

THE



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

May 2024

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WHAT ARE YOU WORTH?

Are we only a bag of flesh and bones, or are we worth something more? What the world around us appears to be is largely dependent upon where we're looking. Our attention is driven by what we value, so we pay attention to things we personally value. That is, we see things that are in the direction we're looking. So, in our minds, the way the world seems to work can easily be biased in our mind. We tend to find what we're looking for and what we value. If we place our value on God, then we can see God and His works in the world all around us. Conversely, if we value something else, then we're going to see

THE HARVESTER
141 County Road 474
Woodland, AL 36280
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the world defined by those other values.

Paul's letter to the Romans opens on these same ideas. You can see God all around you (1:19-20), but if you have valued something of this world more than God, including your own "wisdom," you will struggle finding God (1:21-23). In doing so, this mindset will lead you to exactly what you were looking for, or valuing, all along: uncleanness through the lusts of your own heart (1:24). Paul goes on to note what kind of society a mindset valuing something more than God has "found" in it where it was paying attention:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: (Rom. 1:26-31)

Society around us is increasingly not seeing God. Primarily, this is because it is not looking for Him. This is evident across all ages, but it is most magnified in the youngest generations who are coming through a society with value structured primarily on serving the self. Thus, the world growing around us questions what value God and service to Him would have when serving their own desires is the top value. Today's society sells the message that value is found in the self and that you are your own god; you should value doing what you want to do

and how you want to do it. You can see this shaping in modern societal, political, and cultural movements. These political figureheads and movements are selling the value of “freedom,” where freedom is some unabridged pursuit of doing any and all things which bring you pleasure. This modern version of freedom is freedom only in the realm of serving the self. Freedom within Christianity, however, is freedom from a doomed outcome that sin will bring:

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 6:22-23)

Further, this freedom is not restricted to some immutable characteristic like our genealogy. Rather, this freedom is based entirely by the things within our control (our words and actions), primarily driven by the choice to pursue God through obedience:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10)

True, lasting satisfaction is not found in society’s version of carefree freedom where you are encouraged to pursue whatever makes you happy. Everyone wants to be satisfied; everyone wants to be happy. Thus, it makes it easy to identify who your “enemy” is: those who will attempt to keep you from your worldly pursuits of pleasure or tell you that such pursuits are leading you down the wrong path. As such, those who pursue God have quickly become vilified. Although much of the faults found in a life valuing the self and its fleshly desires are obvious to many of us, interestingly there are data contrasting these two value systems.

Recent studies have found that the United States have hit historical lows in belief in God and in membership to a religious

community (e.g., Church membership). Concurrently, there are increases (downright doubling in some instances) in anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and poor well-being across the same time periods in teens and young adults. Correlation does not equal causation, but it's hard not to associate that society's messaging to value yourself and pursue any lifestyle supplying you any fleeting pleasure has led to a society flailing around in perpetual dissatisfaction. Meanwhile, those who believe, fear, and obey God have been labeled so strict or structured that we're actually oppressive. Yet, we're not flailing around. Similar studies have found that those who are part of a religious community have significantly lower incidences of depression, higher life satisfaction, and have a greater sense of the meaning or purpose in life. Picture climbing a ladder versus climbing a net. The value and associated pursuit of serving God is the ladder; it has a defined, rigid tract of right and wrong. Although you can misstep and miss a rung, that ladder's tracts haven't moved, and there's always something sturdy to grasp onto when you miss that rung. You just have to grab onto it. Conversely, climbing a net has you off balance and you can quickly find yourself tangled. Those with the poorest well-being and stuck on that vicious cycle of fleeting worldly pleasure are largely those who have done the most serving of the self.

Perhaps the greatest irony in modern society's messaging to value yourself is that it effectively devalues the self. Society is having people define the self by 1) how they identify sexually, and 2) how they choose to satisfy the body based on #1. Thus, individual worth has been reduced to the physical body: Is it a male or female body? Then, does it want to be pleased with

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The Harvester

141 County Road 474 * Woodland, AL 36280

Phone: (256) 449-9221* Email: theharvesteronline@gmail.com

Web Page: www.churches-of-christ.org

a male or female body? Although there are other topics and agendas being pushed by the non-God fearing world, nothing seems more debated or pushed to the top of publicity than those of homosexuality and transgenderism. If these are the biggest issues and pathways or barriers to happiness and thus where individual worth is determined, then all this society wants us to value is the physical body. Their carefree approach to freedom then physically sells the self; it reduces the worth of an individual to their physical body.

We are more than a physical body. That is what God would have us be, of course. A life spent placing our worth on serving God as opposed to serving ourselves and our body elevates us far and above being a bag of flesh and bones seeking pleasure from another bag of flesh and bones. While the world sells self-fulfillment through self “freedom” and self-expression, the Bible contains much about self-control. Contentment is found therein, since our self-control is an outgrowth of our value on God rather than self. Paul touches on this in his first letter to Timothy.

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. (1 Tim. 2:9-10)

Modesty is a duty to both men and women, but the particular point I want to examine here is “*professing godliness*” in verse 10. “Professing” comes from the Greek *epaggello*, which means to assert something respecting oneself. So, Paul is pointing out that Christlike words, actions, and appearances indicate where our value is: godliness. So, the converse is that when we do anything non-Christlike, we show where our value and self-respect really exist: in the self. So, verse 10 is following up the call to modesty to effectively convey, “Be modest, because you are worth more than just the body and what’s on it.”

“Self-respect” is a phrase used by the societal influences telling the world to focus on the body and its pleasures. However, a life valuing God shows more “self-respect” than a life valuing the self and the pursuit of what pleases it. Society attempts to reduce people to bodies, labels, and “sexual identities.” One of the most well known and quoted messages by Jesus tells us how valued we are by God:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16-17)

Years ago I heard a highly-educated lawyer ask, “How loving could a father be to kill his own son?” Let’s ask ourselves, who do we value more than our children or immediate family? That’s a very short list, which is entirely the point. That’s how much God values us. You are valued. You are valued by God, the creator of this world and everything in it. This is something we have to hold dear not only to ourselves, but also to spread to the world around us, particularly the young, who are being bombarded with the message that they are just a body. You are worth so much more than a physical body, a label, or a sexual identity. If we value God, we will reap the value that He’s placed on us.

BEN

FROM THE SCRIPTURES: THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING SCRIPTURE

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest

by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. (Deu. 6:4-9)

For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. (Jer. 4:22)

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. (Hos. 4:6)

Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. (Mat. 22:29)

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. (Acts 17:10-11)

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. (Rom. 15:4)

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:14-17)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

May
12 - 14

Napoleon
Woodland, AL

Hunter Bulger
(Prattville, AL)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What was Noah's ark made out of?
2. Into which land did God send Abraham to sacrifice his special son, Isaac?
3. What did the crew of the ship Jonah was on do once the storm had ceased?
4. Which disciple was a tax collector?
5. When a man said to Jesus, "who is my neighbor?" what parable did Jesus reply with?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. Whose father was prepared to sacrifice him on an altar?
ISAAC (Gen. 22:9)
2. How did the angel of the Lord appear to Moses, when he was a shepherd?
FROM WITHIN A BURNING BUSH (Exo. 3:2)
3. How did the Philistines discover the answer to Samson's riddle? THEY THREATENED SAMSON'S BRIDE,
WHO TOLD THEM (Jdg. 14:15)
4. What form did the Holy Spirit take at the baptism of Jesus?
DOVE (Luke 3:22)
5. What happens to "treasure laid up on earth"? BECOMES
CORRUPTED AND THIEVES STEAL IT (Mat. 6:19)

**GOSSIPING IS CONTAGIOUS -
WALK AWAY FROM IT BEFORE YOU GET INFECTED**