

## Ask Sermon Series: Prayer of Examination

By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison

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### Psalm 139:23-24

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

<sup>24</sup> *See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

(Scripture reading of Psalm 139 goes first)

There are 2 kingdoms: the Kingdom of Self (innate) and the Kingdom of God. How do we move from self to God? By a commitment to Follow Jesus. We do that in many ways. Prayers, Presence, Gifts, Service & Witness. One of the most important things we can do is to Pray. We'll spend the month of October discussing this important topic. We'll also provide some specific opportunities, such as Sunday afternoons from 4:30-5:30 in October and on Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>, an all-day Prayer meeting on the day before the General Election. We also have a class on prayer.

**World Communion** Sunday is today. It's interesting in that we have a team of 4 people who flew into Beirut yesterday for an exploratory conversation about responding to the Refugee Crisis in Syria. Christians all over the world share Communion today. As we begin a new sermon series on **PRAYER** today, we join our voices with them in prayer. Prayer is how we communicate with God. It's part of a relationship based on Trust & Invitation. It's basically about aligning w the KOG. If our tires are out of alignment, they wobble or shimmy and can wear out the tread or even cause an accident.

There are various aspects of prayer, but today we'd look at the topic of "Prayer of **Examination**". It's been said "**An unexamined life is not worth living.**" Knowing WHY we think/act as we do can be a powerful asset. It helps to try to understand why someone else acts as they do, but we must do that for us, too. Jesus mentioned not trying to remove the speck from our brother's eye when we have a log in our own. Paul said: **Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test? 2 Cor 13:5-6**

Some might spend TOO MUCH time self-examining, leading to being self-absorbed. But many of us seldom, if ever, take the time to examine ourselves, which can lead us to missing God's Will for our lives.

Here are some examples of Examinations:

1) Teacher w students    2.) Doctor/Dentist w patients    3.) Military officer w soldiers

- 4) Lawyer cross-examining a witness 5) Coach w an athlete 6) Boss w an employee  
7) IRS audit w a taxpayer 8) Police w a suspect 9) Building inspector 10) Termites/mildew/mold

Few of us like exams – whether in the classroom or in the doctor’s office. While we might be given an “A” or a “clean bill of health,” an exam always poses the possibility that we can get an “F” or hear the doctor say, “There’s something suspicious here.” (One doctor told me once that he’d heard about what I had but had never seen it before – and he was genuinely excited that I was novelty for him – though I was able to contain my enthusiasm).

“Why?” should we examine ourselves? The purpose of **SCRIPTURE** is to bring us to God. Scripture urges us to examine ourselves. Found 36x in the Bible, but 24/36 are in Leviticus 13/14 where it talks about the Priest’s role to examine the body for sores, rashes, itches and disease, and also to examine clothing and walls for mildew. The examination was intended to prevent bad things from getting worse.

Our judgments can be wrong. Jer 17:9-10 *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? "I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."* The problem with many judgments is that they are often based on inadequate or bad evidence. Other judgments may have conflicts of interests. Movie

How has God been at work in our midst – even in ways when we’ve not seen His activity among us? A glorious sunrise/sunset, a song we heard on the radio, a kind gesture extended to us – or a loud neighbor who interrupted a quiet evening.

**AWARENESS.** Until we are aware of something, it’s very hard to change. This is the 1<sup>st</sup> step.

- Have I lost my sense of **GOD**? David described God as both Creator and as Personal. He was in **AWE** of that. There was nothing routine or typical about David’s description of the handiwork of God. From the telescope to the microscope – God is amazing. And this incredible God loves me. God knows everything about me and still loves me. God wants me to be in his family forever God loves me just as I am or do I feel I’ve got to make myself loveable first? That the Sovereign, Creator God has also made/knows me is too wonderful to try to grasp: I’m fearfully and wonderfully made.
- Have I lost my sense of my **OWN NEED**? I’m not God.

- Have I lost my sense of **SIN**? The first 18 verses of Psalm 139 are full of gratitude, awe and wonder. But verse 19 (to quote Donald Trump) “is a disaster.” In the midst of one of the most beautiful of all the Psalms, this brutal honesty and hatred appears. Personally, I’d like to completely omit 19-23. Others seem to only want to pray 19-22. But we must keep this Psalm in context: 20/24 verses are very positive. That’s 5/6 verses. And what we glean from this is that God ALREADY knows our hearts – and invites us into a relationship with Him. David is passionate here; he doesn’t want God’s Name taken in vain. That hurts my heart when people say “Jesus Christ.” But we don’t need to hate anyone for God.

- David spoke about the **SPiRiT** of God in **139:7** *Where can I go from your Spirit?* Paul spoke about the Spirit-filled life in **Galatians 5:13-21**

*You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. (Galatians 5:13-15)*

*So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. (Galatians 5:16-18)*

*The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. (Galatians 5:22-26)*

Many of us no higher agenda than to live for ourselves. Life is reduced to our wants, needs and feelings. We are obsessed with our own happiness. We might say, “But I’m not hurting anyone!” “But are you HELPING anyone?” And more importantly, “Are you following God’s will for your life?” “The S.S. United States” was completed in 1952. It was built at a cost of about \$725 million – and the U.S. Government paid about \$500 million of it. The idea was they’d build this

enormous ship which could transport 15,000 soldiers anywhere in the world to fight as quickly as possible. It set speed records, too. It could travel 10,000 miles w/o stopping. But it was never used for its original purpose. During the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 it was on a state of emergency, but it was never used. It was later re-fitted with bars, casinos, elegant staterooms, etc., but it was never used for its intended purpose. Today it sits in dock in Philadelphia which costs \$60,000 per month to maintain it.

- It's possible to attend a worship service week in and week out for years w/o having a single experience of spiritual examination. Why are we here? What are we doing here every week? Are we taking this seriously or just playing church?
- Do I have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ? If you follow Jesus, your sins will be forgiven, you will have the gift of eternal life and you will have a reason to get out of bed every day.

We don't want to miss OUR "intended purpose" in life (God's will for us). The One who gives us our purpose can help us, to not only keep things from "getting worse," but to actually cause us to get BETTER. He has the power to do that. Because He made us, loves us, saves us, we can trust His examination of us. He will discover NOTHING in us that He cannot redeem. The prayer of examination may lead to **conviction** but it does not lead to **condemnation**. The Great Physician gives us abundant life and makes us whole. We only have to be willing to "engage Him" in the process...

.... Communion helps us do that- today, let's make the liturgy our prayer.

### **Announcements:**

**Prayer Service** this afternoon from 4:30 – 5:30 pm. Prayer Class is offered in our Discipleship Pathway series.

ADOPT A TEACHER – use in STEW Moment along with “SHARE”

### **TOTAL – 112 Need Adopted**

43 – Walt Whitman

71 – Grove

- Today we are launching our Adopt a Teacher Program here at Asbury!
- This program will expand our partnership with our two adopted elementary schools, Grove Elementary (Union Public School District), right in Asbury's backyard, and Walt Whitman Elementary in Tulsa Public Schools, located at 36th Street North.

- You will find not only their name, their contact information and favorite things, but also their classroom needs.
- We would love for each one of these teachers to be adopted, cared for and loved for the ENTIRE SCHOOL YEAR.
- Our heart is that you would establish a relationship with them, get to know them, help them out with their classroom needs and get to know their kids too.
- These schools are in great need of support.
- The majority of the school population is on free or reduced lunch.
- We have many Asbury volunteers that serve throughout the year at these schools in a mentoring capacity, but we need more help.
- This is a perfect opportunity for people with restrictive schedules or have activities during the day to make a real and lasting difference.
- You can adopt a teacher at the CLC