



THE NORTH JERSEY UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

One God • One Lord • One Faith • One Baptism

"Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord"

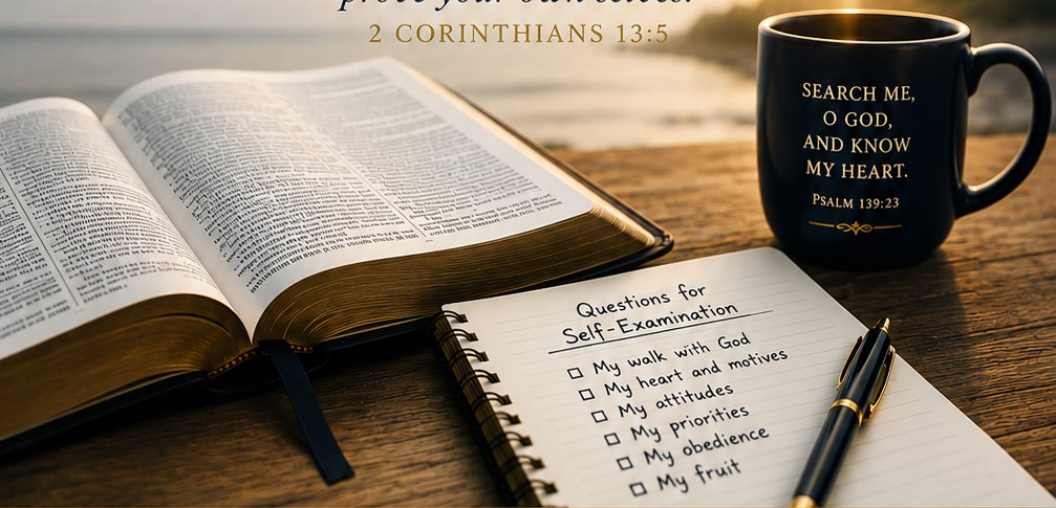
MARK 12:29

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

THE DISCIPLINE OF SELF-EXAMINATION

*Examine yourselves,
whether ye be in the faith;
prove your own selves."*

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5



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Spiritual Growth

The Discipline of Self-Examination

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”

2 Corinthians 13:5

One of the marks of spiritual maturity is the willingness to honestly examine ourselves.

It is relatively easy to examine someone else.

We can see another person's weaknesses.

We can recognize another person's bad attitude.

We can identify another person's inconsistency.

We can recognize when someone else needs to change.

But spiritual growth requires something much more difficult:

Learning to examine ourselves.

Paul did not say:

Examine everyone around you.

He said:

“Examine yourselves.”

There is a difference between **discernment** and **fault-finding**.

Discernment recognizes truth and error.

Fault-finding continually recognizes error **in everybody except ourselves.**

True spiritual maturity does both:

It examines what we hear—and it examines the person doing the hearing.

I. THE BIBLE COMMANDS SELF-EXAMINATION

2 Corinthians 13:5

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”

The word *examine* carries the idea of testing something to determine its condition.

We do this naturally in many areas of life.

We check our finances.

We inspect our homes.

We maintain our automobiles.

We go to doctors for examinations.

Why?

Because problems discovered early can often be corrected before they become serious.

The same principle applies spiritually.

Sometimes we need to stop and ask:

Where am I spiritually right now?

Not:

Where was I ten years ago?

Not:

What position do I hold?

Not:

How long have I been in church?

But:

What is the condition of my relationship with God today?

Spiritual history is not the same thing as spiritual health.

II. ASK GOD TO SHOW YOU WHAT YOU CANNOT SEE

Psalm 139:23–24

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

David understood something important.

There were things about David that David might not recognize.

So he invited God into the examination.

“Search me.”

“Try me.”

“Know my thoughts.”

“See if there be any wicked way in me.”

This requires humility.

We are very capable of justifying ourselves.

We can explain our attitudes.

We can defend our actions.

We can excuse our bitterness.

We can rationalize our compromises.

But when we sincerely pray,

“Search me, O God,”

we are giving God permission to expose things we may have learned to excuse.

III. OUR HEART CAN DECEIVE US

Jeremiah 17:9

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

One reason self-examination is necessary is because we are not always objective about ourselves.

We can convince ourselves that:

My anger is righteous indignation.

My pride is confidence.

My stubbornness is conviction.

My jealousy is discernment.

My gossip is concern.

My bitterness is justified.

My unwillingness to forgive is wisdom.

That is why merely asking,

“How do I feel about this?”

is not enough.

The better question is:

“What does God's Word say about this?”

Our feelings must be examined by Scripture—not Scripture examined by our feelings.

IV. THE WORD OF GOD IS OUR MIRROR

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

James 1:22–25 KJV

James compares the Word of God to a mirror.

A mirror does not create the problem.

It reveals what is already there.

When I look into a natural mirror and discover something is wrong, I do not become angry with the mirror.

I correct what the mirror revealed.

The Word of God works the same way.

Sometimes preaching makes us uncomfortable.

Sometimes Bible reading exposes an attitude.

Sometimes Scripture challenges something we have believed for years.

Sometimes the Word reveals that something in our life needs to change.

The spiritually immature person becomes offended at the mirror.

The spiritually mature person says:

“Lord, help me change what Your Word has shown me.”

That is one of the purposes of preaching.

We do not merely come to church to hear something interesting.

We come asking:

“Lord, is there something in Your Word today that needs to change me?”

V. EXAMINE YOURSELF BEFORE EXAMINING OTHERS

Jesus addressed this directly.

3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Matthew 7:3–5 KJV

He spoke about seeing a mote in our brother's eye while ignoring the beam in our own.

Jesus was not teaching that we should never recognize problems in another person's life.

He was teaching us about **the order of examination.**

First:

“Cast out the beam out of thine own eye.”

Then:

“Thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.”

Notice that Jesus did not say the mote wasn't real.

The problem was trying to correct someone else **without first examining ourselves.**

Before I correct someone's attitude:

What is my attitude?

Before I criticize someone's prayer life:

How is my prayer life?

Before I complain about someone's commitment:

How committed am I?

Before I talk about someone's lack of holiness:

What is God dealing with in me?

Before I judge someone's motives:

Have I examined my own?

Spiritual maturity begins by saying:

“Lord, deal with me first.”

VI. SELF-EXAMINATION REQUIRES HONESTY

Lamentations 3:40

“Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.”

Notice the progression:

Search – Try - Turn

Biblical self-examination is not merely introspection.

The purpose is **change**.

There is little value in recognizing a problem if we have no intention of correcting it.

God does not reveal things merely to condemn us.

He reveals them so that we can bring them to Him.

If I discover bitterness—I can forgive.

If I discover pride—I can humble myself.

If I discover compromise—I can repent.

If I discover spiritual neglect—I can renew my prayer life.

If I discover distance from God—I can draw near again.

Self-examination should lead to **repentance, correction, and growth**.

VII. EXAMINE YOUR SPIRITUAL APPETITE

One useful measurement of spiritual condition is:

What am I hungry for?

Matthew 5:6

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

Ask yourself:

Do I still hunger for God's Word?

Do I still desire prayer?

Do I want to be in the house of God?

Do spiritual things excite me?

Do I desire holiness?

Do I want God to correct me?

Do I want to become more like Jesus?

A loss of spiritual appetite can be an early warning sign.

When our hunger for entertainment continually grows while our hunger for God continually decreases, something deserves examination.

VIII. EXAMINE YOUR FRUIT

Jesus taught that a tree is known by its fruit.

Galatians 5:22–23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

Instead of merely asking,

“Am I spiritual?”

ask something measurable.

Am I becoming more loving?

More patient?

More gentle?

More faithful?

More self-controlled?

More forgiving?

More peaceful?

More humble?

Spiritual growth should eventually produce **spiritual fruit**.

The question is not merely:

“How much do I know?”

The question is:

“What am I becoming?”

IX. EXAMINE YOUR RESPONSE TO CORRECTION

One of the clearest indicators of spiritual maturity is how we respond when someone corrects us.

Proverbs 9:8–9

“Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser.”

An immature person immediately becomes defensive.

A mature Christian learns to ask:

“Is there any truth in what I have been told?”

Even when criticism is poorly delivered, there may still be something worth examining.

Spiritual maturity does not mean believing every accusation.

It means being secure enough to examine ourselves honestly.

X. PAUL PRACTICED SELF-DISCIPLINE

1 Corinthians 9:27

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection...”

Paul did not assume that because he was an apostle he no longer needed discipline.

He understood that yesterday's victories did not eliminate today's responsibilities.

No matter how long we have served God, we must continue watch-

ing:

Our attitudes.

Our desires.

Our habits.

Our thoughts.

Our priorities.

Our relationships.

Our spiritual disciplines.

There is no point in spiritual growth where self-examination becomes unnecessary.

In fact, the more mature we become, the more willing we should become to examine ourselves.

XI. SELF-EXAMINATION IS NOT SELF-CONDEMNATION

There is an important distinction.

Biblical self-examination is not living every day wondering:

“Am I good enough?”

Neither is it constantly searching for reasons to condemn ourselves.

Romans 8:1

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...”

The purpose of examination is not condemnation.

It is correction.

When God reveals something, the proper response is not:

“I’m terrible.”

It is:

“Lord, thank You for showing me. Help me change.”

Conviction draws us toward God.

Condemnation makes us want to hide from God.

God's purpose is restoration.

XII. THE LORD'S SUPPER INCLUDED SELF-EXAMINATION

1 Corinthians 11:28

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

Notice again:

“Let a man examine himself.”

Before remembering Christ's sacrifice, believers were instructed to look inward.

This gives us an important spiritual principle:

Before looking around, look within.

Before blaming:

Examine yourself.

Before criticizing:

Examine yourself.

Before correcting:

Examine yourself.

Before assuming everyone else is the problem:

Examine yourself.

PRACTICAL SELF-EXAMINATION

Periodically ask yourself:

- 1. How is my relationship with God?**
- 2. How is my prayer life?**
- 3. Am I spending time in God's Word?**
- 4. Is there anyone I have refused to forgive?**
- 5. Is there bitterness developing in me?**
- 6. Have I become spiritually complacent?**
- 7. Is pride affecting my decisions?**

8. Am I hiding or excusing anything God has been dealing with?

9. Am I becoming more like Jesus?

What is God asking me to change right now?

Do not answer these questions for somebody else.

Answer them for yourself.

CONCLUSION — LORD, SEARCH ME

Spiritual growth requires more than examining doctrine, movements, teachers, churches, and other Christians.

Eventually the light must turn inward.

Psalm 139:23–24

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

There is tremendous spiritual safety in becoming a Christian who can sincerely pray:

Lord, show me where I am wrong.

Show me what needs to change.

Show me where I have become careless.

Show me where pride has entered.

Show me where my heart has drifted.

Show me what You see that I cannot see.

And then give me the humility to change it.

Final Thought

Spiritual maturity is not reaching the place where we no longer need correction.

Spiritual maturity is reaching the place where we welcome God's correction because we want to become more like Him.

A Prayer for an Honest Heart

Lord Jesus,

Help me to examine my heart honestly in the light of Your Word.

Show me the things in my life that need to change. Help me not to excuse my faults, hide my weaknesses, or compare myself with others. Give me the humility to recognize where I have fallen short and the courage to make things right.

Search my heart and reveal any attitude, habit, motive, or desire that is keeping me from becoming what You want me to be.

When You show me something that needs correction, help me to respond with repentance rather than resistance. Teach me to receive correction, learn from my mistakes, and continually grow in my walk with You.

Keep my heart tender, my conscience sensitive, and my spirit willing to obey Your Word.

Help me to examine myself regularly—not with condemnation or fear, but with an honest desire to become more like You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

YOU'RE INVITED!

The North Jersey United Pentecostal Church

We would love to have you join us!

Whether you are searching for a church home, beginning your walk with God, or simply desire to learn more about Jesus Christ and His

Word, there is a place for you here.

Come experience heartfelt worship, biblical preaching and teaching, prayer, fellowship, and the presence of God.

WEEKLY SERVICES

SUNDAY WORSHIP 11:15 AM

MIDWEEK WORSHIP & THE WORD — ENGLISH

Wednesday • 8:00 PM

SERVICIO EN ESPAÑOL Viernes • 8:00 PM

The North Jersey United Pentecostal Church

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Pastor Gary Evensen

Watch our services and Bible teaching on YouTube:

YouTube — @NJUPCINC

We hope to see you soon!