

Self-Righteousness

Self-righteousness is characterized by harshness or a severity that nearly everyone finds off-putting. Obsession with correcting others, a coldness of spirit, and a judgmental, calculating mind often accompany a self-righteous attitude. Despite this, those who find themselves caught in the trap of self-righteousness will usually feel as though they are a beacon of light in an otherwise darkened room.

What comes to our mind when you think of self-righteousness? If we are honest, most of us probably think of a time when we have had a self-righteous attitude or spirit. Isaiah 64:6 says, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousneses are as filthy rags.” The parable of the Pharisee and publican comes to mind. The Pharisee stood on the street corner and told the Lord all the good things he had done, and the publican said, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” The realization that our works do not gain us salvation is one of the keys to humility.

We all have things we struggle with. It is easy to look at our brethren and wonder why they are doing something we may not approve of, but it is a good practice to examine ourselves and uncover why we are having these thoughts. How well do we do in relationships with our neighbors and friends who are not a part of our faith? Sometimes we may come across with a better-than-you attitude because of what we perceive to be our superior lifestyle and religious commitment. Before we trust an elevated perception of ourselves, may we remember that each of us has nearly equal potential to make a mess of our life without the grace and mercy of God in our heart.

Questions

1. Self-confidence is a good thing. It is simply the confidence to be who God intended us to be. What are the differences in being self-righteous or having self-confidence?
2. How can we make the assessment ourselves if we are self-righteous? Is it possible for us to figure that out on our own, or does it always come from others?
3. True or False: A sign of self-righteousness in our lives is noticing self-righteousness in my brother.
4. Most grow to believe that the way they were raised and taught was the right way. What can we do to avoid a condescending attitude toward other cultures or religions?
5. Jesus showed a strong disdain for self-righteousness. Are we more lenient with this spirit than we should be?
6. Some may fear that if they completely rid themselves of a self-right spirit, they will open themselves up to being permissive or too soft on sin. Is this a valid fear?
7. The Pharisees were extremely conservative and pious. They put so much stock in retaining their conservative values that they lost sight of the true Spirit of God. Where is the balance today in conserving good values but not losing sight of the godly spirit that is compassionate, good, and kind to those who may not share the same value system?

Scriptures for Meditation

Luke 6:41-42 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

Luke 18:9-14 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.