

It is difficult to do what is right if we don't see the truth about ourselves

One of the most familiar stories in the New Testament is that of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32). The story describes a young man who, having wasted his inheritance, finally made the decision to go back home and seek his father's forgiveness. He did this, the text indicates, only after he "came to himself" (Lk. 15:17). The Prodigal Son changed his course of action for the better when he changed his thinking about himself, that is, when he learned to see the truth about who he really was. A more truthful view of himself led to actions that were more beneficial.

It is difficult to do what is right if we don't see the truth about ourselves. On the one hand, if we are puffed up with pride and think too much of ourselves, we'll not find it easy to live as we should. But on the other hand, if we think of ourselves as worthless and hopeless, living as we should will not be easy either. We are powerfully affected in our outward actions by the inward concept we have of ourselves. If we are to have any hope of a quality relationship with God — and hence, a quality life — we are going to have to answer the question "Who am I?" in a way that is true to reality. In the long run, nothing good comes out of thinking that is based on falsehood.

Having been created in God's own image (Gen. 1:27), we are personal beings. And personal beings are worth more than non-personal beings. We may have squandered many of the good things God has given us, but even so, we have a value that is ours just because God made us in His image. Speaking of the birds of the air, Jesus said to His followers, "Are you not of more value than they?" (Mt. 6:26). A human being is worth more than an animal, and that applies to each of us. So we each need to see ourselves in terms of what we are worth to the God who made us. Our worth to God is "inherent" in being who we are: His creatures.

As we study and meditate this week, let's consider how important it is to see our value as persons — and then to live accordingly. If we degrade ourselves in our own thinking, we'll probably live in a way that is consistent with that thinking. But if we see ourselves as children of the King, we'll live another sort of life. God wants each of us to be all that He created us to be, and He will help us reach that goal. Are we willing to accept His help?

Monday: Genesis 1:26,27

Key Idea: The Bible teaches that we are made in God's own image.

Questions for Family Growth: What are some of the things that might be involved in the "image" of God that we bear? What are some characteristics that personal beings have that non-personal beings don't have? What do we mean when we say we have "freedom of the will"?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 20:20.

Tuesday: Ecclesiastes 12:13,14

Key Idea: A right relationship with God is what we were created to enjoy.

Questions for Family Growth: In **v.13**, what does Solomon say about the importance of fearing God and keeping His commandments? What do passages like **Deut. 10:12,13** and **Mic. 6:8** say about our basic duties to God?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:21**.

Wednesday: Matthew 6:25-34

Key Idea: As personal beings created in God's image, we have personal worth and value.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus mean in **v.26** when He said that we have more "value" than the birds of the air? Does our worth to God depend on our worldly wealth, worldly accomplishment, and such things?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:22**.

Thursday: Hebrews 4:11-13

Key Idea: We are accountable to God for how we live our lives.

Questions for Family Growth: How much does God know about us? What does it mean that we will "give account" to God? Knowing that we are accountable to God, what practical difference should that make in our lives?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:23**.

Friday: 1 Corinthians 15:58

Key Idea: The only things we do that will last are the things we do "in the Lord."

Questions for Family Growth: What is the "work of the Lord" and why should we "abound" in it? What does it mean that "in the Lord your labor is not in vain"? What does **Psa. 127:1,2** say about our efforts in life?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 20:24**.

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