

May 4, 2002

Oak Hill
2115 Graefenburg Road
Lawrenceburg, Ky., 40342

ARE WE CHRIST CENTERED OR SELF CENTERED?

In the natural realm we are wisely instructed by the medical community to do a “self-examination” of our physical body on a regular basis. After all, we know our bodies better than anyone, and if we will diligently watch over them, we are more likely to discover something that is not right and then get professional help before the problem is out of control. The reason that we are directed to do a physical self-examination is that in doing so, we are much more likely to extend our life and avoid much pain and suffering that follows neglect. To follow this advice is wisdom indeed.

Today man is doing all that he can to extend his physical life. We spend billions upon billions of dollars on health care, nutritional supplements, purified drinking water, devising special diets and we quickly chase the snake oil vendors that come our way with the very latest “good health” and “healing” fad. All the while failing to realize that our body is sentenced to death and for certain we will soon die. In our effort to preserve and prolong the physical life, we have neglected the spiritual life, which is the deadliest form of neglect. When the people of GOD fail to perform a regular spiritual “self examination” upon themselves, they become easy prey for the demonic spirits of deception.

The whole purpose of this message that comes to you in the name of JESUS CHRIST is to challenge you to begin immediately a personal spiritual self-examination and to point you directly to JESUS as our only hope for life!

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that JESUS CHRIST is in you? -----unless indeed you are disqualified.”
(2 Corinthians 13:5)

The first question that we must ask as we begin to examine ourselves spiritually is, “who or what have we centered our lives on?” Are we centered on JESUS CHRIST, or are we believers in JESUS but living lives that are centered on our institutions, our Christian programs, our good works, our business, our family or our own self gratification? Can we honestly say before GOD, that we are “His offspring” (see Acts 17:29) and that “in Him we live and move and have our being”? (See Acts 17:28) Can we say that we are abiding in Him? In the 15th chapter of John, JESUS commanded us to “abide” in Him. In the 91st Psalm we are told that those who dwell in His “secret place” will abide in His shadow and be blessed with His protection. John said in 1 John 2:6 - “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked”.

Now, in light of GOD’S word can we say that our lives are centered on Him and Him alone? The question is not “Do we believe in JESUS?” but rather have we chosen to cast all else aside in our spiritual walk, center our lives on Him and follow Him, regardless of what anyone else says or does? That is the question that you and I must ask of ourselves and it is extremely personal – just between you and GOD.

This writer has been a professing Christian since he was 11 years old. However, he has only been spiritually awake since he reached the age of 43. On my last birthday I celebrated 60 years of life and I am just now beginning to see how far off center I have been in my Christian walk. Even though I have been a

believer in JESUS, my life has not been centered on Him. Maybe your life is different and you can say before Him, that you are centered on Him alone in all that you do but I cannot. But I thank our GOD for His revelations and I thank Him for His promise to complete the good work in me and you that He has begun. (See Philippians 1:6). As FATHER wakes us up spiritually and we face the truth before Him, He will give us the grace to turn away and flee from the bondage of man's religion. There is much to be excited about as we turn away from man and his institutions, as we turn away from man's doctrine and man's theology, as we turn away from man's rules and regulations that he has put on the backs of believers and turn to JESUS. There is every reason to be excited as our golden calves – our spiritual idols – are exposed and we are given a fresh opportunity to center on Him. There is an excitement that builds in a man or woman as they become empty of religion and fully aware of their spiritual poverty. Only then will they find the favor of a holy GOD.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.” (Jesus speaking Matthew 5:3)

“But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit.” (Isaiah 66:2)

“For thus says the High and Lofty One, Who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” (Isaiah 57:15)

My brothers and sisters we Christians are living way below our means in relation to the promises of GOD. If you are a student of GOD'S word and believe His word to be truth, you know that we are not even coming close to living out that Word. As the “offspring of GOD” we should be reflecting JESUS CHRIST in our thought life, our speech and our deeds. When another human being comes into contact with us, that person should see, hear and feel JESUS Himself as His Spirit manifests Himself through us. If this is not the case, and you know that for the most part that it is not – there is only one reason. We are not centered on JESUS alone and thereby we are not walking in the Spirit. We may be believers, we may get to heaven, we may even pray in tongues, claim to be intercessors or prophets – we may be pastors, teachers or missionaries – we may be at a church every time the door opens and sing in the choir, tithe and serve as an elder or deacon, but I must tell you the truth – none of that activity proves that your life is centered on JESUS and that you are a living reflection of Him. You could be only reflecting man's concept of what a Christian should be. And the most frightening possibility is that we have become idol worshippers – the idol being the church.

Only you and I know the truth as it relates to self and JESUS, and only you and I personally are responsible for our decisions in relation to JESUS and His word. Know this, FATHER knows, and He loves honesty and hates hypocrisy. All we need to do is acknowledge that JESUS has not been the center of our life, repent and ask FATHER to give us the grace to turn wholly to Him and plead with FATHER to set us free from all religious spirits and grant us the grace to follow Him. When you begin to pray this way, be prepared to have your theology messed with, your religious doctrines messed with, your opinion of the little “c” church messed with. Be prepared to have your golden calves – your idols – exposed to the light of His holiness. Be prepared to be tested to see if you mean what you say or if you are just mouthing religious words.

“For the righteous GOD tests the hearts and minds.” (Psalm 7:9)

Be prepared to be broken as you begin, for maybe the first time in your life, to see your true spiritual condition, your spiritual poverty. Be prepared to be persecuted by many of your fellow believers and especially by those in leadership. You will become to them peculiar and strange because you no longer fit into their concept of what a Christian should be like. Be prepared to be called critical, unloving and judgmental. Be prepared to lose friends as you are drawn into a true walk in the spirit and an intimate

relationship with JESUS that will meet every need you have, and they choose to stay behind. Be prepared to become an empty vessel with absolutely nothing to brag or boast about and to stay that way for the rest of your natural life. Be prepared to weep as our Lord reveals His heart to you concerning His people. If we are not prepared to die to “self”, if we are not prepared to take up our cross and follow Him, if we are not prepared to sacrifice all to Him including everything that we hold dear such as our wealth, family, friends and even our ministry, then we are not worthy of Him! (See Matthew 10:34-39)

A dear friend and brother in the Lord said to me many years ago. “It is one thing to pledge allegiance to the flag and something altogether different to join the army.” Using that thought I would say; it is one thing to join a church and say that JESUS CHRIST is your savior, and something altogether different to “follow Him”. “Follow Him” means to not only believe in Him, but to literally take Him at His word and do exactly what he says to do, looking to no other man nor institution for your leadership – only JESUS. Our GOD is very “jealous” of His people. In fact, one of His names is “JEALOUS”.

“For you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is JEALOUS, is a jealous GOD.” (Exodus 34:14)

“For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” (Deuteronomy 4:24)
(Also see Exodus 20:5)

Our Lord will not share our love and our loyalty with anyone or anything, not even the institution we call “the church”. He demands to be first in our heart above all else. He did not say it would be easy. No! He said that it would be difficult to follow Him.

“Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:14)

Difficult? Yes! Impossible? No! Can we follow Him in our own strength or in the strength of any other man? Never! Only by the power of the Holy Spirit is there any hope whatsoever that we might “follow Him” and keep His word. However, we can decide whether or not we actually want to follow Him, as He has given us a “free will” that He will not override. If we offer Him a “willing heart”, that is all He asks for. He will then be faithful and enable us to break free from all bondage, religious and otherwise. Our heart’s desire makes all the difference. A heart that is truly centered on JESUS CHRIST will walk with Him in reality. And the Spirit of Christ will manifest Himself openly. If we take the first step, He will meet us every time.

Any man or woman, boy or girl whose heart is truly centered on JESUS from the rising up in the morning to the lying down in the evening seven days a week – week after week – month after month and year after year – is eventually going to meet JESUS in all His glory. Not only that, but that person whose heart is centered on JESUS is going to experience a peace and joy in this life that others will miss. The storms of life will not shake them. Events such as occurred in America on September 11, 2001 will not shake them. Absolutely nothing will cause them to be moved off course. If every church in America was boarded up and the Bible was outlawed, the person whose heart is centered on JESUS will calmly walk right on with a peace of mind that will cause others to think that he or she is mad. You see that person is actually living in the reality of the Holy Spirit, and no man nor demon of hell is going to deter them or draw them off course. Glory to GOD! Some will think I am crazy but I believe the 91st Psalm – all of it! And I believe we can walk in the 1st verse of that Psalm. Read it for yourself, GOD is not a man that He would lie to us.

Let me share an example of what I mean by “centering” your heart on JESUS. Several years ago I was an active pilot and had my own plane. One piece of electronic equipment that did not come on my

plane as standard equipment was an instrument known as a V. O. R. This was an excellent and much needed piece of equipment when you were making long cross-country flights. Prior to leaving your place of departure you looked at your flight chart and located your point of destination. For the sake of simplicity, let's say you were flying from Lexington, Kentucky to Knoxville, Tennessee. At the airport in Knoxville there is a ground transmitter that continually transmits an electronic 360-degree signal on a certain frequency. After you are airborne, you set your V. O. R. to the proper frequency and watch your instrument panel. A needle will show you the proper heading to take and when that needle is centered on your instrument, all you need to do is maintain the course by keeping the needle centered and you will eventually fly straight over the Knoxville airport. Veer off course by allowing the needle to get off center, and you will miss your point of destination. Every time! That's a bit over simplified, but basically that's the way it works.

Centering ones heart on JESUS is just as precise as using a V. O. R. in an airplane. We may stray off course from time to time, but as long as we recognize that we have strayed off course, repent and turn back to JESUS alone, we will arrive at our desired destination. But we must realize that when we are not "centered" on Him we are not going to experience His full blessing in this life. Not only that, but when we are not "centered" on JESUS we are more than fair game for Lucifer and his agents to mess with.

Why do you think there is so much sin in the church? Why are we molesting children, divorcing our mates, committing adultery and fornicating in the church just like the unbelievers? Why are we so heavily in debt, have such poor reputations for paying our bills on time and thereby set such un-Christ like examples for unbelievers? Why is there so much strife, disunity and lack of love between fellow believers? Why are so many ministries promoting themselves as being GOD'S answer to man's problems and continually begging for more and more money? Why are we "selling" JESUS in the church as we hawk our books, tapes, videos, caps, T-shirts, etc., etc., just like the heathen do at their rock concerts and ballgames? Why are we so often no different from the rest of the world? The answer is real simple. We have not centered our hearts on JESUS! We have not kept His word, we have not loved Him more than the world, and we absolutely have not been walking in the Spirit!

Don't tell me that a man whose heart is centered on JESUS and who is walking in the Spirit is going to leave his wife, have a homosexual affair with a little boy or go sit in a movie theatre and listen to the name of his GOD being defamed. Don't tell me that a man or woman whose heart is centered on JESUS and walking in the Spirit of GOD is going to dig themselves further and further into debt as they attempt to satisfy their own personal lusts. Don't tell me that a man or woman whose heart is centered on JESUS and walking in the Spirit is going to demonstrate a greater love for pleasure than for GOD. Don't tell me that the man or woman who robs a bank, steals from a neighbor or their employer, beats their child or sits in front of the TV for hours on end watching the open sewer of the world – don't tell me that they have hearts centered on JESUS and that they are walking in the Spirit of GOD. Don't tell me that a man or woman that feeds their soul from the writings of man more than they do the writings of GOD is walking in the Spirit with a heart centered on JESUS. And don't tell me that any man or woman who has a greater loyalty to the church than they do to JESUS has a heart centered on JESUS and that they are walking in the reality of the Holy Spirit of GOD. When we claim to be centered on JESUS and walking in the Spirit – abiding in Him – and at the same time behave as the rest of the world, we slander and bring shame and reproach on the name of the most High and Holy GOD.

Our refusal to face the truth and admit that we have not been walking in the Spirit with hearts centered on JESUS is like the drunk that believes that he doesn't have a problem, is really OK, because he can stop drinking whenever he wants to. He is in denial and if he doesn't acknowledge his problem and seek help, he will die a drunk. Many of us, who call ourselves "Christ Centered", Spirit walking Christians are living in denial. We are living a lie, and very few love us enough to tell us the truth.

“Do not be deceived, GOD is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” (Galatians 6:7,8)

As I close let me say that I am not telling you that if you are truly a Born Again believer, but your heart is not centered on GOD, that you will not make it to heaven. Only FATHER knows that. But I am telling you that you will miss FATHER’S full blessing in this life, you will set a poor example for those around you and you will pose absolutely no threat whatsoever to the Kingdom of darkness. You will spend the rest of your life running from church to church, tape to tape, book to book and conference to conference. You may stay busy, busy, busy in your church work, but in the end you will have missed the greatest blessing that is afforded to man - to be called a friend of GOD.

GOD BLESS

Tom

PS: Your writer has been greatly blessed and encouraged in recent months as a number of you have written, called or stopped by, to give me a word of encouragement. I cannot tell you what a blessing that is to me and I thank you for your friendship, your love and your encouragement. However, I realize that there may be those receiving these messages that don’t take the time to read them or if they do, they are not spiritually challenged by them. If you are one of those persons, please drop me a note and I will gladly remove your name from the mailing list. It will not hurt my feelings and I will think no less of you for doing so. The expense of preparing and sending out these messages is growing, and I would like to be sure that they are going to those who receive a blessing from them.

We are now living in the days where our hidden agendas, darkest secrets and true spiritual condition is being exposed by the Holy Spirit. These are the days when the “true believers” will be set free to follow JESUS just as they followed Him in the early church as described in Acts Chapters 1, 2, and 3. These messages are one man’s feeble effort to point those around him to JESUS CHRIST, to Him alone. Apart from that, there is no other reason or purpose for this effort.