

Examine Your Life

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- [0 : 00] Psalm 119, beginning at verse 7, we'll read two sections out of this chapter!
- I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands. Though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will not forget your law.
- At midnight, I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws. I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.
- The earth is filled with your love, O Lord. Teach me your decrees. Do good to your servant according to your word, O Lord.
- Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I believe in your commands. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I obey your word.
- [1 : 20] You are good, and what you do is good. Teach me your decrees. Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies, I keep your precepts with all my heart.
- Their hearts are callous and unfeeling, but I delight in your law. It was good for me to be afflicted, so that I might learn your decrees.
- The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold. The last year, two pastors connected to us in some way or the other have failed out of the ministry.
- One was a pastor for six, seven, eight years or so, I don't know. One was in the ministry for, I guess, 30 or 40 years.
- And from the outside, from our perspective, from my perspective, they both seemed to be doing well, but they weren't.
- [2 : 34] The first is repentance. He's acknowledged his sin, and he's walking with the Lord, but he probably won't be returning to the ministry anytime soon, if ever.
- His young family has been turned upside down in a lot of ways, but I hope things are better now. The second pastor is, of right now, not repentant at all.
- And his family has been turned upside down, too. And sin is making an absolute mess of his life. Both cases are frightening, as they should be.
- Both cases are a bit of head scratchers. You just wonder. But both of them tell me, Jason, take heed, lest you fall.
- Paul told Timothy to watch your life and doctrine closely. Pastors have a special duty to watch over their own lives and their own teaching closely.
- [3 : 49] And in both cases, I've already mentioned, there was, at least to some degree, a failure to watch. A failure to watch their life. Conrad Mbembewe, the Reformed Baptist pastor from Lusaka, Zambia, wrote that the three greatest landmines that have caused the greatest casualties are the three Fs for pastors.
- Three Fs. Females, finances, and fame. Many good men have started out their pastoral ministries on a very promising note, but fail to get far because of being blown into the sky by one of these landmines.

So pray for your pastors. Pray for your pastors. Pray not only that God would watch over our hearts, but that we would watch over our own hearts.

That we would examine our lives carefully. But it's not just a pastor's responsibility to watch himself, to examine himself, to guard his own life.

It's your responsibility. It's your responsibility. Proverbs 4.23, above all else, guard your hearts.

[5 : 07] Guard your hearts. And we read in Psalm 119. The psalmist in verse 59 says, I have considered my ways.

Psalm 119.59. I've considered my ways. I've thought about what I'm doing. I've thought about my life. I've considered it.

I stood apart from it. Instead of living in it for just a moment, I stood apart from it and I considered where my feet are going. What am I doing? And that's actually what we want to do today.

Consider our ways. Examine our life. And let me just say, if you think this isn't for you, if you think, oh, that's all good. I'm all doing fine.

Take heed lest you fall. Complacency, I'm sure, is the very first step to falling. You don't watch where you're going and you're going to trip.

[6 : 09] After Acts, or in Acts 15, after that first missionary trip, Paul and Barnabas got together and they had this conversation. And Paul said, you know, I have this plan. Let's go back and visit the brothers and all the towns where we preach the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.

We want to circle back around and see how they're doing. So, that's my question for you. And that should be the question for yourself.

How are you doing? How are you doing? How am I doing? How are you doing? How are you doing? My insurance company pays me \$50 if I get an annual checkup.

And so, I do it. So, I go in there. Despite feeling fine. I guess I need to be careful of that F for the finances.

But I go in there and the doctor asks me all sorts of questions. He looks in my ears. He presses on my stomach. He listens to my heart.

[7 : 14] He tells me to take some deep breaths. And what is he doing? Well, he's asking himself questions. He's asking me questions about how I feel. But the whole time he's checking me out, he's asking himself questions.

What does this heartbeat sound like? Do I hear anything peculiar in the way he's breathing? Is something swollen? Is everything okay? He's digging for answers.

And he wants to see how I'm doing. And so, today I have five big questions for you. Five big questions that I want to go through with you. Now, you have to realize that there's going to be lots of little questions along the way.

So, it might be handy to have a pen and a paper ready. Because it's going to be very difficult for you to examine yourself in the middle of a sermon.

So, you might want to go back to these five questions to jot things down and go over later. And then, the last thing I want to say before we dig into these five questions is, I want to remind you that we're doing this with Jesus.

[8 : 19] If you're going to have an exam, it's good to have a doctor handy, isn't it? If I take my car into the auto mechanic, I'm not afraid.

I want him to lift it up and look for things that might be wrong. And I have no problem if he finds something wrong. Because he can fix it. He's the right guy for the job.

Remember, you're not doing this checkup without Jesus. The good physician. The greatest mechanic. And remember, we're not doing this checkup to get our lives all tuned up so Jesus will love us.

He already loves us, brothers and sisters. He loves us. He loves our holiness and our maturity so much, he'll lay down his life for it.

We have his heart. So don't be afraid if you find something. You're in good hands. This isn't navel gazing. This isn't despair work.

[9 : 20] We're looking for places where grace has already come. Because I trust there will be places where you say, you know what? God's grace is at work here. And we're looking for places where grace still needs to work.

And it will work. So five big questions. And the first big question is, is are you saved? Are you saved? That was the question Paul told the Corinthian church to ask themselves.

Ask, examine yourself if you are in the faith. Now, in that case, he was expecting that they would find a yes for an answer.

And to a great degree, for many of you, that's what I would hope that you would find. But the question still needs to be asked. Are you saved? Now you're here.

You're here. So that means at least to some degree you have a little bit of religion. If you're here, you must have a little bit of religion. But do you have more than a little bit of religion?

[10 : 28] Do you have more than just the outward trappings of religion? You know, the Pharisees had long prayers, beautiful robes with long tassels.

They had a religion. They ran in the synagogue. They loved to stand in front. They had long robes and flowing tassels, but they didn't have any robes of righteousness.

Jesus said that, you know, they went to church and Jesus called them whitewashed tombs. That means they were nice and beautiful and white and clean on the outside.

And yet on the inside, you roll the stone back and they're full of death. There's no life there. You don't go to a tomb to find life, to find any action, to find any celebration.

You don't find any joy there. You just find death. And that's what the Pharisees had. They were beautiful on the outside. Dead on the inside. So do you have more than a nice, clean outside?

[11 : 37] Have you been born again? Has Jesus come to that dead man in your heart and said, Lazarus, come forth. And out of that death came life.

Has that happened to you? Have you been saved? Do you care at all for your soul? You have a little religion, but do you care about your soul?

You care about work, about family, about finances, about whatever, your pleasure, your vacations, politics, and all those things are fine in their place.

Fine. But do you care about your soul? How's it doing? This week I buried someone.

And someday someone will bury you. And then what? What about your vacations and your pleasures and your good things all then?

[12 : 41] Do you care about your soul at all? Young person. Teenager. Do you care about it when something scares you?

When you have a brush with death? Or an emotional moment? You know, Jesus is coming close to you in those moments.

He's coming close to save you. But are you saved? Are you saved? Do you know about the forgiveness of sins? Not just sweeping them under the rug.

Not pretending like they're not there. Not doing a little bit of good to wipe out a little bit of bad. I'm talking about forgiveness. And that means someone else forgives you.

I'm not talking about you forgiving yourself. You getting over it. I'm talking about forgiveness. I'm talking about forgiveness means real sin. Not little sin. Not pretend sin.

[13 : 44] But real, full-blooded, scarlet, stinking, nasty sin. And you can say, I have been forgiven of sin. Do you know about owning up to being that kind of sinner?

Where there's no excuses. There's no lies. There's no arguments. There's no but this, but that. There's no buts about that. Naked, come to thee for dress.

Helpless, look to thee for grace. Thou lie to the fountain, fly. Wash me, Savior. Help me, Savior. Or I die.

So do you know about confessing your sin and finding forgiveness from God? Jesus bought. Cross bought forgiveness.

Where God, because Jesus died for that sin, will forgive it. He made a sacrifice. He stood as a priest and he gave himself up on the altar, on his altar, which was the cross.

[14 : 53] And because Jesus did that, and only because Jesus did that, that you're forgiven. Do you know about that? Is Jesus your Savior?

Martin Luther said, many are lost because they cannot use personal pronouns. They'll talk about Jesus the Savior, Jesus the Redeemer, Jesus the Advocate, Jesus the Lord, but they can't from their hearts say, he's my Savior.

He saved me. He's my Redeemer, my Advocate, mine. He's mine. I'm his. So I'm talking to each and every one of you.

Can you say, he's mine? And brothers and sisters, if you can say yes to that, praise the Lord. The most amazing, wonderful thing has happened to you.

The greatest thing in all the world has happened to you. God has loved you. God has rescued you. God has given you a home and a hope and a promise.

[16 : 02] And he's given you life. Praise the Lord. Self-examination doesn't have to end with despair. It can end with rejoicing. And if you're a Christian and you've gone through, you've heard those questions and you've thought about it, and you say, yes, I am saved.

I'm not perfect, but I'm saved. Then rejoice. Rejoice. Grace has come to you. Why was I a guest? Why was I made to enter while there's still room?

Oh, it's amazing love. Now that's the first big question. Are you saved? Are you saved? The second question is, the second big question is, is which direction are you going?

What direction are you going? Are you getting closer to God? Are you getting further away from God? What are you going the right direction?

Yogi Berra, apparently this is, you know, one of those stories was Yogi Berra was with his wife and his kids in 1972, and they're driving to the baseball hall of fame. And where's it?

[17 : 09] Cooperstown or something. And, and this is before Google maps. So you just had to have your atlas or whatever. And, and somehow he got lost and his wife, Carmen started giving him a hard time.

Like, you know, you don't know where you're at, do you? And finally he said, yeah, we're lost, but we're making really great time. Well, going real fast in the wrong direction.

Doesn't get you anywhere you want to go. The key is the right direction. The key is the right direction. In a few weeks, Lord willing, I'm going to be leaving for Florida.

And I'm not going to complain when we first start out and we're still in Indiana. I will have a bit of a problem. If the car is pointed North, if the car is pointed South, we're going the right way.

We'll be okay. So which way is your car pointed spiritually? How are things going now? This question has been rattling in my head for months now.

[18 : 21] How are things going now? And if they keep going this way, where am I going to be in a year? Where am I going to be in two years?

Where is this going to take me? If things keep progressing the way they are progressing, where am I going to be better or worse? People generally don't go bankrupt in a moment.

Every now and then they do, but generally they don't. It's moment by moment. Savings go down. Debt goes up. Little by little.

And you look up and you're \$50,000, \$100,000 in the hole. And you say, how did I get here? Little by little. Little by little.

Little by little, I'll get to Florida. Where are you going little by little? Closer, closer to the Lord? Moving in?

[19 : 19] Or are you slouching, moving back? So do you take time to read your Bible and have some time to pray each day?

Or have you fallen out of that habit? Another way to ask this, are your devotions getting shorter and shorter, less meaningful and less meaningful?

Little by little, you're doing less. You're really having less dealings with God, just a little bit. Or little by little, your heart is hardening. things that you would never have put up with.

No, you're starting to think it might be okay. Plato doesn't harden in an hour or a day, but it does harden little by little.

So little by little, how's your relationship with God going? Is your heart warming up or cooling down? Are the idols gathering into your life? You know, they were once on the edge, but now they're sort of on the, they're knocking on the door, and maybe you've let them in on the first, you know, that little entryway.

[20 : 29] Or now, or have they come all the way in, and they're now, they're eating at your table with you? Or are you pushing them out? Maybe church attendance.

Is it getting more and more faithful, or less and less faithful? More excuses, or less excuses? Is sinning getting harder, or is it getting easier? And just again, look ahead two years, three years, four years, five years.

I've considered my ways. What way are you headed? Where are you going to end up? Those pastors I talked about earlier, I doubt they ever thought they would be where they ended up.

But there was a direction to their heart. There was something off. So, where's your heart pointed?

And again, it doesn't have to end with something bad. Are you moving in closer to God? Then rejoice. Keep going. Pick up steam.

[21 : 38] Put the accelerator on. Are you going the wrong way? Well, consider your ways, and repent. Third big question. Are you growing in your use of spiritual gifts?

I know, that might be a strange question, but that's a very important question. Are you growing in your use of spiritual gifts? Are you being more and more useful, more and more fruitful in the church? Paul told Timothy, we saw this in Sunday school, to let everyone see your progress.

There is such a thing as progressing in your spiritual gifts. Now, for Timothy, it looked one way, and for you, it will probably look a different way, but progress in your spiritual gifts.

Now, no one is born into the Christian life with their gifts. Full strength. Full power. Even Charles Spurgeon, you know, he starts preaching at 16, and he's an amazing preacher, probably better than I'll ever be.

But you know what? He got better. He did. He got better. And a lot of times, we can be like babies, and when we're first born into the, we first are born into the family of God, we first have this new birth.

[22 : 50] And you notice, babies have a hard time seeing very clearly, don't they? Their eyes aren't quite focusing yet, and so a lot is blurry. And we don't know what God is going to do with us.

We don't know what we're good at. We don't know what he wants from us. We don't know how he can use us, and we don't know what we're supposed to be doing, and we don't know where we fit in. My question is, is your vision clearing up?

Are you starting to say, hey, you know what? This is where I fit in. This is where I fit in at Christ Fellowship. This is what God wants me to do, and I'm doing it. And not only am I doing it, I'm progressing in it.

I'm getting better at it. I'm being more useful. Every Christian has gifts. We're all different. It's all grace. It's all necessary.

So do you know what God wants you to do? It doesn't matter. I'm not talking about old Christians. I'm talking about all Christians. Do you know what God wants you to be doing at the church with your gifts?

[23 : 53] Are you learning to say no to some things because you know that just, that's not what I'm good at. That's not what I really should be doing.

Or at least trying to find ways to say no to those things and saying yes to the things that God has called you to. Well, maybe you say, I don't, here I am, I don't know what God wants me to do.

I don't know. My question is, what do you do that blesses other people? Ask that question. What do you do that blesses other people?

What ministry do people say, thanks, I needed that. That was good. That was helpful. That's what you're looking for. Not some sort of feeling in your stomach.

Not some sort of grand sense of this miraculous calling or anything like that. But here I am, I want to do this and when I do it, people are blessed.

[24 : 54] People want me to do it more. If you thought you were called to be a barber and you cut some people's hair and they said no thanks and they don't come back, guess what?

You're not called to be a barber. So you're looking for the things that you use your gift and people are blessed and they come back. So, are you growing in your use of spiritual gifts?

Growing in your understanding. Growing in your use. Sharpening them. Sharpening them. Progressing. Getting better at whatever God has called you to do.

He's all called us to do something. He's called us to do something and something good and something necessary. And so let's grow in that. And like I said, when we grow in that, that is a blessing to all of us.

That's a good thing for all of us. That's the third question. Now the fourth is, are you taking care of your body? This thing.

[26 : 00] Your physical body. Are you taking care of your body? Now, why is that even something I'm talking about? this is like, this isn't a gem.

But it's just, your body is much of you as your soul is. When God made you, he made you a body, soul creature.

You're not an angel. Angels don't have physical bodies like ours. But people have bodies. Retired pastor, Al Martin, has said that he used to be contacted by young pastors who he had trained.

And only like after a few months, they would call back a few months into their ministry and he, they'd call back and they'd say, help, I can't pray anymore. I, I can't study.

I can't sleep. I can't go on. I have to get out. I have to find something else to do. I think I'm going to have to resign. And, you know what his answer was?

[27 : 16] His answer was not, you need to read your Bible and pray more. Here's your problem, he says. You're, you're trying to live like a disembodied angel when you're, you're rather than a flesh and blood human.

So here's your solution. One, exercise vigorously three times a week. Two, take one full day off a week. Three, spend at least one evening a week with your wife.

That's why this has to be a self-exam question. Because you can't, you can't expect to treat your body, which is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

We're told not to grieve the Holy Spirit. We can't expect to treat the temple of the Holy Spirit like a garbage dump or like a car that never needs any sort of maintenance and expect your body and your soul to do well.

It won't, it won't happen. It won't work. Now, there's a big difference between what God sovereignly brings in your life.

[28 : 24] God brings sickness. God brings physical struggles. There's a big difference between what God brings into our lives and then just what we purposely do to ourselves, thoughtlessly do to ourselves.

And so I'm asking, are you taking care of yourself, your physical body? So more vegetables, less junk food, more walking, less sitting, more sunshine, less TV, more sleep, less Netflix.

Ariana Huffington from the Huffington Post, the founder, she woke up one morning in a pool of blood. And what had happened was she had been working and she finally collapsed, smashed her cheekbone on her desk and then she drops to the floor and here she is.

She's at the peak of her success, financially, worldly speaking. But she said something was not right and this is what she wrote later. I was not living a successful life by any sane definition of success.

I know something had to radically change. I could not go on that way. And so she changed. She made sleeping more a priority.

[29 : 46] She became this sort of even sleep evangelist. God gives his loved ones rest. He gives them rest.

He gives you sleep. Are you resting? Are you taking care of that body? Charles Spurgeon was subject to real serious, serious bouts of depression.

And studying his case, he was almost like the perfect candidate for it in some ways. He went through an extremely traumatic experience.

He was preaching before thousands of people and all of a sudden some troublemakers started yelling, fire, fire, fire, and yelling, fire in the theater, you know, that saying.

And there was a stampede and people died in church with him at the front. And he never really got over it.

[30 : 52] I mean, if he was a modern case, you know, some psychologists would say he had post-traumatic stress disorder because he would. He would go back in his mind and he would think about it and it would haunt him.

So on top of that, he lived in foggy, rainy London. He worked nonstop up to 10 sermons a week sometimes.

He helped run an orphanage, a minister's college, and on and on he went. And in some ways he worked too hard. He didn't eat very well.

He was overweight. He smoked. And he didn't do a very good job of taking care of his body. And he died at 57.

David Brainer, the colonial missionary to the Native Americans, he worked nonstop. He died of tuberculosis at 29.

[31 : 54] And he said, God gave me one horse and I killed it. And I'm just saying don't do that. Grow in wisdom.

Examine yourself. Am I taking care of myself? Because this body is not just mine. It belongs to Jesus. He died for it. It's not just mine.

The spirit has his mailbox on it. It's his temple. It's his address. So grow in wisdom in this area. So just ask yourself, am I doing what I need to do to take care of this physical body that I might serve the Lord?

Fifth and last, are you growing closer to your brothers and sisters in Christ? How's your relationships doing here at Grace Fellowship Church?

Are they opening up or are they closing down? Are they getting closer or getting further away? Okay. we need each other.

[33 : 03] I mean every single word of that statement. We need each other. We need each other. We need to be able to share each other's burdens and successes.

We need to be able to have a burden put on us and we need to be able to put a burden on other people. We need to have a close relationship with each other.

Rambo works in movies. The one-man army works in movies and in video games doesn't work in real life.

Doesn't work in real life. One of the funniest things I ever saw was this from the satirical newspaper and it said Kuwait deploys troop and there was this one man standing in the desert with a gun and it's funny.

It's funny for a lot of reasons but that's ridiculous. That is utterly ridiculous and that's why it's funny but Christian it's not the Lord deploys troop.

[34 : 19] There are no one-man armies. Men who go out alone die alone. There are squads and there are platoons and there are companies and there are brigades and there are divisions.

Men and women who go it alone die alone. Pastors who keep it all bottled up get taken down alone. Christian, you do that?

I saw planet earth and there was the scene of this wolf chasing this whole herd of caribou and as long as there's a herd together he can't do anything and yet then there was one that got it all by himself.

In a herd there's nothing a wolf can do but alone dinner is served. So how are your relationships? As married couples if you're married just start there how's my marriage?

Is it getting closer? Do I feel like I can share more with my spouse? Are we getting more and more united or not? Or your friendships here getting more honest or less honest?

[35 : 40] More transparent or less transparent? More opening? More encouraging? or you're pulling away more isolated? Again which way is it going? Which way is it going?

Paul said to Barnabas let's go see how they're doing. Let's go see how they're doing. So here we are June 17th how are you doing?

Are you saved? Are you growing closer to the Lord? Are you growing in your use of spiritual gifts? Are you learning to take care of your body?

Are you growing closer to people? So how are you doing? If you aren't doing well there's a Savior.

Savior. And he's not just a Savior for the beginning of your Christian life. He's a Savior from all of your sin. He's a Savior for all of you. He has full salvation.

[36 : 48] He said I've come that they might have life and life to the fullest. So are you living less than what is real life in some area? Well come to Jesus. He has real life to give.

You have a Savior for that. He can rescue you and he will rescue you. Wait upon him. Call upon him. Believe him.

Don't despair. You know what? He's more than enough for you. He's more than enough for you. Let's pray. Our Lord we began by singing search us and that was such an appropriate song.

Thank you for bringing that together. So please help us to search ourselves and take our spiritual pulse to give ourselves a spiritual checkup.

And where there is grace let us celebrate it and rejoice and see it. And where there is a need for grace let us run to Jesus to find it. Thank you that we can look at ourselves and not even be afraid.

[38 : 01] But if there is real genuine need for fear or reason to be afraid I pray that you would wake us up and bring us to our senses and turn us around.

Bring us closer together. Help us to open up to one another. Help us to be honest before you. Help us to live a life that is pleasing to you.

Thank you that we can. So I pray that you would send us on our way. thinking, believing, repenting, looking to Jesus.

I pray this in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.