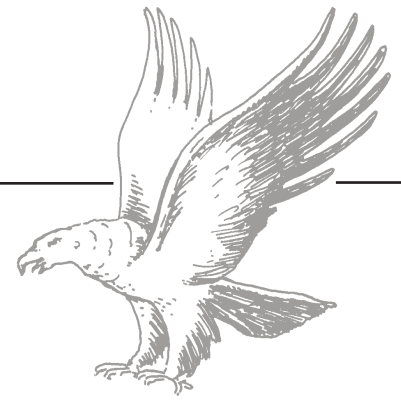


Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



June 12, 2016

Examine Yourself!

Knowledge of the truth is important in a program of self-improvement, but that knowledge doesn't count for much if we are not also subjecting ourselves to a rigorous process of self-examination.

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Cor. 13:5).



The church in Corinth was as dysfunctional a group of believers as you'll ever see. These Christians had much to learn about faith in Jesus Christ, and their behavior showed it. Immorality, rivalries—with lots of bickering and infighting—and shameless self-promotion were tearing the church apart and destroying their influence in the community. So Paul spent an inordinate amount of his time working with these people, patiently teaching, instructing, rebuking, and modeling the truth they sorely needed in their lives. Here at the end of his second letter to them, Paul's final challenge was simple: “Examine yourselves . . . Test yourselves.” They had to look deep inside their hearts and figure out what kind of people they really wanted to be—and whether or not they were making any progress toward that goal.

It's a process we should be familiar with in our own lives. Improvement in character can be achieved only when we engage in an ongoing program of uncovering the weaknesses and defects in our lives, and take on the challenge of correcting them. But for that program to be successful, several key ingredients must be present.

First, self-examination must be performed using *the right standard*. Whether we're talking about auditing financial records, inspecting widgets coming off the assembly line, or testing a student's grasp of subject matter, examination requires an independent standard by which the subject can be measured. The standard in our Christian life is “the faith,” the body of teaching found in God's word, starting with the story of the Son of God who sacrificed His perfect life for a race so undeserving of it. Until we can understand “love God” and “love my neighbor” as more than mere checklist items, we'll always struggle to pass the test.

Secondly, examination must be conducted *with brutal honesty*. We cannot

fudge the facts and expect to learn anything helpful. One good way to ensure transparency is to enlist the aid of others in the process. Those who are older and wiser in the faith are well equipped to provide the kind of gentle appraisal that will expose the flaws hidden in the dark crevices of our lives. We should welcome their critique.

Finally, self-examination cannot be successful without *a genuine desire to implement the changes* an examination calls for. If our purpose is only to rubber-stamp our own sense of self-importance, we're wasting our time and deceiving ourselves. Our default expectation should always be that there is *something* in our lives that needs to be changed. We must arm ourselves beforehand with the courage to make those corrections when we find them.

Paul taught the Corinthians everything they needed to fix the problems that were dragging them down. All that remained was for them to look within themselves and see where they needed to apply that teaching. That's what we need to do, too.

– David King