

Challenge Yourself to Be Better

Have you ever been in a meeting or situation where you swore you were going to keep your thoughts to yourself, then someone said something to push your button and you opened your mouth before you knew it. You might have rehearsed your cool, calm, and collected demeanor in your head a thousand times. You imagined how proud you would feel after having remained composed while everyone else bickered back and forth. "I'm not going to feed into that mess..." you think, "...and there's nothing anyone can say or do to cause me to lose it." But you DO lose it. To your surprise, you go off because of something that you never suspected would affect you.

Your intention to stay calm in a heated situation indicates that you were challenging yourself to be better, even if you didn't succeed. You wanted to exude confidence, because as Christians, that's part of the package. We are supposed to remain anchored in the goodness of our Heavenly Father amidst any raging storm. If the storm rages a little too hard and you lose your bearings, don't miss an opportunity to learn something new about yourself. Any time we deviate from the script, we have a chance to explore what's at the core of who we are.

For some this is a scary place. It reminds us that becoming born again didn't wipe away the dark spots on our souls; they have to be dealt with, not pushed further down.

The world hasn't strayed so far from its rockers that it doesn't appreciate such Godly virtues as kindness, patience, and respect. These qualities still have a place in our society, a diminishing one mind you, but a place none the less. Christians have long been admired as models of virtue, and most of us think it automatically comes with the territory. We want people to respect and honor us simply because we wear the title. We want the glory, but don't want to do the work.

Philippians 2:12 NKJV

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

Salvation isn't where our work ends, it is where it begins. We are admonished by our Heavenly Father to take notice of those things that we are accustomed to doing out of habit, to pay attention with a keen eye to those things that cause hiccups in the flow of

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life, and to work them out so that we end up on the other side better than we were; we must measure up to the great gift we have been given through our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

There's a reason why God has told us to study to show ourselves worthy of His approval, (2 Timothy 2:15) and it is because it takes time to work through our issues. We work through them by learning more about His Word, and then walking in it, but we certainly can't work through our issues if we refuse to confront them.

Matthew 22:29 KJV

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

Not many days before he would endure great suffering, Jesus Christ had a few discourses in the temple, some with those who considered themselves paradigms of virtue and knowledge. These discussions were of significant importance, as we see in Matthew 22:29 KJV. He said to the Sadducees, "...*Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.*" This statement was in response to a question they posed concerning the resurrection of the dead and the future state. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead or the afterlife, and hoped that Jesus might say something of which they could accuse him.

As he did so masterfully, Jesus put them on blast...he threw the high beams on them, but did it ever so simply. He said "*You don't know what you're talking about. You don't know the scriptures, but you think you do. You've missed the meaning entirely, and because of that you are making some errors.*" The Sadducees were entrenched in their way of believing. It was very doubtful that they would allow themselves to be enlightened, not even from the Son of God. Their frame of mind is where many of us who are followers of Christ find ourselves today, and we hate to admit it.

We don't like admitting that our own failure to learn more about God's Word has caused us to make preventable errors. We can become so wrapped up in our daily lives that we can't hear the Word we need to hear. We consider ourselves so spiritual that we fail to grasp the deeper meaning of God's Word; and before we know it, we lose the ability to see what we need to see all together. We can't see those who need to hear a profound word of inspiration from our lips. We can't see the simple ways to be a blessing to others each day, and if you can't see a way to be a blessing, then you can't see a way to receive one either.

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None of us ever know ourselves as well as we think we do. God has purposed that we discover new things as we grow in Him. He wants us to challenge ourselves to be better by confronting the ungodly things we see, and then ask His forgiveness for them. If we'll ask Him, and if we'll give ourselves permission to change, God will come into those places so that we can be even more anchored in His love.

Understand that through your mistakes and missteps, through the Words of wisdom and encouragement that are within your proximity each and every day, Jesus Christ is showing you the way. These things come to you for a reason. Although life can feel very uncomfortable at times, it may even feel like a wilderness experience, know that nothing about your life is random. Everything can be employed as an instrument to lift you higher.

From your view, the things of this world should never be as harsh as they seem. They are meant to be an opportunity to grow and become closer to our Heavenly Father. So don't stop growing when discomfort arises. Don't stop learning just because you feel you've had enough. Raise your sights and see life's hiccups for the opportunities they are; they are challenges to be better in Christ.

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