

ARE YOU THE ONE?

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Which is more important for a public leader: moral character or political savvy?

This is a question that has been asked and debated more times than we can count. And it suggests a problem that's as old as humankind.

Isolation Breeds Doubt

Herod Antipas served as the Roman governor of Judea. He was a son of Herod the Great (who tried to have Jesus killed as a toddler). Herod allured his brother Philip's wife, Herodias, and married her. This adultery was only one of many points of moral decline for the governor, but it was one that John the Baptizer publicly decried.

Herod, going through his own crisis of conscience, listened to John eagerly, knowing that John was a righteous and holy man, but Herod was paralyzed to respond to his own conviction.

This situation infuriated the governor's wife, who wanted John dead. To appease his wife, to protect John's life, and to silence his own public humiliation, Herod had John chained in the prison house, yet often listened to John teach.

This removed John from public ministry and from the growing ministry of Jesus, whom John had introduced to Israel. As John lingered in prison, without a visit or a rescue, he was plagued with doubt about his own value and the message he had proclaimed. His own disciples were his only contact with the outside world.

Luke 7:18 *The disciples of John the Baptist told John about everything Jesus was doing. So John called for two of his disciples,¹⁹ and he sent them to the Lord to ask him, "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?"*

"Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?" This was no casual question. It was born of a personal revelation, and carried by generations of hope. The longing of an entire nation, provoked by prophecy and compacted by oppression, was channeled through those words.

When things don't go as we have expected and take a turn for the worse, we question what we have heard and the light of hope may grow dim. In John's extreme circumstance, confidence was diminished and certainty was lost.

His disciples delivered the question to Jesus. It wasn't the first time He had heard it.

The Challenge

John had baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. As Jesus came up out of the water, the Spirit of God, like a dove descended and rested on Him. And a voice was heard thundering from the clouds, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." As a result, John testified boldly, "This is the Son of God, the Messiah (the Christ), the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Then, the Holy Spirit led Jesus directly into the wilderness, where He was tested by the devil for 40 days. Three tests are highlighted by the record.

² *Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.*

³ *Then the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread."*

⁴ *But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone.'"*

⁵ *Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ "I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them," the devil said, "because they are mine to give to anyone I please. ⁷ I will give it all to you if you will worship me."*

⁸ *Jesus replied, "The Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"*

⁹ *Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! ¹⁰ For the Scriptures say, 'He will order his angels to protect and guard you. ¹¹ And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'"*

¹² *Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the Lord your God.'"*

¹³ *When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.*

"If you are the Son of God..." This question haunted Jesus all of His life. He was repeatedly challenged to prove Himself, show His credentials, defend His actions, and explain His teachings.

Even at the end of His life, as He hung on the cross in excruciating agony and aloneness, they hurled insults and taunted, "If you're the Son of God, save yourself and come down from the cross!"

Compassion Fatigue

Think about this. The unending challenge. "Who do you think you are?" "What gives you the right to do these things?" "Why should we listen to you?" Day after day. Year after year. No

matter where you go. No matter how many good deeds you do. It's never enough. It's never convincing. Your smiles are answered with scowls. You're always scrutinized. Always talked about behind your back.

How would *you* feel? What would your thoughts be? Would your compassion become fatigued? Would you wonder, "What's the point?" Would you give up and turn away? Would you curse those you had been sent to help?

Jesus said, "*The person who endures to the end is the one who will be saved.*" (Mark 13:13) Do you think that statement could apply to the matter we are considering now?

Jesus was perfect. He was fully God in human form. But you and I...? We are all too familiar with our imperfections.

Who Am I?

Self-identity is a universal issue. Who am I? Why on earth am I here? These are universal questions. And life throws at you enough resistance to make you wonder.

Some say, life throws at you enough resistance to smother you. But others say, life throws at you enough resistance to strengthen you. Which is it for you?

"If you're really a child of God, why do you behave the way you do?"

"If you're a child of God, why do you say the things you do?"

"If you're a child of God, why do you think the things you do?"

Gaining Perspective

When Jesus was pressed by life, He retreated—not *from* life, but *to* His Father. He got alone with God and listened to what the Father had to say to Him. And God said to Him things like, "beloved Son" and "I am well-pleased."

What would happen to your perspective if you got alone with God and listened to His thoughts about you? "*I have loved you with an everlasting love.*" (Jeremiah 31:3) "*With everlasting love I will have compassion on you.*" (Isaiah 54:8) "*I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.*" (Hebrews 13:5)

The Bible is replete with such commentary and promise. We only need to get God's perspective in order to effectively counteract everyday life!

Solid Witness

When John's disciples brought his question to Jesus, *"Are you the One who is to come, or shall we look for another?"* (Luke 7:18), Jesus told them, *"Go back to John and tell him what you have seen and heard—the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor. And tell him, 'God blesses those who are not offended because of me.'"* (Luke 7:22-23)

In the previous chapters Luke reported that Jesus had cast out a demon from a man possessed, had healed many people—including a man with leprosy, a paralytic, a man with a withered arm, and a centurion's son—had preached the sermon on the mount, and raised to life the dead son of a widow. And *"at that very time, Jesus cured many people of their diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and he restored sight to many who were blind."* (Luke 7:21)

Jesus had taught, *"If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."* (John 10:37-38)

He answered with His works! His deeds bore Him witness.

What do your deeds say about you? Do they bear witness of your faith in Jesus Christ?

If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Working Faith

The answer to those haunting questions is not found in cleverly devised argument or rationale. The answer is found in *faith that works*. For in Christ Jesus, being Jewish has no benefit, nor does being Gentile—your religion or irreligion count for nothing. What is important is faith that is activated and energized and expressed through love (Galatians 5:6; AMP).

If you try to fulfill your life on your own, Jesus said you will lose it—it will all disappear in the end. On the other hand, if you give it away in love, you will find it, and its lasting fullness!

Are you a child of God by faith? What do your works say? How are you giving your life away? Think about it. Then get up and do something in Jesus' name.