

Spiritual Health Exam

November 8th, 2015 ~ Proverbs 3.1-12

Six Tests of Spiritual Health

1. **1,2** ~ Do you treasure God's commands?
2. **3,4** ~ Do you value truth and practice mercy?
3. **5,6** ~ Do you openly trust and acknowledge God and His Word?
4. **7,8** ~ Do you regard your own wisdom as ultimate?
5. **9,10** ~ Do you tithe consistently and share generously?
6. **11** ~ Do you despise or detest God's correction?

Exam & Text Overview

- ❖ **III: Saying at work** ~ "What gets measured, gets managed"
 - ✧ Please don't take your exam / We'll take it together later
 - ◇ We'll walk through each question to ensure we understand them first
 - ◇ You won't need to share your results with anyone / Be brutally honest
 - ◇ We'll also score it together once we're finished / It's not that simple
- ❖ DO | DO NOT - equally important / Handout shows 9:7 respectively
 - ✧ Let's not read too much into ratio – 10 Commandments are 3:7 at best
- ❖ The first 5 portions all have blessings attached to them

1. Do You Treasure God's Commands?

- ❖ **Read vs 1,2** ~ "My son . . . peace they will add to you."
 - ✧ "do not forget" -> "keep"
 - ◇ To "forget" the law is contrasted with "keeping" the law
 - ✧ "Keep" does not mean obey | It means treasure, cherish, to have high regard
 - ✧ And where is it to be kept? / In our hearts
 - ◇ Our hearts are own personal safes / "What do you store there?"
 - ◇ **III: Keepsakes Box** ~ I have keepsakes everyone else on earth would throw out
 - They have imputed value to me / They are not valuable items
 - But the Word of God has intrinsic value / very few things do
- ❖ The blessings of treasuring God's commands are 1) "long life" and 2) "peace"
 - ✧ "long life" ~ Appreciation for eternal life begins here and now
 - ✧ "peace" ~ Jesus said "in the world you shall have tribulation"
 - ◇ This peace is primarily peace with God

Xition: Let's ask ourselves the 2nd question . . .

2. Do You Value Truth and Practice Mercy?

- ❖ Read vs 3,4 ~ “Let not mercy . . . sight of God and man.”
 - ✧ Anthropomorphic language / As if they’re seeking to escape / In a way they are
 - ◇ We must work against the flesh to be truthful and to extend mercy to others
 - ◇ It is not natural in this fallen world to speak the truth and to be merciful
 - ◇ We always have opportunities to conceal parts of stories to hide our sins
 - ◇ We always have opportunities to make people suffer for their poor decisions
- ❖ “Bind them around your neck” / “What do you put around your neck?”
 - ✧ Something precious / important / personal / beautiful / valuable ~ Keep it safe
- ❖ “Write them on the tablet of your heart”
 - ✧ **III: Keepsakes Box** ~ Engraved on outside of the safe that is our heart...
- ❖ Yet look at the blessings attached . . .
 - ✧ “Favor and high esteem” with “God and man”
 - ✧ When we speak the truth (*esp. if it doesn’t flatter us*) / We gain favor
 - ✧ When we extend mercy to undeserving people / We gain favor

3. Do you Openly Trust and Acknowledge God and His Word?

- ❖ Read vs 5,6 ~ “Trust in the Lord . . . He shall direct your paths.”
 - ✧ In context, “your own understanding” is not informed by Scripture
 - ✧ We are told to do 2 things in this text:
 1. Trust God with all of your heart
 2. Acknowledge God in all of your ways
 - ✧ **III: Sides of coin** ~ The first is hidden from view / The 2nd is open for all to view
 - ◇ Second through 4th tests all have the same trait (**reread them**)
- ❖ God rewards us for trusting and professing Him before people
 - ✧ **III: Pens** ~ **2 Tim 2.12** ~ “If we deny Him, He also will deny us”
- ❖ He promises to direct us on the path / Won’t get lost

4. Do you Regard your Own Wisdom as Ultimate?

- ❖ Read vs 7,8 ~ “Do not be wise . . . strength to your bones.”
 - ✧ We must evaluate our beliefs by the Word of God
 - ◇ It is very tempting for us to do the reverse (**reread in reverse**)
 - ✧ We must distinguish between God’s truth and our twist on that truth
- ❖ Holding ourselves in high regard is contrasted with having a proper fear of God
 - ✧ Holding ourselves in high regard is also equated with evil
- ❖ God’s reward for humility is health and strength

Xition: Let’s ask ourselves the 5th question . . .

5. Do you Tithe Consistently and Share Generously?

- ❖ **Read vss 9,10** ~ “Honor the Lord . . . vats will overflow with new wine.”
 - ✧ We honor God with our possessions by sharing what He has given to us
 - ◇ All that we have is due to God’s blessing
 - ◇ **III: Hardscrabble farmer movie** ~ “Why thank Jesus? – I got up at 5am”
 - ✧ Giving of our firstfruits is to always give God the best
 - ✧ To tithe is to give 10% of our increase to God through the church
- ❖ God blesses the faithful and the generous with abundance
 - ✧ Food and wine are promised to come to the generous
 - ✧ These are common biblical allusions to the blessing of God resting on you
- ❖ This test is all DO’s whereas the last is all DON’Ts

6. Do you Despise or Detest God’s Correction?

- ❖ **Read vss 11,12** ~ “My son, do not . . . the son in whom he delights.”
 - ✧ Bad things happen . . . And sometimes we realize we deserve it
 - ✧ “When rebuked by God, do you cop an attitude?”
 - ◇ Do you rationalize sin away – thinking surely God is not that petty . . . ?
- ❖ No earthly blessing is connected to passing this test
 - ✧ **Read** list of other blessings from sheet
 - ✧ We receive far more / Confirmation that we are loved by God
- ❖ A father should spank his children because he loves them and wants them to behave
 - ✧ Others may want to spank your children because they’re annoyed by them
 - ✧ Those who are God’s are God’s adopted children / And He promises spankings
- ❖ Our children (*and we*) must learn to accept and learn from loving discipline
 - ✧ Spiritual maturity is when you’ve become thankful for God’s spankings

Preparing to Take Exam

- ❖ “Do you have an exam?” / Have handouts ready . . .
- ❖ “Do you have something to write with?” / I have some pens handy
 - ✧ I like pens and pencils / We’ve fairly stolen these pens over many years
 - ✧ If there’s anything thieves hate it’s having their stuff stolen / Please return them
- ❖ These questions aren’t perfect / I made them up yesterday (90”)
- ❖ Listen to my explanation of each question / Be brutally honest with your answers
- ❖ If you truly don’t know an answer – leave it blank
- ❖ We won’t force sharing of scores afterwards / This is for you alone

Xition: Without further ado – on to the exam . . .

1) Do You Treasure God's Commands?

- a) Individual verses can count as well / You may not have practiced in a while
- b) ...
- c) Not just a casual reading / You came back to it time and again
- d) Not just a quick lookup / Actually reading

2) Do You Value Truth and Practice Mercy?

- a) Okay – kind of funny . . . But have you lied on a form? (*Not just to be secure*)
- b) You may have regretted it later, even admitted it – but did you do it?
- c) Be honest / Have you actively overruled mean thoughts?
- d) Not casually – but consistently over months or years (*at least each week*)

3) Do you Openly Trust and Acknowledge God and His Word?

- a) Not with Christian friends / But with people hostile to God and the Bible
- b) You took action / You could have remained on the sidelines but got in the game
- c) Again – with someone who doesn't want to hear it
- d) Or shared. Could be some other public forum (*protest signs, news article comment, etc.*)

4) Do you Regard your Own Wisdom as Ultimate?

- a) Examples big or small (*economics, privacy, immigration, school, Sabbath, gender roles*)
- b) Another believer may have challenged you (*household voting, vows, tattoos & piercings*)
- c) Can you cite Scripture for opposition to homosexual marriage, abortion, or euthanasia?
- d) Do you defend gun ownership via 2nd amendment, marriage as traditional, creation as ID?

5) Do you Tithe Consistently and Share Generously?

- a) No penalty for “no” as you may have always had job and money
- b) Not because of bad decision, but because it was then lost to you
- c) You may miss here or there but you tithe 10% to church and commit to catch up
- d) Everybody falls behind – but not all catch up

6) Do you Despise or Detest God's Correction?

- a) When the correction came you “knew” it was from God
- b) Not “before” you realized it – but afterwards
- c) Can you still remember the feeling you had when you “knew” God did this?
- d) Or are you confused by the need for correction – and how it demonstrates love?

Xition: Now to score it . . .

- 1) Do You Treasure God's Commands? (16 / -4)**
a) Yes = 5 No = -1
b) Yes = 5 No = -1
c) Yes = 3 No = -1
d) Yes = 3 No = -1
- 2) Do You Value Truth and Practice Mercy? (10 / -5)**
a) Yes = -1 No = 1
b) Yes = -2 No = 1
c) Yes = 3 No = -1
d) Yes = 5 No = -1
- 3) Do you Openly Trust and Acknowledge God and His Word? (12 / -4)**
a) Yes = 3 No = -1
b) Yes = 3 No = -1
c) Yes = 3 No = -1
d) Yes = 3 No = -1
- 4) Do you Regard your Own Wisdom as Ultimate? (14 / -2)**
a) Yes = 5 No = 0
b) Yes = 3 No = 0
c) Yes = 3 No = -1
d) Yes = 3 No = -1
- 5) Do you Tithe Consistently and Share Generously? (12 / -6)**
a) Yes = 3 No = 0
b) Yes = -2 No = 2
c) Yes = 5 No = -2
d) Yes = -2 No = 2
- 6) Do you Despise or Detest God's Correction? (11 / -4)**
a) Yes = 3 No = -1
b) Yes = -1 No = 2
c) Yes = 3 No = -1
d) Yes = 3 No = -1

Xition: Even flawed – an objective measure can be very useful to us . . .

- Hopefully this exam has revealed areas for you to improve your spiritual life
- We must not think because we're Christians that we're good Christians . . .
- Let's let God's Word judge us in this matter
- But we must welcome – and even seek out – that judgment . . .

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,

And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

To God our Savior, who alone is wise,

Be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.

Amen *pause* Go in peace . . .

Do you treasure God’s commands?

Have you ever memorized a hefty portion of Scripture (e.g., chapter or 7+ verses)? Yes No ___
In the past 3 years have you read (or listened) through the Bible? Yes No ___
In the past 2 months have you studied, memorized, or meditated upon, a part of Scripture? Yes No ___
In the past month have you read Bible at least once per week (outside of church) Yes No ___

Do you value truth and practice mercy?

In the past 3 years when writing down your weight on a form have you lied? Yes No ___
In the past year have you lied to someone to escape a difficult situation? Yes No ___
In past month have you experienced more merciful thoughts than vengeful ones? Yes No ___
Do you regularly pray for a friend or loved one who is not walking with God? Yes No ___

Do you openly trust and acknowledge God and His Word?

In the past 3 years have you participated in at least 5 debates concerning God and Bible? Yes No ___
In the past year have you defended the Bible or God from attack by an unbeliever? Yes No ___
In the past few months have you quoted Bible in conversation with a stranger or unbeliever? Yes No ___
In the past month have you posted a Bible text or quote to social media? Yes No ___

Do you regard your own wisdom as ultimate?

Have you ever changed a cultural view or practice based on bible study (post conversion period)? Yes No ___
In the past 2 years have you researched Bible in area of cultural dispute affecting you? Yes No ___
Do you anchor possibly controversial personal beliefs or practices in biblical reasoning? Yes No ___
If criticized do you typically defend yourself using biblical, as opposed to human, reason? Yes No ___

Do you tithe consistently and share generously?

Have you ever tithed knowing you might run low on money before your next paycheck? Yes No ___
In the past 3 years have you ever regretted giving a tithe or a gift? Yes No ___
In the past year have you tithed 10% of your income regularly? Yes No ___
Are you more than 6 weeks behind in tithing right now? Yes No ___

Do you despise or detest God’s correction

Have you ever sensed God’s hand of correction upon you? Yes No ___
If / when you sensed God’s hand of correction upon you did you feel angry? Yes No ___
If / when you sensed God’s hand of correction upon you did you feel blessed? Yes No ___
Are you pleased by the knowledge that God corrects those whom He loves? Yes No ___

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
1 2 3 4 5 6 Tot