

New Year Evaluations

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Ephesians 4: 11 to 24

HOW DO WE MEASURE CHRISTIAN GROWTH / HEALTH?

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF MATURE DISCIPLESHIP?

(WHAT CATEGORIES WOULD WE WANT TO MEASURE?)

RATE YOURSELF FROM 1 (Low) to 10 (High) ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURES:

1. If we are disciples of Jesus Christ, then compare ourselves with Jesus

(With his attitudes, words, lifestyle and mission as we see them in the Gospels)

2. Compare ourselves with the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5):

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, self-control

3. Ask 10 Heart-searching questions from Ephesians:

1. Am I a real Christian? (ch 1 v 3-14)
2. Am I an empowered Christian? (ch 1 v18-20)
3. Am I an optimistic Christian? (ch 3 v 20)
4. Am I a humble Christian? (ch 4 v 1&2)
5. Am I a growing Christian? (ch 4 v 15)
6. Am I a distinctive Christian? (ch 4 v 25-32 & ch 5 v 3-5)
7. Am I a loving Christian? (ch 5 v 1&2)
8. Am I a thankful Christian? (ch 5 v 18-20)
9. Am I a protected Christian? (ch 6 v 10-17)
10. Am I a prayerful Christian? (ch 6 v 18)

4. Compared with the Great Commandment (Mark 12 v 28-34)

- How is our Relationship with God?
- How is our Relationship with Others? (church & non-church)
- How is our Relationship with Self?

5. The 4B Test. How are our:

- Beliefs - attitudes, worldview?
- Behaviour - lifestyle, service?
- Being - character?
- Belonging - church community & contribution/gifts?

6. The twelve fundamentals for mental/emotional health

Without these 12 principles etched into one's thinking, any other solution to life's troubles will not bring the desired result. "Sick" thinking is to some degree part of everyone, and must be actively replaced with true thinking, otherwise it will create unhappiness. These are the boundaries between sick thinking and mental health.

1. Accept responsibility for my own situations and choices. If my choices got me in to it, only my choices can get me out. *(Sick thinkers run away or blame others.)*
2. Accepting short-term emotional pain for gaining long term health & peace of mind. *(Sick thinkers look for quick-fixes.)*
3. Checking my expectations for myself and others, to see if they are realistic and fair; and deliberately being gentle on myself in a demanding and performance-based world. Seek to be a "human being" not a "human doing". *(Sick thinkers never challenge their own expectations.)*
4. Checking my beliefs & assumptions and replacing the "lies" which are causing me problems, with new insights. This requires my humility & someone I can trust to help me. *(Sick thinkers take offence rather than correction.)*
5. Revising old traumas and patterns of behaviour wherever my over-reactions and misinterpretations show there is a need. Make friends with the past. *(Sick thinkers believe that their reactions are always OK.)*
6. Respecting boundaries & understanding where my responsibilities towards others begin and end - not rescuing, playing the victim, interfering or dominating, and learning to say 'No'. *(Sick thinkers cross others' boundaries and don't respect their sovereignty.)*
7. Appropriate empathy with others' hurts, without ignoring or smothering/rescuing. *(Sick thinkers either ignore the hurting or try to rescue.)*
8. Speaking the truth in love (gentle assertiveness) to all, without fear, defensiveness or need to be aggressive to maintain position. *(Sick thinkers either 'blow up' or 'sulk up'.)*
9. Balancing head and heart - neither coldly analytical nor relying on feelings. *(Sick thinkers let cold analysis or their feelings decide the truth.)*
10. Adopt a sense of belonging within myself rather than relying on external things or people to give me security. *(Sick thinkers do the opposite.)*
11. Use goals to achieve a sense of progress without pursuing foolish priorities which are unworthy. *(Sick thinkers drift, stall or 'chase fluff'.)*

12. Adopt an internal sense of worth, significance and self-respect, rather than looking to others to provide it. If others give you your worth, they can also take it away! (*Sick thinkers fear rejection, seek their value in others' opinions, take offence where none was intended.*)

Practising these principles will put on the mind of Christ.

Jesus said, "If you obey my teaching, you are really my disciples; you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32)

(These principles come from David Riddell's course 'School of Living Wisdom'.)

God is most interested in who we are becoming

Have you stopped to consider this:

"All that I am before God is what I am on my knees. When I die I cannot take anything with me; my status, achievements, wealth or possessions. When I die, all I take to God is me, the person who I will have become. But how much time do I put into who I am becoming?"

Am I satisfied with who I am, or are there things that I do not like about myself and want to change?

Let's not simply pray day after day for God to change us, but let us take responsibility for seeking change, with the help of God and others.

TRUE DISCIPLESHIP

According to George Barna, the USA's leading researcher of religious trends, "True discipleship is about a lifestyle, not simply about stored up Bible knowledge. Often, churches assume that if people are reading the Bible and attending a small group, then real discipleship is happening. Unfortunately, we found that's often not the case. Discipleship is about being and reproducing enthusiasts for Christ. Discipleship, in other words, is about passionately pursuing the lifestyle and mission of Jesus Christ. Our studies revealed that a surprisingly small proportion of born again Christians claim that they are enthusiastically seeking to be true followers of the Lord."

Among the obstacles to effective discipleship cited by Barna are starting the process too late in people's lives and the absence of a worldview that facilitates genuine discipleship. "Christianity would be incredibly influential in our culture if Christians consistently lived their faith," Barna stated. "Most non-Christians don't read the Bible, so they judge Christianity by the lives of the Christians they see. The problem is that millions of Christians don't live like Christians and that's partially because they don't know what they believe and therefore cannot apply appropriate scriptural values in their life."