

- As people who care and are invested in the church, we often wonder about the future of the Church as a whole and local churches. What will it be like in 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, or 100 years? We wonder about this because the health and strength of the church is so important. We know that the church (universal and local) is to glorify God in all that it does. **(Eph. 3:20,21)** So when thinking about the future, we begin to ask some questions. These questions center around the people that make up the church because the church can only be as strong as the people that make it up. We might begin to ask things like... What would it be like if everyone was evangelistic? What would it be like if the people of the world were more receptive to the Gospel? What would it be like everyone else was more influential on others? What would the church be like if Christians acted more like Christ on a regular basis? These are all legitimate questions, but in reality, we don't have much control over the answers of these questions. We can't control how others are. We can't control how the world responds to the truth of the Gospel. But we can control ourselves. We can control what we do.
- With this in mind, I'd like for us to not worry about or spend our time considering what the church would be like if everyone else did this or that, but instead we're going to spend some time considering what the church would be like if everyone was like me. It is a good practice from time to time to just stop and consider how we are doing in this life. How is my faith at this moment? Am I living up to the standard that God has for me? What things could I do better? Sometimes, it's hard for me to recognize that I am not doing that well because I as an individual cannot have the same effect as the whole. After all, I am just one person. But, what if everyone was just like me in my faith. What if everyone conducted themselves just like I do? These are the important types of questions because they might really help us to gain a better understanding of exactly where I am. Again. I want to focus on myself this morning, not others. I need to be everything I can be for the Kingdom. I can encourage others, but at the end of the day I must control my own actions and faith. I hope you'll make these important considerations with me this morning.

### **I. It is important that I focus on my standing as a Christian, before I begin to focus on others.**

- A. It is really easy for me to get so caught up with the actions of others, that I can completely forget about giving some time to recognize where I am.
1. The wise man is able to understand and know his way, but the fool deceives himself. **(Prov. 14:8)**
  2. Paul, in a discussion on helping those who are in sin, reminds Christians to not forget about keeping an eye on themselves so they do not fall into sin. **(Gal. 6:1)**
  3. I might be so focused on how completely off someone else is that I don't recognize that I'm not where I need to be either. **(Gal. 6:3)**
- B. It is so important for me to take the time to see how I am doing in my faith. If I never take that time, then I could be way off course and never come to realize it.
1. We hear the analogy so often about the person in the boat that finds himself in the middle of absolute nowhere because he wasn't paying attention to the movement of his boat.
  2. I need to recognize whether I am living up to the standard that God's expects out of me. Am I striving to excel or am settling for mediocrity in my faith and life.
  3. Paul, again, had some good words for Christians, this time in Corinth, when he encouraged them to test themselves to see if they were living up to the standards of Christ. **(II Cor. 13:5)**
  4. He knew that he wouldn't fail the test because he was constantly aware of where he was in his faith. **(II Cor. 13:6)**
  5. Some might say that was awful arrogant of Paul. I disagree. Paul wasn't be arrogant, he was being confident knowing that He was doing everything that Christ asked Him to do. In that, there can be much confidence.
  6. It all begins with us focusing on our faith and where we are standing before God.

### **II. I need to evaluate specific aspects of my life as a Christian.**

- A. I need to open myself up in front of a spiritual mirror and see just how I am doing in specific areas of my life as a Christian.
1. I should be living in such a way that if everyone was like me, then the church would be in great shape.
  2. If I look at my life and realize that the church wouldn't be in good shape, then why would I continue on in the same way that I was before?

B. Where would the church be if everyone was like me in...

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| 1. my Bible study<br>( <b>II Timothy 2:15</b> ) | 6. my attitude ( <b>Phil. 2:3-7</b> )                      | 11. my marriage<br>( <b>Eph. 5:22-25,28</b> )          |
| 2. my prayer life ( <b>I Thess. 5:17</b> )      | 7. my attendance<br>( <b>Heb. 10:24,25</b> )               | 12. my leading of my family<br>( <b>Joshua 24:15</b> ) |
| 3. my dedication ( <b>Gal. 2:20</b> )           | 8. my worship ( <b>Col. 3:16</b> )                         |  |
| 4. my evangelism ( <b>Rom. 1:16</b> )           | 9. my giving ( <b>II Cor. 9:7</b> )                        |  |
| 5. my morality<br>( <b>II Cor. 6:14,15</b> )    | 10. my preparation for<br>leadership ( <b>I Tim. 3:1</b> ) |  |

C. When I take an honest look at my actions and behavior, can I say that the church would be glorifying to God if she were made up of a lot of people that were just like me?

### **III. I must give every effort to focus on being the best I can be for God.**

- A. I must do that because every outcome of the church will be my outcome if I don't do better.
1. If the church might shrink and die off because of my lack of study, prayer, attendance, faith, etc. then that means that I will die off as a Christian if I continue on as I am now.
  2. Before I can make any changes, I must recognize that the end of the road I am on currently isn't where I want to end up.
  3. I must do better as a Christian if I want to give myself the best chance of being a strong Christian and the church the best chance of being a strong church.
  4. If we all have this mindset, then the church will flourish and grow, possibly like we have never seen it before.
- B. Through being the best I can be, I can be a strong and positive influence on those that are around me.
1. There might be times where I would love to just tell someone exactly what they need to hear and there might be times where that is appropriate, but I can often get my point across with far less words by simply being what I know God expects for me to be.
  2. This isn't just something that I think, but this is godly wisdom from the Apostle Peter to Christian women who were married to unbelievers. He encouraged them to influence by their example rather than their words. (**I Peter 3:1,2**)
  3. This principle can be applied to all people. I might have tried to talk with someone about an issue they have. That might not have gotten me anywhere. My next move? Just do what I know I need to do. If nothing else, I am glorifying God in my actions and at the end of the day, that is all that matters.
  4. There will always be those people who don't attend, worship, study, pray, or whatever it is like they should, but that does not ever give me the excuse to do the same.
  5. I must make sure that I am always being for God what He expects for me to be. I should strive to know that if everyone was like me, then the church would be just fine. That isn't said from an arrogant heart, but from a confident heart knowing that in everything that I do, I am being led by the Savior Jesus Christ.

We can really waste a lot of time focusing on what everyone else should be doing to make the church stronger. Its a waste of time because I can't control what they do, but I can certainly control what I am doing to make the church as healthy and strong as it can be. May God help me to always make sure that my main focus is on my actions, and may my godly actions influence others to live to that higher standard of living that can be found in Jesus Christ. In all things, may God be glorified.