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Let us Examine Ourselves

by John Free

A cliché says, “The unexamined life is not worth living.”

Educators believe that examinations are an essential element in the learning process. Scientists believe that testing and evaluation are essential to good science. If you are not willing to submit your theory to testing and examination, it likely has little merit. Physicians cannot do their work unless they can examine their patients and test the functioning of their various internal organs. Likewise, examination is a central part of the Christian life. When we come to the Lord’s table, we are called to a time for examination.

There may be several ways to approach this examination. My favorite way is to imagine myself standing before the cross of Jesus where I ask myself questions about how important the things I value in life really are.

I like my home, but the Son of Man did not have a place he could call his own to lay his head. I like cars, especially those I have never owned, but the creator of the world walked or rode a donkey to get where he wanted to go. I like nice suits and ties, but the savior on the cross was stripped to his underwear. Ultimately, how important are the things I like?

I like my education and degrees, but he had to be content with the basics he learned in synagogue school in Nazareth. Ultimately, how important will my education be?

We buy insurance for our house, our cars, our health, our lives and bodies. We insure ourselves against malpractice, on-the-job injuries, earthquakes, fires, thefts, loss of income, wrinkles, depression and those who will not buy insurance. But the traveling preacher from Galilee only knew the assurance of the Father’s love. A good life insurance agent would not have tried to sell him insurance anyway. The best insurance is eternal life insurance, and Jesus has already paid the premium. Can any other policy be of greater value than that one?

We study psychology, go to seminars and lectures, consult the experts, read the self-help books and consult our consultants. But the one who gave his life for the world did it for the joy set before him of bringing many souls to glory.

We prize our mobility; we travel almost as fast as the sounds we make; we entertain ourselves with our games, our movies and our evening news. I once knew a fellow who let his wife’s changing the channel on a TV set become the “straw that broke the camel’s back” as far as their marriage was concerned. His rights appeared to be more important to him than his commitments. But Jesus emptied himself, took the form of a servant, and became obedient to death, even on a cross.

We like our investments. We want our stocks to go up in value as well as our homes when we get ready to sell them. But Jesus said that we should lay up treasure in heaven where moths and rust do not consume and thieves do not break in and steal. Are there any better investments we could make than a cup of cold water given in the name of Jesus, or a prayer offered on our knees for a suffering, struggling soul?

We ride bicycles that go nowhere, we lift weights only to put them right back where they were. We count our calories, our cholesterol, our pulse and our pounds. We measure our waist, our hips, our chests. We want every hair to be in place, every blemish to be covered, every drink to taste great, every dish to tantalize our gourmet appetites. But they gave Jesus a sponge soaked in wine vinegar while he was on the cross. When you are giving your life as a sacrificial offering, your best is more a matter of character than appearance.

It is examination time for those who keep company with the crucified Jesus. Let us gather around the cross, behold the slaying of the lamb, let his blood splatter our Sunday best, see the wounds that heal our souls, feel the agony that he endured, listen to his gracious words of forgiveness, and let us see how truly important are the things to which we attach so much value.

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