



Intro

Why do I go to other churches and always leave happy, but...so often leave discouraged about myself at RH?

The answer is b/c we teach the whole Bible. There are passages, like Ecclesiastes that the Holy Spirit uses to not only encourage but exhort and rebuke. Hard words produce soft hearts, so in essence Ecclesiastes produces deep joy in God.

Who feels this way? What has this produced in your life? Can you identify signs that while you are discouraged about yourself that there is a correlating encouragement from who Jesus is what he has done for us? What particular aspect of redemption has been particularly encouraging recently? (Christ's imputed righteousness, forgiveness, appeasing God's wrath, reconciliation...)

“Ok. So what do we do”? The answer from last week: the Wise Lean In to God and Live Life Deeply the fool wallows in laziness and excuses. But practically how?

‘A wise mans heart inclines him to the right, but a fools heart to the left.’ Ecc 10:2

Wisdom and folly in life are matters of the heart. The heart is (biblically) the wellspring of all that you are. It's the entirety of your inner man...mind / affections / will. It's your mind that informs your affections of the source of your greatest joy, your affections stir you and with your mind imagine it and long for it, to the point that your will leads you to pursue it. So, people and circumstances don't make us say the things that we do. Our hearts do.

Here's the kicker...the heart is terribly deceitful. It's hard for us to truly know our own hearts perfectly.

“For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” Galatians 5:17,
Indwelling sin, or remaining sin, is present in each of us. It is tenacious, destructive, and unremitting in its opposition to grace.

As a result, many of us live in the dark to ourselves...listen to John Owen:

Many men live in the dark to themselves all their days; whatever else they know, they know not themselves. They know their outward estates, how rich they are, and the condition of their bodies as to health and sickness they are careful to examine; but as to their inward man, and their principles as to God and eternity, they know little or nothing of themselves. Indeed, few labor to grow wise in this matter, few study themselves as they ought, are acquainted with the evil of their own hearts as they ought; on which yet the whole course of their obedience, and consequently of their eternal condition, doth depend.

If we are going to be men and women whose lives move further away from the portrait of the fool in Ecclesiastes, we must be men and women who are passionate about knowing our soul. We must be passionate about studying our hearts.

Why don't we do this? What patterns in your life indicate that you are afraid of how “deep the rabbit hole goes”? What does this indicate about how much your trust God: the Holy Spirit to search and Jesus to heal? What are you afraid of? How are these fears alleviated through the gospel?

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by doing so you will save both yourself and your hearers.” 1 Timothy 4:16

Conclusion...Fools Do Not Watch Their Life and Doctrine, Wise Men and Women do.

This is for all of us...(or **Priesthood of the Believers**) For while some are called aside by God to give special attention to the leading of God's people and the preaching of His Word...all of us are speaking words of wisdom or foolishness everyday to various hearers.

Do you feel the weight of this verse upon your soul? If not, why do you dismiss it? (Note: that we

always make time for what is most important.)

Your Life and Doctrine Are Inseparable

1. You cannot watch your life accurately unless you understand sound doctrine.
2. And it does you no good whatsoever to study doctrine unless you also apply it to your life.
But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. James 1:22-24

Your Watch Must Be Persistent (close and consistent, not casual and occasional)

“Keep a close watch on yourself. . .”

But often, we behave as if this verse were directed at someone, anyone, other than ourselves. We could make a list a mile long of other things that we'd rather keep a persistent watch on other than our soul.

Where have you fallen into this trap? With whom have you been too eager to point out their faults? Has it been because we have lost sight of our own sin and our desperate need for a redeemer? How would you treat this person differently with this new perspective?

If You Do Not Watch...

'even when you walk, you (the fool) will lack sense, and you will say to everyone that you are a fool...your toil will wear you out b/c you don't know where you are going and your lips will consume you.' Ecc 10:3

So. How Do We Do It?: Tools For Keeping Watch of your life and doctrine on a daily / weekly basis
Here's one strategy. Not a rule. But a way to cultivate..

- Daily or Weekly set aside a time in the evening
- Make a List of The Evidences of Gods's Grace in Your Life
- **Watch Your Life & Doctrine - See the “Tools for Living in 3D” in the handout..**

Do Not Watch Your Life Alone

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Hebrews 3:12-13

God answers by saying, I have given you myself and one another in order that you may protect your heart from deceitfulness (illusions) and their hardening effects. You need that help everyday.

Heart work is certainly hard work. It's humbling work. But it's necessary work because sin is always at work. And that, my friends, is why we need one another. Although it is not easy to specifically confess my sin to others, the reality is that I cannot watch myself by myself. I need others. I need the discerning eyes of friends on my heart and life to fulfill this command. God in his wisdom has designed it so. If left to myself, my discernment of sin would be deficient, and my growth in godliness limited. Because I can often see other people's sin clearly, I assume that I can see my sin clearly. But it doesn't work that way. My own sin has an unusual ability to blind me, almost as if it never existed. The sin of a sinner is self-deceiving. - CJ Mahaney

*Since each of us still has sin remaining in us, we will have pockets of spiritual blindness. Our most important vision system is not our physical eyes. We can be physically blind and live quite well. But when we are spiritually blind, we cannot live as God intended. Physically blind people are always aware of their deficit and spend much of their lives learning to live with its limitations. But the Bible says that we can be spiritually blind and yet think that we see quite well. We even get offended when people act as if they see us better than we see ourselves! The reality of spiritual blindness has important implications for the Christian community. The Hebrews passage [Heb. 3:13] clearly teaches that personal insight is the product of community. **I need you in order to really see and know myself.** Otherwise, I will listen to my own arguments, believe my own lies, and buy into my own delusions. My self-perception is as accurate as a carnival mirror. If I am going to see myself clearly, I need you to hold the mirror of God's Word in front of me. - Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemers Hands.**

Take a step back and think honestly about the nature and depth of the conversations in your Community gatherings and in the relationships of the members. Where can you see the fruit of spiritual blindness being overcome with the help of others? Does this characterize your Community and friendships? How can you cultivate this for the sake of your souls?

Since my self-perception is as accurate as a carnival mirror, I need to ask others to hold up the mirror of God's Word. I need to humbly, but diligently and aggressively, seek out appropriate individuals and implore them to help me see my sin. And I must honestly inform them about my temptations and sins instead of presenting a carefully edited or flattering version of myself. If I limit the evaluation of myself to myself, I will simply deceive myself . . . I certainly won't be fooling anybody else! – CJ Mahaney

What fears rise in your heart as you heard this? Why are Christians naturally resistant? Why are we in this room resistant? Have you been hurt by well meaning (or not so well meaning) folks in the past that you let see your sin? Are you afraid of being judged for what you really are?

Consider some of the root (or real) barriers to this level of honesty with others: pride, unbelief, rebellion, bitterness, unforgiveness...

“Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

So as you and I obey the conditional elements of verse 16 we should have every confidence that God will preserve us and those whom we serve. Here's why: this promise, like every promise of salvation found in Scripture, is guaranteed in and fulfilled by the finished work of the *“one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* (1 Tim. 2:5)...*in whom every promise is yes and Amen.* (2 Cor 1:20.)

The Power of the Gospel to accomplish

Who stands behind this Word and guarantees the fruit of our obedience? What empowers your close watching and diligent persistence? The cross of Christ! Without Christ's finished work on the cross, the burden of this verse would be too much to bear. But because of the Savior, you can have hope that your life will increasingly reflect the transforming effects of the gospel. And you can have hope that your ministry in the church will contribute to the preservation of yourself and your brothers and sisters.

After you discussion this week, encourage one another with this reality from scripture. Some other good verses in addition to the ones above are:

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, **13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-14

14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Hebrews 10:14

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. **27** And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. **28** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. **29** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. **30** And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. Romans 8:26-30

19 And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, **20** that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. Ezekiel 11:19-20

39 I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. **40** I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. **41** I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul. Jeremiah 29:39-41