

A BIBLICAL BASIS & COMPARISON

Does my life genuinely look like Christ's?

(Based on The New Living Translation with support of others as noted.)

With the so-called "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5-7), Jesus revealed His heart (5:48) while at the same time giving us a metric against which to examine on our own. The point of this tool is not to emerge unscathed. And if we do, we probably have not been completely honest with ourselves. The purpose is not to condemn ourselves on all points either. The goal is to hear God speak to us. To let Jesus point out, via the Spirit's illumination, the places where our heart is not like Jesus'. This teaching Jesus gave, and by extension this list of questions, *is intended to help you be unable to continue as you are*. It is designed to help you recognize God pointing you toward an area of our life that He wants to refine. So, if God "speaks" to you, stop and focus there. Do not just keep reading. Some feel they must finish but chances are, if you keep moving, you will not come back. The moment is lost. The whisper silenced. The conviction dissipated. Moments in which we consciously realize that we are hearing from God are priceless treasures that should not be wasted!

Using This Tool

As you read through these points, you are going to have questions. You may be inclined to wish that certain points were clearer, better explained, more obvious. You may wonder where certain points came from, unable to see them in the text yourself. Your questions and uncertainty may tempt you to skip certain bullets. My advice is that you do just the opposite. Assume that your heart and the tempter wants to keep you in the dark about the truth. It may be unconscious but the impulse to deride, censor, skip or move quickly through this metric, designed to show where your heart is out of sync with Jesus', should be considered suspect and more thoroughly examined. If a careful, reflective, honest attempt is made and there is no conviction, move on. Allow me to distinguish just a bit between conviction and condemnation. The later sounds like rejection, abuse, and attack while eliciting feelings of worthlessness, un-lovability, hopelessness and failure. Those things NEVER come from God. They may be your own voice, a parents or spouses, or the enemies, but God never communicates with those He loves after that accusatory pattern. Anything that attacks you personally is never from God. Conviction calls out your wrong without condemning you personally or questioning your intelligence or worth. While it may lead to healthy guilt (shaming is not a tactic God uses either) over wrong(s) done, it will also be restorative in nature and specific in its presentation. The enemy of our souls throws the whole book at us but the Spirit of God does not wish to overwhelm us but to bring us to repentance and restoration with Him. (We have a resource we can give you to help you better make this distinction.)

Do not assume that you are nothing but a worthless sinner because that is not true. That again is an attack on you, not conviction of sin, and "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, NASB95)! You are a saint (Ephesians 1:14; 1Peter 2:9-10;). Do however assume that you are a saint who sins (1John 1:5-10). Let God be your guide (Deuteronomy 13:4-5, 26:17-19) not the one called the accuser of our brethren, who by the way has been defeated ("thrown down" - Revelation 12:10)! Happy hunting!

Taking a Personal Heart-Inventory Using the Sermon on the Mount

5:1-12

- ✓ Do I believe, think or act like I don't need God, or am I aware of my constant need?
- ✓ Am I mourning loss – of life, possession, reputation, expectation...
- ✓ Do I need to be comforted by God and am I waiting on Him to receive it from Him?
- ✓ Am I humble, gentle, meek, patient, "long-suffering" – in spirit, words, thoughts?
- ✓ Do I have an appetite (hunger and thirst) for doing what is right?
- ✓ Is my very life and character sustained (feed, made strong, vibrant) by justice?
- ✓ Do I long to be in a right relationship/standing with God?
- ✓ Am I a merciful, caring person?
- ✓ Is my heart pure? (Psalm 24:3-6)
- ✓ Am I a peacemaker and peacekeeper?
- ✓ Am I being, or willing to be, even happy when, because of my commitment to God, I'm persecuted (mocked, lied about, put down, discredited, dishonored) for the sake of pleasing/obeying/owning God?

5:13-16

- ✓ Is my life "tasty," well-seasoned, attractive (not sour), drawing people to God?
- ✓ Does my life cloud truth or hide God, or is truth uncontainable, unquenchable in me?
- ✓ Am I so "bright," so "shiny," that my life shows (points) others the way to God?

5:17-20

- ✓ Do I just talk about living right, like keeping the 10 commandments, or do I do it, model it, teaching/showing others how to follow God's ways?
- ✓ Is my living better than mere religiosity, that outwardly looks good, puts on a false face, while underneath hiding known uncleanness, willfully deceiving others?

5:21-26

- ✓ Am I angry with anyone, enough to call them an idiot, or to wish trouble on them?
- ✓ Am I quick and careful to do whatever it takes to dissipate my anger; do I hold on to it or do I walk away from it like it's as bad for me as the flames of hell itself?
- ✓ Am I quick to settle my differences with others, to reconcile with others, to refuse to nurse wounds and rehearse hurts, to be the one that "goes first" and reconcile?

5:27-32

- ✓ Am I lusting after someone, taking prolonged looks at them, second looks, imagining them unclothed, wishing to see them naked or have a sexual encounter?
- ✓ Do I desire to "have," to be intimate with someone who's not "mine," who "belongs" to another, who's promised to another by vows of loyalty to them?
- ✓ Am I taking serious steps, ones that might be hard, might hurt, to keep from lust?
- ✓ Am I using "legal cover to mask moral failure?" (v. 32, The Message)
- ✓ Do I use cultural norms as a measure of godliness?

5:33-37

- ✓ Is my word (promise) reliable; do I do what I say; do I keep my word?
- ✓ Do I have to "swear on a stack of Bibles" before others will believe me?
- ✓ Can I be trusted to be where and when I say I will be, to follow through, to keep my vows even to my own hurt.

- ✓ Am I known as a fiercely loyal person, or one who is looking out for themselves?

5:38-48

- ✓ In defending or protecting myself, have I given others cause to defend or protect themselves because my self-defense has been to attack others?
- ✓ Am I willing to be misused, unfairly treated, and/or taken advantage so God's love is revealed to others? (not including consistent verbal, physical emotional abuse)
- ✓ Do I tend to quickly/easily feel wronged or offended, to demand my rights, or to respond with a victim mentality and entitlement?
- ✓ Am I one who unconsciously or intentional, leans toward vengeance, to be retaliatory, punitive, or penalizing others for their lack of consideration for me?
- ✓ Am I kind and loving only to those who reciprocate, or do I treat my enemies and detractors the same as I treat my friends and supporters?

6:1-18

- ✓ Am I a hypocrite?
- ✓ Do I "perform" my religion for show, for respect among other worshippers?
- ✓ Do I do good to impress others, to be admired and rewarded on earth in some way?
- ✓ Do I do "religious" things so people will think I'm more spiritual than I really am?
- ✓ Is my prayer me-focused or kingdom-focused?
- ✓ Do I live in such a way as to intentionally protect the name (reputation) of God?
- ✓ Is there anything in my private life that, if it was publically revealed, would diminish God's name with those who know that I'm a Christian?
- ✓ Do I take for granted God's provision of my needs, and/or do I complain when God refuses to meet my wants?
- ✓ Do I desire God's will be done over mine?
- ✓ Is my story one of continuing rescue from evil, or have I become content with past rescues and allowed my growth to stall out?
- ✓ Have I accepted defeat and/or am content to live with sin, or with a sin-confess-sin-confess cycle of defeat?
- ✓ Is there anyone that I refuse to forgive?

6:19-34

- ✓ Am I storing up (amassing) earthly possessions (spending more time and attention and resources there) or intentionally putting away "treasures" (rewards) in heaven?
- ✓ Do I get up in the morning because of motivation other than living in a relationship with God and doing His will? (Ex. Do I live for the weekend?)
- ✓ Where is my heart? Has it been won over by something or someone else such that those things or people receive my attention first, and God comes second?
- ✓ Is there a "master" other than God that I'm trying to serve, or sin that "rules" my life?
- ✓ Does fear and worry over my daily "provisions" consume my heart or can/does my faith in God's promises and provisions bring rest and calm?
- ✓ Do I use the picture painted by the careless birds flitting about to live my life without purpose, planning or intentionality?
- ✓ What am I seeking first, my kingdom, or God's?

7:1-6

- ✓ Am I gracious - trying to put myself in their shoes - in how I view and esteem others?
- ✓ Do I practice what I preach, remembering my own failings when I address them in others?
- ✓ Do I condemn and point out in others things I too struggle with, as if I did not?
- ✓ Do I use “do not judge” as an excuse to not talk to, with the goal of loving support not condemnation, my loved ones and friends about obvious sin in their lives? (We don’t judge people, their motives, only God knows hearts, but we are called to “judge” actions/sin (Acts 5:1-11; Galatians 6:1-3).

7:7-11

- ✓ Am I persistent in my prayers, expecting good gifts from God, believing He has my best interests in mind?
- ✓ Do I let these verses breed disappointment and anger at God when my persistence doesn’t lead to the answers that I want?
- ✓ Do I only want what I want, or what God has?

7:12

- ✓ Do I treat others the way I would want, and expect, to be treated myself?

7:13-20

- ✓ Do I look for persistent and genuine evidence of devotion to God in my own life or just assume without proof that I’m His child?
- ✓ Am I lazy/negligent in my witness with those who live like hell but claim they’re Christians or with those I know “prayed the prayer” once but don’t have proof of life?

7:21-23

- ✓ Do I say that God is my lord/leader/master but not act/live/obey like it?
- ✓ Is there seeming outward “proof” of lordship but in my heart I do only what I want?
- ✓ Do I do religious stuff, mimicking other Christians, but have no idea what God want from me specifically, and give little or no thought to knowing and doing His will?
- ✓ Dose my Christlike life prove without a doubt that God knows me?

7:24-29

- ✓ When it comes to Jesus’ teaching, does my devotion and determination to obey, and my inner peace, look more like a house on the sand at the water’s edge, or like a house built high on a rock foundation, when hit by the storms (rising waters) of life?

COLLECTIVELY - 5:1-7:29

- ✓ Do I take directives like these as specific rules, applying them strictly and mercilessly to myself and/or others, or am I able to see the intention, the heart/spirit described by these illustrations, and have grace for all with wise and relevant application?

As You Do This Heart-Check, Ask Yourself

“Is/Are There Any...”

- ✓ Actions to take?
- ✓ Attitude(s) to adjust?
- ✓ Bondage to break?

- ✓ Business to finish?
- ✓ Commitments to make?
- ✓ Disciplines to establish
- ✓ Faith/belief/trust to exercise?
- ✓ Habits to change?
- ✓ Motives to purify?
- ✓ Past to heal?
- ✓ Promises to claim?
- ✓ Restitution to make?
- ✓ Relationships to fix?
- ✓ Responses to correct?
- ✓ Sins(s) to confess?
- ✓ Thanks to give?