

Some questions for self-examination from Colossians 3:5-17

Self-examination is an historic discipleship practice for Christians, dating back to the earliest centuries of Church history. Like many historic practices, self-examination has been much misunderstood over time. The idea of reflecting on a set of questions suggested by a text of Scripture, or a theological insight, is to enable the Holy Spirit to shape and form us more into the likeness of Christ, so that, empowered by his risen life living in us and among us we may receive more fully the benefits of his redemption of us achieved once for all at the Cross.

Accordingly, the practice of self-examination isn't meant to be a fishing expedition, demanding that you agonize in prayer until you come up with something, anything, that sort of fits each question, so that you can feel appropriately guilty about not being able to do anything about it!

Rather, as you pray through the list, invite the Spirit of God to show you anything He wants you to see – remembering that the goal of exposing our sin is to get rid of it by first enabling us to take it to the Cross, where Jesus once for all has triumphed over the powers of evil that by his sacrifice have been completely disabled from keeping us in bondage – and in its place receiving new empowerment from the Holy Spirit to live God's way instead.

So here are the self-examination questions suggested by Colossians 3:5-17:

1. Are we being real with God about the ways we are tempted to sin sexually, even if only in our minds? That's where sin always begins. (vv. 5-7)
2. How about our mouths? How are we doing at speaking truth in love? (vv. 8-10)
3. Do we see and relate to all believers as brothers and sisters in Christ, without distinctions based on ethnic or social backgrounds? Do we take our mutual identity only from Christ? (v. 11)
4. Do we recognize our need to depend absolutely on God for these character qualities that, apart from him, are unachievable otherwise? Are we more and more relinquishing control in our lives to The Umpire, the Holy Spirit? (vv.12-15)
5. How are we doing at overlooking trivial offenses; at asking for and receiving forgiveness when the offense isn't trivial? (v. 13)
6. How is our worship life? Are we engaged in fellowship in a setting close enough to allow us to speak truth-in-love into one another's lives, and to receive from one another? (v. 16)
7. Are we thankful to God for his blessings – not just individually, but as a body? (vv. 15-17)
8. What is the one next thing that we need to work on, to do it "in the Name of the Lord Jesus"? (v. 17)