

Introduction

One of life's hardest (yet most important) exercises is that of evaluation. Yet every day we make evaluations:

- We evaluate our weight on scales.
- We evaluate our relationships based upon happiness.
- We evaluate our fitness based on endurance.
- We evaluate our parenting on the behavior of our children.
- We evaluate our worth based on a bank balance.
- We evaluate our well-being based on the life styles of others.
- We evaluate our success on job performance.
- ... MORE?

Life is full of inspections: food, cars, buildings, and even underwear.

Today you are asked to provide evaluation and inspection through a forest of surveys when doing business.

But what about YOU evaluating YOU? If you are like me, you can get so busy—how you are doing life?—that it is easy to overlook and even forget why you are doing it.

It is easy to just survive from week to week and never stop and ask, “Am I doing what matters or just doing much?”

“An unexamined life is not worth living.”
—Socrates

If we are not careful, we can get swept up in the process of life and forget the purpose and priorities of life. We can live accidentally and not intentionally. We can fail to invest and engage in building something that matters.

Life matters! Who you are, what you do, how you live, and where you end up in life matters. Why? Because what you do now determines not just where you will spend eternity, but how you will spend eternity.

1 Corinthians 3—Context. Paul, a pastor, is writing and exhorting a church filled with scattered, distracted and immature believers regarding the need to evaluate and refocus their lives.

Paul spent 1 1/2 years as their pastor and helped plant the church in Corinth, but it was a place known for being unruly, indulgent and edgy. He brought the message, the gospel of Christ, and many believed. But in time, their devotion waned and their focus was blurred. Division and factions developed inside the church. Their moral character was scandalized, and their public worship had become infested with selfishness and sensationalism.

For this reason, Paul wrote them to bring challenge and correction. As he writes, he begins with gentle, yet firm affection and admonition. He doesn't tear into them, but he does provide a means of evaluation regarding their spiritual condition.

"But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid

food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

—1 Corinthians 3:1-3

If you stop and evaluate, you may realize you need to line up on the chart of growth and development in the Christian life.

Then Paul begins to exhort and exalt the work of Christ in them and for them.

It is at this point, we engage our text for today's study:

"According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and

the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple" (1 Corinthians 3:10-17 ESV).



1. What is Your Life Foundation?

What are you building your life upon? Paul makes it clear there is only one sure and firm foundation. See 1 Corinthians 3:11.

Jesus ended the "Sermon on the Mount" by telling a parable about two builders. See Matthew 7:24-27.

Sadly, many are building on sand and it will not last.

Jesus is the sure foundation—this is why Paul built everything he said and did upon Christ,

the firm foundation. (Gospel: grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone.)

The security of your life and future is with and in Jesus Christ.

If you get bored with what I just said about the work of Jesus on your behalf, you don't truly understand the gravity of what He has done for you. The gospel told and remembered should DAILY spur our hearts to WORSHIP!

Sadly, too many of us don't have a sure foundation. Maybe you have gone to church, learned some Bible lessons, know a little Scripture, but you have not trusted in Christ. And apart from Him, your life will not stand in the day of judgment. Religion does not take us to heaven. Jesus gives us access and it all begins by putting faith and trust in Christ and Christ alone.

When Christ is the foundation, then all of life is centered upon and settled upon that which fits and becomes life with Him—a Christ-centered life!

One of the ways we reflect this Christ-centeredness is in the materials we use to build up from the foundation.

2. What Materials are You Using?

Right after Paul speaks of the single foundation that will endure, he then talks about materials—the materials being used to build on this foundation.

“Take particular care in picking out your building materials. Eventually there is going to be an inspection. If you use cheap or inferior materials, you’ll be found out. The inspection will be thorough and rigorous. You won’t get by with a thing. If your work passes inspection, fine; if it doesn’t, your part of the building will be torn out and started over. But you won’t be torn out; you’ll survive—but just barely. You realize, don’t you, that you are the temple of God, and God Himself is present in you? No one will get by with vandalizing God’s temple, you can be sure of that. God’s temple is sacred—and you, remember, are the temple. Don’t fool yourself. Don’t think that you can be wise merely by being up-to-date with the

times. Be God's fool—that's the path to true wisdom" (1 Corinthians 3:12-18 MSG).

The foundation will always remain unshaken, but the materials can be valuable or temporal.

- Gold, Silver, Precious Stones. These are things of quality and value—things that endure and remain.
- Wood, Hay, Straw. These are things that are weak and will not last.

There will be a fire test and some things will last and other things will simply go away.

This is serious (not a nursery rhyme). It has everything to do with your time and eternity. Paul wanted them to evaluate and refocus their lives on things that last.

What you do with your time, your energy, and your life matters. Your life matters. Your work matters. Your time matters. Your money matters.

So let's talk about what YOU are working on.
What does success look like for you?
Work? Marriage? Parenting? School?
Finances? Neighborhood? Discipleship? Any
refinements needed?

Fire burns up chaff and leaves behind what is
valuable.

Illustrate with sugar cane fire—400,000 acres
of cane Near Lake Okeechobee, FL. They
burn away the leafy portions of the plant (40
acres at a time) to expose the stalk. Once
the fire clears all the excess and debris, they
chop down the stalks (filled with sugar for
processing). You have to burn the chaff to get
the sweet, valuable goodness of sugar.

3. When Will My Life Evaluation Come?

“Each one's work will become manifest, for
the Day will disclose it, because it will be
revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort
of work each one has done” (1 Corinthians
3:13 ESV 3:13).

The DAY will disclose it! There is an
appointed time. I believe if we looked

through the lens of eternity in every area of life and every decision we make, we would probably make very different decisions on a day to day basis. It is amazing what decisions you make when you realize that time is short.

The Bible describes a day when believers will give an account to God for the life they have lived:

“So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Corinthians 5:6-10 ESV).

Is there something that needs to be “refocused” beyond yesterday/today to “the Day”? 99.99999% of your life will be lived elsewhere.

4. What Will Your Outcome Be?

“If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple (1 Corinthians 3:14-17 ESV).

... because of something called a “REWARD.” The Bible does NOT teach that heaven is a reward for a good life, but rewards will follow us to heaven as part of God’s grace and goodness in our lives.

This is not for RELEASE (to judgment and hell). You are not being judged based on salvation, but service.

“If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire” (1 Corinthians 3:15 ESV).

One thing that is very important to observe in 1 Corinthians 3:13—what SORT it is. We are not going to be judged on what size of work (how big, how well known, etc.), but the character and the nature of the work.

Things overlooked on earth will be celebrated in heaven and things celebrated on earth will often be overlooked in heaven.

One of the greatest stories from the past:

- Edward Kimball—Sunday School teacher, and God put it on his heart to impact young men...
- Dwight L. Moody—shoe salesman
- F.B. Meyer—English preacher
- Wilbur Chapman—young seminarian/evangelist
- Billy Sunday—Professional baseball player/evangelist
- Mordecai Ham—Revivalist/evangelist, prayed for Charlotte, NC revival
- Billy Graham—whose life just came to a close earlier this year, but whose influence will remain. The lasting impact will be seen and celebrated in eternity, but know this—it will be less about the success of Billy Graham and more about the faithfulness of Edward

Kimball, a Sunday School teacher in Chicago.

I fear for some in this room, heavenly rewards will go unclaimed for you.

Each year there is a Super Bowl (other big events). In the end you play, receive a ring, a jersey and your name in the program, but you don't win. You never get to don the gear.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'"
(Revelation 14:13 ESV).

Works don't take us to heaven, but they follow us there!

I think many of us are scared of saying that God blesses or rewards us because of the prosperity gospel. You see there is a simple difference in the gospel of the Bible and the prosperity gospel. It is when you receive rewards! The biblical view of the gospel says that you may suffer harm, loss, even your life now, but you will RECEIVE in eternity.

Prosperity gospel says receive everything now.

“We settle for a Christianity that revolves around catering to ourselves when the central message of Christianity is actually about abandoning ourselves.” —David Platt

God is not some mean, grim individual waiting to hand out pain and inflict judgment. If there is anything we learn from Scripture, it is the kindness, mercy, and patience of the Lord with those He loves! He will bring judgment, but just like a good Father, He desires obedience and fruitful, productive work from us!

Legacy is what you leave that continues to grow past your life!

“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6 ESV).

It is our future reward that motivates our hearts and our lives to live with bold, courageous faith here and now!

“Only one life will soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last. —C.T. Studd

If this statement is true (and it is), how would you evaluate your life today? Are you living in light of a coming inspection day? We will all face the heat of eternity and in the end, only what’s done for Christ will last.