

Important Questions

James 1:21-25

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Abraham Lincoln wisely said, *"You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all of the time."*

A. That statement is loaded with truth:

(1) Some people are easy to fool. Why? So many in our society lack 'critical thinking' skills.

(2) In fact, some people will fall for about anything, all the time! (e.g., "low info voters")

B. We need to sharpen our thinking skills and be wary so as not to be deceived by others.

Col. 2:4: *"Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words."*

2. However, I want to suggest to you that when it comes to deceit our most powerful foe is not other people but OURSELVES!

A. Think about it. What was the greatest problem faced by the nation of Israel? Self-deceit!

B. On numerous occasions they deceived themselves into thinking they were faithful to God when they were not.

Jer. 5:31: *"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so."*

3. Self-deceit is spiritually deadly!

1 Cor. 6:9-10: *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."*

A. We can fool our fellow brethren into believing we are strong, faithful Christians.

B. But we certainly will never be able to fool God (review 1 Cor. 6:9).

C. And it is sad and scary to think of how easy it is to fool ourselves.

4. Bottom line: Only you and God know how faithful you really are in your relationship with Him.

Psa. 44:21: *"...He knows the secrets of the heart."*

Heb. 4:11-12: *"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*

5. The religion of Jesus Christ is not only a religion that regulates our overt behavior; but it also regulates the thoughts and intents of our heart.

A. The wise man said: **Prov. 23:7:** *"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."*

B. Jesus said: **Matt. 15:16-20:** *"So Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding? 17 'Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.'"*

C. I can judge your behavior, but I cannot judge your heart (and vice versa): **1 Cor. 2:11:** *"For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?"*

6. The fact that self-deceit is a constant danger makes it critical we follow Paul's admonition in **2 Corinthians 13:5**: "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves."
NLT: **2 Cor. 13:5**: "Check up on yourselves. Are you really Christians? Do you pass the test?"
7. How do we go about performing a self-examination? A spiritual "check-up"?
 - A. **3** We can perform it by asking ourselves some very soul-searching questions.
 - B. If we will honestly answer these questions we will see ourselves as the Lord sees us.
 - C. Once we see ourselves as the Lord sees us, we must take any corrective action that might be needed in order to be pleasing to Him **IF** our heart is truly set on serving Him and abiding with Him eternally.
Jas. 1:21-25: "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **4** Am I faithful in my attendance?
 - A. I understand there are times we have legitimate reasons why we cannot attend a service (Bible study, worship, gospel meetings).
 - B. However, if the brethren are meeting to worship and study God's word it's important for me to make the sacrifice to come!
Heb. 10:25: "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."
 - C. If our attendance is "hit or miss" can we truly say we say we "hunger and thirst for righteousness"? (Matt. 5:6) Can we truly say are seeking "first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"?! (Matt. 6:33)
 - D. Faithfully attending services is probably the easiest thing God asks of us! **Heb. 10:24**: "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,"
 - E. If we don't like meeting with the brethren, what makes us think we'll enjoy heaven?!
2. ****** Am I a true soldier in God's kingdom?
2 Tim. 2:3: "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."
Eph. 6:12-17: "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;"
3. ****** Do I truly love my Savior, Jesus Christ?
Jn. 14:15: "If you love Me, keep My commandments."
Lk. 6:46: "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"
Jn. 8:31: "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed."

1 Jn. 2:3-5: “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.”

4. ****** Where am I laying up treasure? On earth or in heaven?

Matt. 6:19-21: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

1 Jn. 3:16-17: “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

Matt. 25:31-46

5. **5** Am I praying as often as I should?

1 Thess. 5:17: “pray without ceasing,”

Eph. 6:18-20: “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints;”

Lk. 18:1-8: “Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,”

Eph. 3:20: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,”

6. ****** Am I ready to meet Jesus in the clouds?

1 Thess. 4:16-17: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” **Will you be cleared for take-off?!**

Matt. 24:44: “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Acts 1:11: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

2 Pet. 3:9-12: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?”

7. ****** Who do I allow to control my life, God or Satan?

Rom. 6:16: “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”

Matt. 6:33: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

Matt. 10:39: “He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

8. ****** Am I preparing myself to pass the test on Judgment Day?

1 Thess. 5:1-11: “But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. 11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”

9. **6** Am I letting my light shine before the world?

Matt. 5:14-16: “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

10. ****** Am I the preserving salt of the earth, or am I the salt that is ruined for eternity?

Matt. 5:13: “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”

Gen. 18:32: “Then he said, ‘Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?’ And He said, ‘I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.’”

11. ****** Do I love my enemies, or hate them?

Matt. 5:43-48: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

12. ****** Am I showing myself to be a true neighbor to others around me?

Lk. 10:29-37: “But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ 30 Then Jesus answered and said: ‘A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’ 36 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves? 37 And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”

13. ****** Am I using the talents given me by God in such a way as to glorify Him?

Matt. 25:14-30: “For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. 16 Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ 21 His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ 22 He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ 23 His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ 24 Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’ 26 But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

14. **7** Am I searching for those who have gone astray from the fold of God, and/or bringing others to Christ by teaching them the gospel?

Matt. 18:12-14: “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? 13 And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. 14 Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

Ezek. 33:7-9: “So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. 8 When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”

15. ****** Do I stand up for Jesus against the sins of the world and against error and false teaching, as often as I should, or do I allow these to pass by without a word of care?

Eph. 5:11-13: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”

16. ****** Are my eyes continually fastened upon the goal of reaching heaven and receiving the rewards thereof, or are they ever fastened more upon the goals of this world which lead me straight towards hell?

Heb. 12:1-2: “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that

is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Matt. 7:13-14: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

17. ****** Is my speech pure, holy and acceptable to God?

Col. 4:6: “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”

Titus 1:15-2:1: “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. 2:1 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.”

Titus 2:6-8: “Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, 7 in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, 8 sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.”

18. **8** Am I walking in the light of God, or in the darkness of Satan?

Psa. 119:105-106: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. 106 I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgments.”

1 Jn. 1:6-10: “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

19. ****** When I encounter temptation, do I flee it and never look back?

Matt. 26:41: “But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’”

1 Cor. 10:13: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

Rom. 13:14: “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

20. ****** Do I flirt with sin? Do I see how close I can get to living in the “world” yet still claim to be a Christian?

Rom. 12:9: “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.”

1 Pet. 5:8-9: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith,...” Contrast v. 9 with: “here kitty, kitty, kitty...”

21. ****** Am I a spiritual coward?

1 Cor. 16:13: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”

Matt. 10:34-39: “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a

daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; 36 and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

Rev. 21:8: *"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

III. CONCLUSION: 9

1. There are many other questions, just as important as these we could ask ourselves.
2. However, every Christian should be able to ask himself these questions and every other that needs asking **IF** we studies the Bible daily.
3. Did you pass your self-examination, do you have a clean bill of spiritual health? Or are you deceiving yourself?
4. If not, and you would like the prayers and encouragement of the brethren this morning, why not come as we stand and sing.