

HOW RELIABLE ARE RESULTS?

Grow Up, Part 1

October 31st, 2010

Introduction To This Series

God wants a great relationship with all of us, but there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to spirituality.

What works for one person can be worthless - even harmful - for another.

Whenever we project what works for us onto everyone else, we create frustration and legalism.

It's the end result that matters (a great relationship with God), not the path we take to get there.

The “house rules” of a great relationship with God are the clear commands of Scripture. 2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT) “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.”

God's house rules aren't hard to figure out; that doesn't mean we'll always agree with God's rules.

Great relationships with God don't just happen.

They take hard work and significant mid-course corrections to stay healthy over the long haul.

A problem is we don't always know when things first start to go astray with God.

Measuring Spirituality or Our Relationship With God

We look inside for inner peace & a clear conscience, assuming that the absence of guilt and conviction means that everything is okay.

We look outside at the results of our decisions, assuming that the right ones will be blessed and successful while the wrong ones won't work out so well.

Both of these kinds of thinking, though very common, are a big mistake and both can be incredibly deceiving.

Our conscience is not a God-given warning system preset to go off every time we violate one of God's standards.

Results can be very deceiving - yet most of us tend to judge our relationship with God by how things are going.

Job 8:20 (NLT) "[A friend of Job's] God will not reject a person of integrity, nor will He make evildoers prosper."

John 9:2 (NCV) "His followers asked Him [Jesus], 'Teacher, whose sin caused this man to be born blind—his own sin or his parents' sin?'"

Judges 14:3 (NLT) "His father and mother objected. 'Isn't there even one woman in our tribe or among all the Israelites you could marry?' they asked. 'Why must you go to the pagan Philistines to find a wife?' But Samson told his father, 'Get her for me! She looks good to me.'"

The only sure & reliable sign that I'm on good terms with God is my obedience to His commands and laws.

1 John 2:3-4 (NIV) "We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands. The man who says, 'I know Him,' but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

John 14:15 (NIV) "[Jesus said] 'If you love Me, you will obey what I command.'"

Success's great miscalculation is the assumption that success always springs from God's favor – and the greater the success, the greater His favor

2 Chronicles 26:21-23 (NIV) "King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in a separate house—leprous, and excluded from the temple of the Lord. Jotham his son had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land. The other events of Uzziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. Uzziah rested with his fathers and was buried near them in a field for burial that belonged to the kings, for people said, 'He had leprosy.' And Jotham his son succeeded him as king."

When things fall apart, most of us assume there has to be a reason

If we can't find a connection to sin or a lesson to be learned, we begin to question God's goodness & faithfulness

Our assumption that failure must mean something is spiritually wrong makes it nearly impossible to accept the idea that we can fail when everything is spiritually okay

Job's tragic circumstances had nothing to do with God's displeasure
Job 1:8 (NIV) "Then the LORD said..., 'There is no one on earth like him [Job]; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.'"

In the midst of a trial or failure (unless we can see some direct connection to specific sinful choices), we can't know what it means

Judging God or my spiritual journey by results also tends to ignore the fact that the middle of a story is never the end of the story

When we let success or failure become the determiner of God's character or the condition of our spiritual walk, we inevitably come to some wrong conclusions & decisions

Doing the right thing and obeying God's commands remains the best way to know how I'm doing, and how to stay in the center of God's will

Faith and obedience always matter - results don't