

It Is Written

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Four Questions To Ask Everyday

By Ken Weliever

The Chinese philosopher, Confucius, is well known for his wise sayings and teaching regarding personal morality and social relationships.

One of his disciples was Zeng Shen, who is relatively unknown today, but earned high praise from the ancient sage.

Zeng Shen is said to have ended each day with 3 questions for personal introspection. Though he lived some 2400 years ago, they are good questions for us today and actually have a Biblical basis.

#1 "Have I sinned in my thoughts and actions toward others?"

Two important principles Jesus taught speak to this question. The 2nd great commandment is to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). Also there is what is commonly called "The Golden Rule:" "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 7:12).

Following these two Christ commandments will properly regulate my thoughts, words, and actions toward others.

Each day we all have opportunities to interact in various social, business and community circles, either in person or on the phone. It may be a sales clerk, a server in a restaurant, a police officer, a government employee, a teacher, a medical provider, or even a stranger.

In these often brief encounters do others see and hear the spirit of Christ? Is our Christian light shining? Are we speaking kindly, graciously, and respectfully? Are we treating others, not only the way we want to be treated, but the way the Lord desires?

A further thought, would we be embarrassed if any of these people learned I was a preacher? Or pastor? Or deacon? Or Bible class teacher? Or visited the church where I attend?

#2 "Have I broken faith in any of my friendships?"

This question digs a bit deeper into my close relationships. My friends. My brethren. Even my family.

Even before Confucius or Zeng Shen, Solomon said, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24). Am I that kind of friend? Am I considerate? Compassionate? Trustworthy? Honest? Reliable?

The many "one another" commands in the New Testament give specific guidance in our close relationships. Care for one another. Encourage one another. Serve one another. Comfort one another. Forgive one another. And love one another.

How would you answer question #2 at the end of the day?

#3 "Have I tried to teach anything to others I have not fully learned and understood myself?"

This question is good for all Christians, but especially applicable for parents, preachers, pastors, and Bible class teachers, as well as those in various secular leadership positions.

Not only should I teach what I truly have learned and know, I ought to be living it. Have I learned what I'm telling to the extent that I can clearly see the application in my daily decisions?

Jesus' most severe condemnation was reserved for religious leaders who "say and do not" (Matt. 23:3). The ESV renders this: "They preach, but do not practice." Ouch! Could that indictment hit too close to home?

BONUS QUESTION: Here's an important question to add to the first three.

#4 "Have I served and glorified God today?"

This question reminds us that our primary relationship is first of all to the Lord. The actions and attitudes regarding my earthly relationships arise from my spiritual relationship with Him.

Can I end today and say that I have glorified God in my spirit and my body (1 Cor. 6:20)?

If I have been mistreated, misunderstood, or suffered for Christ, have I gloried Him (1 Pet. 4:16)?

Have I glorified God by my good works (1 Pet. 2:12)?

Has God been glorified by both my obedience and generosity in giving (2 Cor 9:13)?

Has the name of Christ been glorified before the world by my words and deeds today (Col. 3:17)?

While some days the answers to these questions may make us uncomfortable, hopefully they would affect the proper change and correction.

These four questions will help us fulfill Paul's exhortation: "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith" (2 Cor. 13:5).

Let's Just Do What God Says

By Doy Moyer

Religious division is a result of failing to do what the Lord says. It reflects an earthly mindset. The apostle Paul told the factious Corinthians: "for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not mere men?" (1 Corinthians 3:3-4).

Look around. Hundreds of denominations exist. They call themselves after men or peculiar doctrines. They engage in a plethora of unauthorized activities because this is what they want. Focus is put upon the social or political. All of this is done supposedly in the name of Christ. However, the Lord says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Religion has become so feeling and emotion oriented that to suggest that there are those who are practicing lawlessness "in the name of Christ" is to be mean spirited and unkind. There is no such thing as false worship in today's society. "Tolerance" for all the various ways of "serving God" is the call of today. Shame on us for suggesting that there is a pattern of authority for the worship and work of God's people. Frankly, with an attitude like this, we might as well write our own Bible.

God's will is unity. We are to endeavor for it by following His plan in the Scriptures (Ephesians 4:1-6). We are not at liberty to toss aside any of the teachings of the Bible. Yet, in order for denominationalism and division to exist, tossing aside what God says is exactly what is being done. It's no wonder that the world has responded with disbelief (see John 17:20-21).

Let's just do what God says. That may sound simplistic, but it is still the key to pleasing God and maintaining unity among believers. Let's be just Christians. It can be done - it must be done if we are to please God. May we all examine ourselves, our practices, and our doctrines, and see if we are following God's will. It's in the Book.