



REVIEW:

TRUTH: GOD LOVES YOU

TRUTH: THE WORK OF MEASURING UP IS FINISHED

What types of standards do people strive to meet in order to feel good about themselves?

Finances

Job position

Weight

Attractiveness

Being smart: good grades

Talent

Competition: winning sports, games,

Having the best of certain things

Being "good"

Being "religious"

Etc

Why do these accomplishments make us feel better about ourselves?

What is the problem of turning to these things to give us a sense of worth and value?

Whenever we place our sense of worth in our performance, we are declaring that our worth is constantly in flux. If I perform well, then I can feel good about myself. If I perform poorly, then suddenly my worth crashes to the ground and I am no longer as loveable or acceptable. We are then on an emotional roller coaster with our sense of value constantly manipulated by our circumstances.

This approach to life is rooted in what we call the performance lie.

**I must meet certain expectations to be accepted by others or self.
I must measure up!**

We also project that lie on to others.

Others must measure up to my expectations in order to be acceptable to me.

We add to that lie a consequence:

Those who fail do not deserve to be fully loved or respected.

What do you think God has to say about our striving for a sense of worth from all these achievements?



Jeremiah 2:13 (NIV)

My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

What does God mean with regard to “digging their own cisterns”?

People were abandoning God and attempting to meet their life needs through their own efforts and pride. God defined these attempts as faulty and incapable of giving them the life they longed for. They would never gain what they were looking for apart from him.

In what ways might we dig our own cisterns?

Colossians 1:12 (NIV)

giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

How does the work of Christ set us free from the performance lie?

Jesus met the only expectation we are truly called to live up to holiness. There is no other bench mark for our lives. We could never have attained it by our own efforts, but he measured up for us. As a result, there is absolutely nothing we need to “strive” for in life to declare us loveable and acceptable. We are fully accepted and loved by God. Since we have already been qualified for eternity through Jesus Christ, there is no other test that needs to be passed.

If the only standard that truly exists has been met in us through Christ, why do we still strive to meet other standards that don’t truly exist?

- 1) We still want to think we are “good enough”; that we measure up; that we are adequate. Pride demands that we be self-sufficient and worthy of praise in the eyes of others. We want to believe that we can control our own lives and live independently of God.
- 2) We don’t fully understand what Christ accomplished through his death and resurrection. We find it hard to change our thinking and trust that Christ has already qualified us; that the requirement for moral perfection has already been met for us.

Every other religion tells you there is something you can do to be “righteous” enough for God. Christianity is the only faith that says it is impossible to measure up by our own efforts and that we need righteousness to be given to us as a gift if we ever hope to walk into the presence of God.

How does the lie of performance bring fear into our lives?

When our sense of worth is tied to our performance, we will constantly live in fear that some day we will not perform well enough and no longer be worthy of love and acceptance. In North America there is an epidemic of low self-esteem which is rooted in the fear that at the core of our being, we do not measure up.

How might the lie of performance cause us to act in ungodly ways?

The lie of performance causes us to either:

- 1) Become aggressive and strive harder to succeed or,
- 2) Avoid anything/anyone that might expose our inadequacy.

Colossians 3:23 (NIV)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,

How does the above verse take the pressure off from the performance lie?

When we do something for God, we do it out of a joy of partnering with him. We are simply called to do our best and he will take care of the results. God does not need us to perform to a certain level to be pleased with us; he simply wants us to do our best. If we seek to glorify him in all we do – that is success to God.

How might the lie of performance be subtly at work in the following scenarios?

And, if we believed the truth, what might be a contrasting approach to life?

A parent encouraging a child to get an A in school...

When we encourage children to reach a specific goal in order to feel good about themselves, we are embedding the performance lie. This is also true when it comes to sports and other competitions. It is often tempting to praise a child when they win the game and less so when they lose. This creates immense pressure for children to feel they have to perform in order to be approved by their parents, school, team or culture.

Godly Response: We need to teach children to simply do their best and in a way that brings glory to God. This removes stress and allows a child to do what they do with joy and to the fullness of their ability. This approach frees children from the fear of failure. If they lose at something, it does not affect their self worth.

A person striving for a promotion at work...

It is not wrong to get a promotion at work, no more than it is wrong for a child to get a good grade. The question focuses more on what the deep motivation is for the promotion and the need to “strive”. If the promotion is for a sense of affirmation and sense of accomplishment, then the performance lie is probably subtly at work. We are sinfully motivated to feel we need to be at the “top” in order to affirm our sense of identity and worth.

Godly Response: Simply do the best that you can do and leave the results to God. It is not wrong to apply for a promotion, but the heart is often shown when one does not get the promotion. We often rationalize why we need a promotion, but the reality is, God will take care of our needs. We simply need to trust him with our lives. **We are not called to be successful; we are called to be faithful. When we are faithful, God will bear much fruit through us.**



A person who cannot say “No” to helping others...

Sometimes what we do can have the appearance of godliness, but it can still be rooted in the performance lie. When people find it hard to say no, it is because there is a fear that if they do not help, they will not be respected or valued as much. These people will often start to feel burned out and end up resenting the very people they are helping.

Godly Response: Only do what you have a peace about doing. Set godly boundaries around your life even though other people may not value those boundaries. Do not give outward consent, but inwardly resent.

Jesus did not please everybody. There were times when the crowds came to him expecting to be healed, but he left and went to another town instead. Those people who were left behind without being healed were probably not too impressed with Jesus (Mark 1:37-38).

Can you think of any other scenarios where the lie of performance might be subtly at work?

How many of you would identify yourself as a perfectionist? What is the root deception behind perfectionism?

Perfectionism is rooted in the belief that things must meet a certain standard in order for me to feel good about them, and to feel good about myself. If I don't reach that standard of excellence, then I am not worthy of respect or love. I fear incompetency and inadequacy, so I must constantly perform above and beyond. When I can make things “just right” I feel like I have a sense of control and adequacy.

In these moments we really need to ask, “Whose attention and affirmation are we striving to gain?” Often, it can be traced back to a parent, and especially a father, who never affirmed you. You have lived your whole life trying to gain another's acceptance and affirmation, declaring that you are significant and loved. Your whole life has been controlled by this very pursuit.



How might the lie of performance affect our relationships with others?

The lie erects defences between us and others who might threaten our sense of worth. This is evident through:

- Avoiding people who are upset with us
- Not being open to criticism
- Getting angry with others when they fail to meet our expectations
- Giving people the silent treatment
- Criticising others
- Competing with others
- Having the last word
- Not being open and vulnerable with people
- Wearing masks to hide what is really going on in our life
- Judging others
- Unable to offer forgiveness
- Etc...the list is endless...

Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Why did Jesus not need to “grasp” after his identity?

Jesus knew who he was and, as a result, he did not need anyone to affirm him. We only need people to affirm our identity and worth if we are questioning it. If there is no question, then there is no need for affirmation.

How did Jesus' secure identity free him to serve others?

Jesus could act as a servant without needing to be respected by others. He was free to LOVE others without needing to manipulate their approval. He was free from their opinions with regard to his worth.

Why do people in high positions often find it hard to do menial tasks?



Paul Opposes Peter

Galatians 2:11-16 (NIV)

¹¹ When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. ¹² Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³ The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

¹⁴ When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

¹⁵ "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' ¹⁶ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Why do you think Peter, the Jews and even Barnabas, stopped eating with the Gentile believers?

Can you identify ways in which fear of others' opinions might hinder how we build relationships?

Galatians 5:1 (NIV)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Why does Paul call a return to a performance-based faith, a return to slavery?

When you do not rely on Christ to measure up for you, you are then driven to measure up yourself. The problem is, you will never do it. You will have to keep striving and striving, never reaching the point where you can stop and rest. Your life will be manipulated by fear of failure and inadequacy, constantly striving for the approval of others. You will be a slave. It completely misses the very reason Christ came to set us free.

If you choose to reject the lie of performance and the need to do more in order to feel good about yourself, how will that change how you approach this coming week?

How will it change how you relate to people and permit people to speak into your life?

How will it bring you peace?



AT HOME:

Each day take one of these verses and spend time reflecting on all its implications. Ask God to help you see areas where you buy into the performance lie and have put up defences to protect you from feelings of inadequacy.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)

whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Colossians 3:23 (NIV)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,

Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV)

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.
4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

Galatians 1:10 (NIV)

Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

John 6:66-68 (NIV)

⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. ⁶⁷ "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Philippians 4:12-13 (NIV)

¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Acts 4:19 (NIV)

But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.

Which verse speaks the loudest to you? Why do you think that is?

Try to start each day this week affirming the fact that Christ has met every standard for you. You don't need to prove anything to yourself or anyone else. Simply live for the glory of God.