD!” - Lamentations 3:40

“How many are my iniquities and my sins? Make me know my transgression and my sin.” - Job 13:23

“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” – 2 Corinthians 13:5

“For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.” - Galatians 6:3-5

“Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.” - 1 Corinthians 11:28-32

“For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.” – Romans 12:3

Already/Not Yet Christians

- We have been declared Righteous in Christ, made a New Creation by the Spirit, but still await glorification.
- “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you” - Colossians 3:1-5
- “When a soul comes to Christ, it is not made perfectly holy all at once. ‘The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day’” (Proverbs 4:18). – Robert Murray M’Cheyne
- “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.” – John Owen

Why do it?

1. We examine ourselves to: Kill sin that would hinder our glorifying God and Enjoying Him

- To study one's self in the light of God's Word, and carefully to go over one's condition, examining both the inward and the outward sins, and using all the tests which are given us in the Scriptures, would be a very healthy exercise; but how very few care to go through it!? – Charles Spurgeon
- Seeing Sin we know is there
- Seeing Sin we don't know is there
 - “Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.” - Psalm 19:12
 - “Cleanse me from my secret faults, O Lord...I fear to deceive myself, lest my sin should make me think that I am not sinful.” – Augustine

2. We examine ourselves to: Better Resist Temptation

3. We examine ourselves to: Help “till the soil” for the Spirit to bring forth fruit

- “The reason for the inward look is to know better what to look to Christ for.” – John Piper
- “*And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment*” – John 16:8

4. We examine ourselves to: Worship/Glorify God (He becomes more beautiful)

- “O Lord, as long as I am apart from you, I am self-satisfied, because I have no standard by which to measure my low stature. But when I come near to you, there for the first time I see myself. In your light I behold my darkness. In your purity I behold my corruption. My very confession of sin is the fruit of holiness. Oh! Divine Man (Jesus), let me gaze on you more and more until, in the vision of your brightness, I loathe the sight of my impurity; until, in the blaze of that glory which human eye has not seen, I fall prostrate, blinded, broken, to rise again a new man in you. Amen.” - George Matheson (Scottish pastor and hymn writer)
- “Clear conviction of sin is the only true origin of dependence on Another's righteousness, and therefore (strange to say!) of the Christian's peace of mind and cheerfulness.” – Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Danger – Self-Examination vs Morbid Introspection

“*And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”* – Revelation 12:9-10

Morbid introspection leads to being self-focused

- “I suggest that we cross the line from self-examination to introspection when, in a sense, we do nothing but examine ourselves, and when such self-examination becomes the main and chief end in our life. We are meant to examine ourselves periodically, but if we are always doing it, always, as it were, putting our soul on a plate and dissecting it, that is introspection. And if we are always talking to people about ourselves and our problems and troubles, and if we are forever going to them with that frown upon our face and saying: I am in great difficulty—it probably means that we are all the time centered upon ourselves.” - D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*

Morbid introspection leads to Legalism

Morbid introspection leads to Isolation

- “*I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.*” – John 17:15

“So beware of introspection, because it only leads to despair. But embrace self-examination, because it leads to Christ.” – Kristen Wetherell (author)

Who to look to when you do it (Jesus)

“It is better for you and me to be admiring the compassion and fullness of grace that is in our Savior, than to dwell and pore too much upon our own poverty and vileness.” - John Newton

“Take help from the windows. Open the shutters and admit the sun. So if you wish to look well inwardly, look well out... This is the very way to quicken it. Throw widely open the portals of faith and in this, every light will be admitted into the chambers of experience. The true way to facilitate self-examination is to look believingly outwardly.” – Thomas Chalmers

“Learn much of the Lord Jesus. For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. He is altogether lovely. Such infinite majesty, and yet such meekness and grace, and all for sinners, even the chief! Live much in the smiles of God. Bask in his beams. Feel his all-seeing eye settled on you in love, and rest in his almighty arms. Let your soul be filled with a heart-ravishing sense of the sweetness and excellency of Christ and all that is in Him. Let the Holy Spirit fill every chamber of your heart; and so there will be no room for folly, or the world, or Satan, or the flesh.” - Robert Murray M'Cheyne

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” - Hebrews 12:1-2

“Cultivate the habit of fixing your eye more simply on Jesus Christ, and try to know more of the fullness there is laid up in Him for every one of His believing people. Do not be always pouring down over the imperfections of your own heart, and dissecting your own besetting sins. Look up. Look more to your risen Head in heaven, and try to realize more than you do that the Lord Jesus not only died for you, but that He also rose again, and that He is ever living at God’s right hand as your Priest, your Advocate, and your Almighty Friend. When the Apostle Peter “walked upon the waters to go to Jesus,” he got on very well as long as his eye was fixed upon his Almighty Master and Savior. But when he looked away to the winds and waves, and reasoned, and considered his own strength, and the weight of his body, he soon began to sink, and cried, “Lord, save me.” No wonder that our gracious Lord, while grasping his hand and delivering him from a watery grave, said, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” Alas! many of us are very like Peter—we look away from Jesus, and then our hearts faint, and we feel sinking.” – J.C. Ryle (19th century English pastor)

How to do it

Prayer

Community (Local Church)

- Community can help you spot sins you can’t see
 - “The greatest psychological insight, ability, and experience cannot comprehend this one thing: what sin is. Psychological wisdom knows what need and weakness and failure are, but it does not know the ungodliness of the human being...In the presence of a psychologist I am only sick; in the presence of another Christian I can be a sinner. – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*
- Community can help you navigate sins once they are spotted
- Drag sin into the light of community
 - “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” – 1 John 1:7

Develop the “muscle” of checking in with your heart

- If something makes you mad: stop, ask why, list the possibilities, find the likely root, bring out the sin, take it to Jesus
- Examine your fears. Why did that make you afraid?
- Examine the way you spend your time
 - “Brethren, if you are ever so much taken up with any enjoyment that it takes away your love for prayer or for your Bible...then you are abusing this world. Oh! Sit loose to this world’s joy: ‘the time is short.’” - Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Develop the “muscle” of looking to Jesus when you see your wicked heart

- “Abide in Him, little children, whom I have always preached unto you, that when He shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. Let every new sight of your wicked heart, and every new wave of trouble, drive your soul to hide in Him, the Rock of your salvation. There is no true peace but in a present hold of the Lord our Righteousness.” - Robert Murray M’Cheyne
- Learn to distrust feelings
- Learn to stand on His truth when it’s all you have
- Preach the Gospel to yourself
- “Lift your eyes from your own bosom, downcast believer, – look upon Jesus. It is good to consider your ways, but it is far better to consider Christ.” - Robert Murray M’Cheyne
- “The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself... And then you must go on to remind yourself of God—who God is, and what God has done, and what God has pledged himself to do.” – Martin Lloyd-Jones

You will Grow in this:

- “Learn the true way of coming to peace – It is by looking to manifested Jesus. Some of you think you will come to peace *by looking in* to your own heart. Your eye is riveted there. You watch every change there. If you could only see a glimpse of light there, oh, what joy it would give you! If you could only see a melting of your stony heart, if you could only see your heart turning to God, if you could only see a glimpse of the image of Jesus in your heart, you would be at peace; but you cannot, - all is dark within. Oh, dear souls, it is not there you will find peace! You must *avert the eye* from your bosom altogether. *You must look to a declared Christ.* Spread out the record of God concerning His Son. The gospels are the narrative of the heart of Jesus, of the work of Jesus, of the grace of Jesus. Spread them out before the eye of your mind, till they fill your eye. Cry for the Spirit to breathe over the page, to make a manifested Christ stand out plainly before you; and the moment that you are willing to believe all that is there spoken concerning Jesus, that moment you will wipe away your tears, and change your sighs for a new song of praise.” - Robert Murray M’Cheyne

“*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*” – 2 Corinthians 3:18