

Spiritual Physical

Getting Fit for Our Final Exam

March 23, 2005

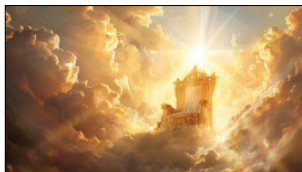


I'm gonna be your server ... and doctor, because today you're all gettin' a spiritual physical!

And it's *all* about *finding* out, how *prepared* we are to *stand* before the Lord *face to face*. But *first*, to today's question: **Are you ready to answer for your actions?** Because every day, the day draws closer, when you'll *stand, alone*, before the *throne* of the *Savior*, and *give* an *account*.

For we **[believers]** must *all* appear *before* the judgment seat of *Christ*, so that *each* of us may *receive* what is *due* us for the things done **[by us]** while in the body, whether *good* or *bad*. Since, then, we **[in the body]** know what it is to *fear* the Lord, **[as a child regards the absolute authority of a loving parent]** we try to persuade *others*. **[That]** What we are is plain to God **[our Father]**, and **[since we know "the heart is deceitful above all things" (Jer 17:9)]** I hope it is also plain to your conscience. – 2 Corinthians 5:10-11 NIV

For *none* of us **[who live in the body]** *lives* for ourselves *alone*, and *none* of us *dies* for ourselves *alone*. **[Because all of us know we'll stand alone to give an account for ourselves; so]** If we *live*, we live for the Lord; **[on account of His call and our created purpose]** and if we *die*, we die for the Lord. **[Knowing that even our death is part of His perfect plan]** So, whether we **[sincere servants]** *live* or *die*, **[we win! Because]** we belong to the Lord. ... For we will *all* stand before God's judgment seat. **[As]** It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before Me; **[and]** every tongue will acknowledge God.'" So then, **[let's keep in mind that]** each of us **[sincere servants who belong to the Lord]** will give an account of ourselves to God. – Romans 14:10-12 NIV



And our *account* will involve *answering* five *essential* aspects concerning our *created purpose*. And there'll be *no pulling the wool* over *His* eyes! So, in *order* to have five *good and faithful answers* up *there*, we *need* to do *all* we can *down here* and *now*, to *prepare* our *heart* for our *five-part, created-purpose, final exam*.



For instance: 1) **We were created to believe in something.** Namely the *One true God* and *Father* of all the *living*. And since *true belief* means **recognizing** and **receiving** and **responding** to our *Creator's* authority, the *question* will *simply* be: **Did you love Me above all else?** Yes or no? *Imagine* if the *answer* is *no*. *Yikes!* At *best* it would be a *soul-crushing realization*, in the *presence* of my *Creator*, that I'd *refused* to *experience* the *truest love* for which I was *created!* And *worse* yet, it'll *all* be *unthinkingly obvious* and *irresistibly appealing!*



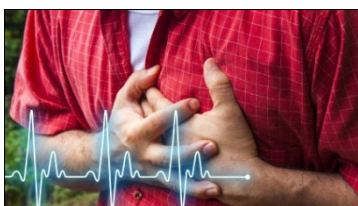
And there's *four more* *created-purpose categories* to *answer for!* Because: 2) **We were also created to belong to something.** His *body*. His *flock*. And since *true belonging* involves **interacting** and **interrelating** and **interconnecting** with *other* believers, the *question* will be: **Did you bond with My kids?** You *know*, your *eternal brothers* and *sisters*. Yes or no?



And: 3) **We were created to become something** (i.e. what *He* would be if *He* were *me*). And since *true becoming* requires **discipline** and **devotion** and **dedication** (to *examine His example* and *put it into practice*), the question will be: **Did you act like Me if I were thee?** Yes or no? (He mainly speaks King James when it rhymes!) And since *He's the Vine* and *we're the branches*: (Jn 15:5) 4) **We were created to branch out to something**. Cuz we're called to *sow and grow and bear fruit*. And *true branching* is all about **extending the Good News of the cross of Christ as the tree of eternal life**, with our family and friends and neighbors around the world. So *this question* will be: A) **Did you share Me?** Yes or no? And if so: B) **With grace?** And finally: 5) **We were created to bestow something**: *our service on His behalf*. And since *true bestowing* always involves our **time** and **talents** and **treasures** (to *meet the needs that match our resources*), the question will be: **Did you care for others as only you could?** Yes or no? And in that moment, before His throne, standing alone, face to face, finally fully seeing, knowing, and understanding, and then giving your one-on-One account about what you did with what you were given, imagine what you'd be willing to give to be able to give a resounding, "Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes A! Yes B! And, YES!"

It's not like He didn't lay out a warning in simple, children's story terms, saying:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants [that's us] and delivered his goods to them. [That's our created potential] 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. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. [YAY!] And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. [YAY!] But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. [BOO!] After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts ... [when they came to him to give an account] He who had received five talents came and brought five other talents ... [and] His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant ... Enter into the joy of your lord.' [YAY!] He also who had received two talents came and ... His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant ... Enter into the joy of your lord.' [YAY!] Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord ... I was afraid, and went and hid your talent [BOO!] ... But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant ... you ought to have [at least] deposited my money with the bankers [who could've helped you increase your talent] ... So take the talent [that was only on loan] from him' ... For to everyone who has [gained from the goods they've been given], more will be given ... but from him who does not have [any gain from God's entrusted goods], even what he has [on loan] will be taken away.'" – Matthew 25:14-29 NKJ



Which is why **God places a high value on self-examination**. Again and again we're warned to examine and strengthen our spiritual self.

[Paul writes] Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; [and not merely in the church] test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – 2 Corinthians 13:5-6 NIV

For it is *God* who works in you ... to *fulfill* His *good purpose*. – Philippians 2:13 NIV



But *you*, dear friends, must continue to build your lives on the *foundation* of your holy *faith*. And continue to pray as you are *directed* by the Holy Spirit. – Jude 1:20 NLT



Cuz *He's* doing *battle* in our *self-deceiving hearts*, to do *all* He *can* with the *limited cooperation* and *time* that He's got to *get* us *good* and *ready* to *fly right* through that *final exam*, so we can *enter into* the *joy* of our *Lord*! So, we're gonna test ourselves for the *five vital signs* of a *good and faithful servant*!

How many of you happen to remember *Dr. Harry Worley*? He *delivered* me. And he was my *pediatrician* – and the *only doctor* I knew *growing up*. And in my *twenties*, I hadn't *seen* him for *years*. But I *needed* a *physical exam*. So I *called* and *made* an *appointment*. Nobody *told* me he'd *become* a *gynecologist* about *five years earlier*! And I didn't *know* I *needed* to *ask*! And he was *aging out* his *pediatric patients*. So maybe *that's* why the receptionist *made* the *appointment*. I don't know. I *do* have a *high voice*. So, I *check in* and *sit down*. It's just *me* and the *ladies*. And they're *giving* me *strangely curious glances*. And I'm just *smiling back* like a *dope*. One *asked* if I'm *waiting* for my *wife*. *No*. *Odd question*. Then I'm *led* into an *examination room*. And it doesn't *feel right*. Kind of like a woman *entering* a *restroom* and seeing a *urinal*. But, *Dr. Worley* comes *in* and he *couldn't* be *nicer*. But then, *after* the *exam*, He *tells* me *he's* a *gynecologist*, and he's been *phasing out* his *pediatric patients*, and I'm a *little too old*, and a *lot too male*, to *come back*. And *as* I *left*, through the *lobby*, the *ladies* looked at *me*, and I *smiled* with *relief* and *said*, “*Not pregnant!*”

So, for our spiritual physical, we need to *know* we're being *examined* by the *right physician*, by *asking five vital questions*, to make sure we don't *end up* in the *wrong place*! And you can *grade* your *current condition*, with an **A for Fit**, a **B for Effort**, a **C for Feeble**, or a **D for Flat-lining**.

Ready to see how ready you are to settle your account? Well, ready or not ...

First off, when it comes to **BELIEVING**, we need to *test* our *faith* by asking: 1) **What is the center of my life?** Which is *all* about *worship* and *devotion*. Cuz, if we *fail* to *devote* ourselves to our *Lord* we'll find a *substitute*: *career*, *sports*, *hobbies*, *money*, *family*, or *whatever*. It's not *will* I be *devoted* to something; it's, **what am I actually devoted to?** Because *something* is the *center* of your *life*, around which the *majority* of your *decisions* and *desires* revolve. And **it's either the Savior or a substitute**. Because, we *can't* serve *two masters*. (Mt 6:24) So *how* would you *grade* yourself when it comes to *recognizing*, *receiving*, and *responding* to His *authority*, with a *well-developed plan* for *deepening* your *intimacy*; as well as *praising* Him and *worshipping* Him *physically* and *emotionally*, *publicly* and *privately*? Circle: A B C D (Fit, Effort, Feeble, or Flat-lining).

And when it comes to **BELONGING**, we need to *ask*: 2) **What is the community of my life?** Which is *all* about *fellowship* and *relationships*. Cuz **we're designed to grow together, not apart**, which is *why* we must *interact* with *growing believers*. **Spiritual fruit (like patience, kindness, and goodness) can't grow in isolation**. We need *others* to *encourage* us, *confront* us, *irritate* us, and *support* us; and *to* whom we can *return* the *favor*. So, **who are you influencing and being influenced by?** And what *grade* do you *give* yourself for *interacting*, *interrelating*, and just *plain connecting* with your *fellow followers* of *Christ*? A B C D (Fit, Effort, Feeble, or Flat-lining).

And when it comes to **BECOMING**, we have to ask: 3) **What is the character of my life?** Which is *all* about *discipleship* and *discipline*. There are only a *couple things* you can take to Heaven, and *Christ-like character* is one of 'em! We're all developing *habits*. Question is: **Am I developing Godly habits?** Habits flow from our *values, attitudes, and day-to-day decisions*. And so, **if we fail to focus on acting like Christ, we'll reflexively act like our parents, peers, or favorite personalities**. So, what *grade* do you get for the *discipline, devotion, and dedication* it takes to put *His example* into *practice* in your *day-to-day life*? A B C D

And when it comes to **BRANCHING**, we need to ask: 4) **What is the communication of my life?** Which is *all* about our *calling* as Christ's *ambassadors*, to *share our life openly*, and to *reach out readily and respectfully* to our *family, friends, and whoever happens to sit next to us on an airplane!* Remember, you can *only* take a *couple things* to Heaven, and the *other* is *others*. So, **who are you bringing with you? Or are you content (for now) to leave 'em all behind?** What *grade* do you *give yourself* in regard to *reaching out* to those in *desperate need* of God's *love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, and eternal life* through Christ? A B C D

And when it comes to **BESTOWING**, we have to ask: 5) **What is the contribution of my life?** Which is *all* about *caring for others* by *serving our created purpose*. Because **you were created to contribute to God's creation**. And He created *each of us* with a *unique set of skills and passions* and *financial means* expressly for this *purpose*. So, **are you caring for the needs you're cut out for?** Because, *true greatness* isn't *gauged* by *who serves you*, but *who you serve*. **The only good thing you should leave behind, is a legacy**. So what *grade* do you *give* the way you *use your time, talents, and treasure* – *consistently, proportionally, and sacrificially*? A B C D



Okay. Now let's hook you up to a heart monitor.

Transfer your grades by making a dot on the graph above each of the five created purpose categories.

And now connect the dots to see your *spiritual EKG* (Eternal Kingdom Grade). **Can you see which entrusted goods need attention to improve your condition?**

Now it's time to write your *prescription*. Just put an X in any box (below) that's next to a category for which you gave yourself a C or a D. Each one has seven Scriptures to target the problem.

- BELIEVE (1 Pet 2:4-10; Jn 15:1-8; Lk 6:43-49; Eph 2:13-22; Jn 10:27-30; Jms 1:19-27; Mt 7:21-23)
- BELONG (Eph 4:11-18; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Rom 12:1-16; Jn 15:9-17; Col 3:12-17; 1 Jn 4:7-21; Heb 10:19-25)
- BECOME (1 Jn 2:1-17; Phil 2:1-16; Jn 13:1-17; Eph 4:17-32; Col 3:1-10; 2 Pet 1:1-11; Heb 12:1-15)
- BRANCH (Jn 15:1-17; Eph 2:1-10; Mt 5:14-16; 1 Pet 3:8-17; Lk 9:57-62; 2 Tim 1:6-14; 2 Cor 5:14-20)
- BESTOW (Jms 2:14-26; Mt 25:31-46; Gal 5:13-26; Lk 12:35-48; Gal 6:1-10; 1 Pet 4:8-11; Mk 10:42-45)

Now just take your *daily meditation*. **Read one each morning, and let it settle in throughout the day**. And after *seven days*, if you *don't see improvement, repeat*. We'll *stand alone*, but we're *in this together!* And now that we have *no excuses*, what say we *improve the health* of our *body!*

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.