



February 13, 2005

Usefulness

There are many things in the world that are made for a specific purpose. Some of these things work well and others are simply fodder for the landfills and future generations of archaeologists who might try to figure why all the metal, glass and plastic was wasted. In thinking about our spiritual lives it may be that we need to think about how useful to God we are at the present time. It would also be interesting to ask ourselves how useful we could be, exploring the potential that we have to develop and grow as a Christian. Then it would be interesting to really spend some time and try to picture how useful we might be optimally in the sight of God. This process, I believe, is partly what Paul meant when he wrote, ***“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobrates?”*** (2 Cor 13.5). We generally apply this to matters of doctrine and faithfulness. Taking that a step further we may realize that this self examination involves looking not just at what we are doing and whether this is scriptural, but at looking at the things that we are not doing as well. The absence of some things in our lives may indicate that we have no ability to do something, but it may also indicate that we have not pushed ourselves to develop new talents and skills that may help us and those around us. Sometimes we see certain functions as being outside the realm of possibility in our view of our personal skills. What if we had to do something ? I have seen situations where some have been ready to just give up when things became a bit uncertain and uncomfortable. Many times that signals not a lack of ability to do what needs to be done, but a lack of willingness to do that which we could do if we wanted to and had to. Another way in which we do not achieve this goal of becoming more spiritual and therefore more useful to God, is by not overcoming the things that weaken us from time to time. There are problems and cares that we will all have to face for a lifetime perhaps. There may even be moments when those things overwhelm us and in spite of our best intentions we find ourselves doing something that we should not. Taking a look at this situation we have to ask ourselves a few questions about our lives. What can make us stronger and prevent or severely limit these periodic failures? One thing is prayer. Christ told his disciples, when he returned to them and found them sleeping, ***“Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”*** (Luke 22.46). This is the second time that Christ had stated this. The first time was a short period earlier before he left the disciples to pray (Luke 22.40). Prayer is that which reminds us that God is with us if we will remember him. When we are not talking to God and relying on him we allow the isolation of our own emotions to gain a measure of control that may eventually lead to other things if we are not careful. What about teaching? Do we find ourselves useful to God in this area? When opportunities present themselves, do we use them? Most of the time that we fail to grasp an opportunity to teach someone may be related more to not knowing enough about God’s word than about concern over offending someone. Paul reminded Timothy, ***“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”*** (1 Tim 4.13). How much do we read and study at home and other times when we are away from other Christians? Have we really applied ourselves to this to the point that God would approve of us and our knowledge? One thing that creates an obstacle for us is an unseen danger of being too familiar with certain scriptures. Reading over certain areas of the Bible, that we have covered perhaps hundreds of times, may cause not to linger as long over certain passages as we might if they were not so well known. Studying God’s word means that we will ask ourselves what certain passages mean. Wondering if we really understand them that way that we should. We can ask ourselves if we are able to adequately explain these passages to someone else so that they might understand them as well. We may wind up singing in the shower or in the car, but do we practice teaching a Bible passage when we are driving along or doing nothing else. Could we occupy our minds with God and his word while doing other repetitive tasks that we no longer have to think about to do? All of this is possible. How much do we want to think about God? We want him to think about us all the time. But really, how useful are we to him. Would he hire us to do a job if there was an interview process that we had to go through?

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