

A Quick, Easy, Important and Very Revealing Test

There are no perfect parents. Considering only the majority of good parents, in most cases, their children would be hard-pressed, in a week's time, to find a single instance in which their parents told them, among the many "Don't do that . . . do this" instances, anything other than what was for the children's own good (meaning anything told a child for the parents' selfish benefit). This, in spite of the fact that the parents provide for all the children's needs and beyond, often sacrificially.

There are also no perfect children. But all-in-all, as good as they may be, children have no concept of their parents' (good parents) full love for them – it is certainly greater than the relative immaturity of children's reciprocal love for their parents.

God is the only perfect Father. And even His most spiritually mature children have no idea . . . how much He loves them – it is certainly infinitely greater than the relative immaturity of their love for Him.

God doesn't get in a bad mood and snap at them. He never gets anything wrong, blows things out of proportion or is impatient because He is under great pressure. Unlike the best parents, God is 100% consistent in all He tells us to do and not to do. God is never distracted or unable to fully and personally parent us to maturity. He is always available, anytime we wish, to talk with us. As a basis for these talks He even gives us a detailed written outline (the *Bible*) to help us know how to mature so that, in the midst of life, we know what to do and what not to do to protect ourselves.

At the time of our being born to Him, God tells us He has a unique (as distinctive as our personal DNA) full-time purpose and works for each of us and our lives:

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Eph 2:10

And, at the same time, He promises a personally-assigned and ever-present mentor – His Holy Spirit. He reminds us He fully understands we will make mistakes along the way, everyone does. But there is only one mistake, one sin, that is unforgivable, and that is the rejection of His Holy Spirit. And the reason? Because this dismissal of His greatest gift is a denunciation of Him and everything He offers us – "I can do it myself - leave me alone!" Jesus warns us of this eternally deadly error:

"I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven." Mt 12:31

Likewise we are told to:

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. 2Co 13:5

This is really a quick, easy, obviously important and very revealing test – with minimal thought we will know whether we are currently passing or failing.

And the really really really Great News? If we find, in our self-examination, we must change it is as easy as following Jesus' first recorded public "Do this" to return to

Him – something even His most obedient child understands they must do from time-to-time (No, frequently!) to both grow their faith and not drift away from Him into error and danger.

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” Mt 4:17

And as James further explains how repentance “works:”

“God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the **humble**.”

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Jas 4:6-8

As another side of the same self-examination coin, Jesus says:

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.” Jn 14:15-16

Reaffirming, that if we have the Holy Spirit we are saved and if we don’t, we are not! It is self-apparent (even if not to others) if we have God’s Holy Spirit, His offered Counselor, making us, leading us, restoring us, guiding us, being with us, preparing us, anointing us . . . ^{Psalm 23}, or instead we know we are alone and on our own in fending for ourselves, that we are not yet saved.

Do we love Him? Only we can legitimately test ourselves for this. This will be evidenced by an increasing desire to obey Him more and better and to know more of His loving commands – any thought we can “get” all of this at one time, when we are born again, is as foolish as teenagers thinking they have somehow learned all their parents know, and even more than them, so they can stop listening to their parents and instead begin instructing them on “Do this . . . Don’t do that!”

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves” is a short test. It will reveal where we currently are (or are not) and if, in this moment, we need to repent back to Christ (or to Him for the first time) – to be on the path of grasping more and better His love and sacrifice for us with a desire to pursue Him even further, to the end of life to the kingdom of heaven that is near for us all.

A good starting place in this process? *Matthew 1:1*:

- Reading it as it is given to us, personally, in the present-tense and as relevant and necessary for day-to-day life, not in a second-person, historical and impractical way **as so often taught!**
- Looking closely for a single “Do this . . . Don’t do that” other than for our own good (Hint: we won’t find a single case).
- Looking for the promises of God’s offered gift after gift if only we accept and use them and not forfeit them by doing that which is inconsistent and incompatible and, in the end, will hurt us (the “Don’t do this (or these) . . .” that accompanies each potential blessing). For example, not pray for or expect

a good marriage while committing adultery. As foolish as this sounds this is a common prayer!

Or equally self-defeating, not focus on the “Don’t do this . . .” and overlook the associated promises with the feeling God is “a hard man,” a very common thought of those rejecting Him and His gifts offered us.

- And further, in this regard, don’t do/stop doing ANYTHING we might do thinking we are making a sacrifice for God (reading the *Bible*, going to Church, especially to “get it over with” – it is better, with this feeling not to go at all!, giving money to the church or helping others . . .) because any feeling that we are sacrificing or giving to God is, in all cases, false and destructive to the relationship.

For everything that pleases God is also for our own good. Or said another way: EVERYTHING for God’s Glory is for our good and everything for our good is for His Glory! We have nothing God needs or wants other than we take and use ALL His personal gifts offered us – this is what really delights the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

Yes, we won’t read too far, in and beyond *Matthew*, before God speaks to and leads us in the “way everlasting” for the “kingdom of God is near.”