

The Oak Grove Oracle

(Family News & Views of the Oak Grove Church of Christ)

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Spiritual Reality Checks

God expects Christians to grow and mature spiritually (II Pet. 3:18). To check on our progress, He has ordered us to take periodic spiritual evaluations. Paul wrote, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves..." (2 Cor. 13:5). In fact, to make sure we don't wait too long between self-examinations, 1 Corinthians 11:28 admonishes us to take spiritual inventory every week in the course of taking the Lord's Supper, for the text says, "But let a man **examine himself**, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

Regular spiritual reality checks can be profitable for all of us, if we'll be honest with our self-evaluations. However, they can also be frightening! What if when we look in the mirror we don't like what we see? What do we do when we stand against the door-jamb of the Scriptures to measure ourselves, only to find we've stopped growing or even started to decline? Is there any hope if we discover we are stunted in spiritual growth?

Yes, there is hope! When Paul penned First Corinthians, he wrote to Christians whose spiritual growth was stunted. He said, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1). The very fact that Paul offered this criticism, as well as some solutions to the problems of spiritual immaturity, is indicative of the fact that spiritual immaturity can be corrected.

If your spiritual inventory uncovers an area of weakness, the first step in outgrowing it is to admit your problem. Half the battle is now won! Scattered throughout the Scriptures are some practical guidelines for renewing spiritual growth in your life. 2 Corinthians 13 has a nice 3 point plan for a spiritual reality check (stop doing wrong, start doing right, seek improvement). Other guidelines can be discovered through personal daily Bible study (2 Tim. 2:15).

Surely, one of God's greatest desires and our greatest need is sustained personal spiritual growth. Are you more dedicated to the cause of Christ today than yesterday, a week ago, a month ago, or a year ago? Is your knowledge of the Scriptures increasing with each passing day? Are you kinder, gentler, more loving, and more caring as the years unfold? Are you more Christ-like in thought, speech, dress, and actions than when you first became a new creature in Christ? May God help us to take regular spiritual reality checks of these crucial matters!

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