

Cubby's Talks

How can the church reach men for Christ? Here in the South many men believe that working hard and achieving some level of financial success and security for the family is their primary task. Around that work they want to carve out some space for some fun and relaxation to recharge.

Church, faith commitments and a personal spiritual life are aspects of their heart that are below the radar; low on the priority list. When these men do operate in the spiritual realm they work from a set of assumptions and a lack of personal experience that encourages the belief that spiritual matters just are not relevant.

But a man's interest in spiritual matters can be sparked into active processing when another man they respect invites them to a safe place to pose their questions, test their assumptions, and know that they will not be alone or stand out as a spiritual seeker.

Here in Columbia that looks like men (group size is limited to 15), invited to gather in an office downtown one evening a month and ask any spiritual question they want to some fellow business men and seminary professors. Most months there is a waiting list. Some men want to return for several months to not only pose their questions but also hear how the questions of fellow seekers are answered. After a period of relationship building many of the men are then open to a one to one lunch meeting to make a personal commitment to Christ.

This article is one of several that condense the answers to the questions men frequently pose. Perhaps God wants to use a couple of mature men in the church in your area to begin a similar process. "Cubby" Culbertson, Dr. Bill Jones, and Pastor Det Bowers have been three of the leaders in this outreach in recent years.

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Am I truly a Christian?

Many church-goers have, in time of crisis, prayed to God for divine guidance. In the course of their prayer they have promised God, saying, "God, if You will just take care of me this time, I will commit the remainder of my life to You." After the crisis passes, they go back to living in the same manner they have always lived.

Are they truly Christians or is God just their celestial "sugar daddy?" God's book of First John is written for the purpose of verifying whether they really are Christians.¹ Perhaps today is your day to determine the genuineness of your commitment to God. Examine your own life in the light of the litmus tests of God.

- I. **"By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments."**²

Do not mistake morality for grace. Just because you are faithful in your marriage, attend to the needs of your family, are honest in your business practices and give to worthy causes, you are not necessarily a Christian. Christians study their Bibles in order to know God's commandments so that they can live in the manner He describes.

Every Scriptural prescription is a joy for those belonging to God's eternal kingdom. God says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."³ Legalism is a charge oftentimes brought by those playing the game of Christianity, yet refusing to enter God's playing field.

If you are not hungering and thirsting to know God's word, the likelihood is that you are failing to practice the life set forth in His word. John writes, "No one who is born of God *practices* sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious."⁴

Christians refuse to live in sin. The Christian convert sets his sights upon keeping God's commandments fully.

II. "The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him."⁵

The theology in this test is not difficult. Do you love your brothers and sisters in the Lord? When you are gifted with the new birth, your loves and your company shall change. One of the earliest evidences of your new relationship with God will be the new relationships you cherish with others who love Jesus.

A person abiding in the light of Christ is a lover of other abiders. Light reveals the serpents you have never seen before; light directs you away from damaging associations and toward nurturing associations; light provides warmth to the soul and heat to the heart. Caleb and Joshua wanted their brothers to enter the Promised Land. You will want others to know about your Savior and you will sacrifice to the end that they will come to know the Lord Christ.

III. "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."⁶

Do not love anything that will not last forever. This world and all it offers is dying. Never mistake earth for heaven because the glories of the world to come are far nobler than the treasures of this world.

A Christian filled with the love of his Father would rather resemble his Father than the world. The Christian will forfeit being the most respected, the most prosperous and the most powerful in order to become the most holy. Tragically, lovers of this world will discover themselves to be eternal inhabitants of Sodom.

True Christians are never indifferent to spiritual matters. Christians delight in conversations filled with God's word and those concerning God's new creation. Can any of the things of this world do for you what Christ can do?

IV. “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”⁷

To “believe” means you have placed all of your trust in Jesus Christ – both for the matters in this life and in the next. You trust in Christ alone for His provisions in this life and in the life to come. And you know that your trust in Jesus does not relieve you of the responsibility of applying yourself to the task of living in the manner God directs.⁸

Do you trust only Jesus for your salvation? “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”⁹

V. “We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”¹⁰

Christians adopt the Bible’s teachings. One of the fruits of a true conversion is the person’s genuine love for God evidenced by a growing desire to please his Lord, and his willingness for his life to be governed by Scripture.¹¹

God’s spirit of truth enables a Christian to capture a deep awareness of his own sin, and a deepening awareness of his sinfulness. Christians are zealous in their pursuit of godly teachers, disciplers and associates. They consistently choose God’s word over their own opinions, and are strict in their refusal to live outside biblical bounds.

VI. “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.”¹²

Spiritual sloth is intolerable to a man gifted with the new birth. He attends to the business of the Lord in every area of his life. He rests in the grace of God to address the trials of life.

Christians vigorously engage in their battle against worldliness, never yielding the cause and refusing to lay down their spiritual weaponry of God’s word and prayer. The Christian grants himself no indulgence, is intolerant of his failures and keeps his eye on the enemies known as the world, the flesh and the devil. Precise living enables victory.

EPILOGUE

The almost saved are totally damned. Partial conversions are non-conversions, for “how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”¹³ Many professors of Christianity are but shadows. They are civilized and cultured in the ways of the converted, but they shall perish in their false confidences.

The ostrich has wings, but cannot fly. Earlier in your life you may have come under conviction or felt a “spiritual experience,” but if you are not now aware that you are a sinner and your sin has been nailed to the cross at Calvary, you are not a Christian. Christians hunger and thirst for the things of God for they value Christ above all. Christians practice righteousness whereas “the one who practices sin is of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin,

because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious.”¹⁴

Jesus says, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’”¹⁵ Does living water flow from you?

SOLI DEO GLORIA!

¹ I Jn. 5:13

² I Jn. 2:3

³ I Jn. 5:3

⁴ I Jn. 3:9f., italics mine.

⁵ I Jn. 2:10

⁶ I Jn. 2:15

⁷ I Jn. 5:1

⁸ II Pe. 1:10

⁹ I Jn. 5:11f.

¹⁰ I Jn. 4:6

¹¹ Heb. 8:10

¹² I Jn. 5:4

¹³ Heb. 2:3

¹⁴ I Jn. 3:8, 9f.

¹⁵ Jn. 7:38

Other helpful titles are:

J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973).

John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1971).