

Coach House Church BEACONS

ACCOUNTS

2ND JUNE 2021

It's that time of year when accountants can start to relax a bit. From the start of April to the end of May they are busy poring over figures that relate to the previous financial year. Taxes have to be paid and reports prepared. Investors and shareholders want to know how their company is doing. Are we making more money than last year? Now whilst this might seem boring to most people it is a very necessary and important activity. Most of this information is required by law and must be published in the approved way.

It is also about this time of year that zoos like Chester or London will be counting all their animals and making lists and inventories. It is important for the zoo to know how they are doing in terms of breeding rare species and the general well-being of the animals in their care. Taking stock is also something we do ourselves. Whether that is checking our bank account balance or maybe just looking in the cupboard before you go shopping to see if you need any more beans.

If you have children you, will be constantly checking on what they are doing and you will receive regular reports from the school, but what about our faith? How often do we check our faith to see how we are doing?

This is what Paul wrote in his second letter to the Corinthian Church

"Examine yourself to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you. If not, you have failed the test of genuine faith."

So Paul is suggesting here that we examine ourselves. I remember having exams at school. Lots of questions that didn't seem to bear any relationship with the lessons I had been to. Of course in this case I had no idea what the questions were

going to be, but if I test myself then I would need to make up the questions so then I should know the answers. This means that any test of myself is more like the audit process undertaken by the accountants.

Before we look at what this might look like in practice let us consider what it means to have a "genuine faith"

Jesus said "Love the Lord your God with all your heart all your soul and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is equally important: Love your neighbour as yourself. The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments"

So we could ask ourselves "Do I Love the Lord with ALL my heart, ALL my soul, ALL my mind, or is there a part of my mind or heart that is concentrating on something else?"

We could also ask "How much do I love my neighbours?"

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthian Church he wrote a well known passage about love. "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful, or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable and it keeps no record of being wronged....Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful and endures through every circumstance"

This passage gives us a few pointers to the things in our lives that we could test or examine to see if our faith is genuine.

Another example for us comes from the letter of James. In it he writes "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you" I would read you more of the letter of James if we had time as it contains plenty more to say on this subject, perhaps when we see how to put this into practice you could read James for yourself and meditate on its content.

The last two topics I will mention are Prayer and Fellowship. "How much do I pray? Who do I pray for? How often do I share with other believers?"

So how do I put all this into practice? Well first and foremost I cannot tell you what questions to ask yourself. You will need to decide what it is that you need to test

yourself on as this will be different for everybody. There is one thing though that I can tell you and that is that the answer to most of the questions will be "Not enough"

It would be easy at this point to lose heart, but that would be missing the point. We all fail before God. Even the apostle Paul said "I do what I don't want to do, and I don't do what I want to do" He found that serving God is difficult, and that we get sidetracked into other stuff, avoiding the good things that we know we need to do but somehow don't.

The good news is this: Jesus died for our sins, and this includes our waywardness and foolishness. He sees our heart when we turn to Him and not our failings. But this doesn't mean that we can just do what we like. We must work to sustain our faith. James wrote in his letter "So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds it is dead and useless"

So how does my personal audit work? Well first of all it involves quite a bit of commitment, it might be something that you do for many years. This years accounts are only relevant when viewed against last years accounts. So it is with us. We ought to know if we are more profitable for God this year than we were last year. Are we moving forwards or backwards? Of course you could try to create last years accounts by just remembering what you were like but it works best if you keep accurate notes over several years.

To do this you will need to consider how you want to measure yourself. Some things are easier to measure than others, for example if you want to think about prayer you could keep a note of how much time you spend in prayer or how many times you went to the prayer meeting at church. Over time this will build up a picture of how you are doing. Maybe it isn't the time spent that is important, it might be about how close this brings you to The Lord. This is harder to measure but you could give yourself a score out of 10, keep a note of it, then if you do the same next year you will be able to see the change.

You can also measure fellowship in absolute terms but for things like patience or not giving up you might need to use the score out of 10.

All of this is, of course, personal to you, it doesn't need to be shared with anyone so you can be very honest about it. Keep your notes safe so that you have an accurate account of your faith and return to them at regular intervals. Ask God to

show you the things you ought to consider, He knows better than we do what our failings are.

I hope you find this process useful and I hope it also blesses you and brings you closer to The Lord.



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