

## We Apply The Tests

The barriers to finding God are not on God's side, but on ours. Since God is seeking us, then the problem is not of our finding God, but of our letting Him find us. We must put ourselves in the way of being found by God. Some of us are not there. There are definite barriers on our side. It is easier to live yourself into right thinking than to think yourself into right living. I have a friend whose moral and spiritual influence is potent and penetrating. I discovered the secret of it in his relentlessness toward himself. Once a week he goes aside and examines his life in the light of five pointed questions. In the quietness before God, in an air of absolute realism in which there is no equivocation, he examines his life in the light of these five questions:

1- Am I truthful? Are there any conditions under which I will or do tell a lie? Can I be depended on to tell the truth - no matter the cost? One of the test questions of a person's character is this: Will that person lie? And yet how easy it is to lie - even for spiritual people: the willingness to twist a meaning to gain a point; to misquote if the misquotation gains an end; exaggerations to make impressions; a lack of complete truth and misrepresentations in presenting goods for sale. What is at the basis of this looseness with the truth? Is it not often in the fact that we think a lie is sometimes justifiable? Truth is inviolable. Lies are apart from God's Will. If lies are still there, no matter how spiritual we may be, we are still in the old self-sabotaging life and lower nature.

2- Am I honest? Can I be absolutely trusted in money matters? In my work? With other people's reputations? It is not easy to be absolutely honest with ourselves because of what is called the tendency to rationalization. This means that we are seldom objective in our attitudes toward ourselves. We set our minds to work not upon the facts as they are, but upon the business of inventing reasons for our courses of conduct. The ego plays tricks on us. We are self-deceived. But will not God forgive the sin of dishonesty without restitution? How can He? He can forgive the sin of the act only as we are willing to restore. We may not be able to restore all at once, but we must be willing. Finally, am I willing to cut out - ruthlessly to cut out - of my life every dishonest thing no matter how deep the humiliation may be?

3- Am I pure? In my relationships with the opposite sex? In my habits? In my thought life? This question of purity is fundamental. If life sags at that place, it will probably sag all down the line. Obviously, the first thing to do in this matter of purity is to acknowledge the fact of sex. To act as though there are no such things as sex-desires in us is to repress them, and a complex is set up in the subconscious. This leads to nervous trouble and potential breakdown. Sex-desire is one of our basic instincts. There is no shame in this. The question is not whether we have sex-desire, but whether sex-desire has us. As a servant of the higher purposes of life it is a wonderful servant giving drive and beauty to the rest of life. As a master - it is hell. Have we victory or defeat at this place? We may not be in the gutter but is the gutter in us? Am I committing adultery in act or in thought? If so, will I surrender it, now?

4- Am I easily offended or am I loving? Do I lose my temper? Am I quick to sense slights? Or am I taking the attitude of love which refuses to be offended? It is quite probable that the sins of the disposition do as much harm as the sins of the flesh. Perhaps more. Bad-tempered, touchy and quarrelsome spiritual people do as much to hold back God's Work as drunkards or adulterers. We can drive others back by a wrong spirit. If the psychologist were asked to name the two major sins, for their point of view, they would probably name fear and anger. They form the basis for most of our unhappiness. They are impossible to integrate into a healthy personality. Are we prepared to face the fact of our irritability and bad temper and to consent to have the whole thing taken out - even if it involves a major spiritual operation?

5- Am I selfish or am I dedicated to Divine Purpose? What am I living for - myself, my own position, money, place, power? Or are my powers at the disposal of human need? At the disposal of our Creator's Work? What am I living for - myself or others? This test comes to the root of the matter. In the final analysis, what controls my actions - self-interest or God-interest? In the deepest citadel of my spirit, who gives the final word? Do I or God? The answer to that determines whether I am spiritual or not. And what is the issue? It is this: If I dominate my life, it will disintegrate. I shall lose it. If God dominates my life, I shall find it - it will come back to me integrated, happy, useful and serene. Life teaches that if my desires dominate me, I shall be drowned in my own desires. I shall have my way and then I shall loathe my way. If self is on the throne, its inner subjects are unhappy, discordant. That self may be a very refined self, it may be a very moral self, it may be even an apparently serving self, but if it is on the throne, and makes the final decisions, then, as sure as fate, I shall lose my peace. My life needs a Master, but self is not the master that it needs. It must be a Power that I identify as something outside of me. When my hand is on the helm, my life drifts toward the rocks. Hush your heart and ask yourself this question: Who has the ultimate say in my life - self or God? Am I self-directed or God-directed?

As we are about to go on, let us put ourselves before ourselves and look at ourselves from God's point of view. The bravest moment of a person's life is the moment when we look at ourselves objectively without wincing, without explaining away.

E. Stanley Jones