

Essential Habits God-Fearing Believers Jealously Guard

I had my friend on speaker phone the other day while I was ironing Matt's preaching shirts. One sleeve was giving me grief. I ironed one side smooth and flat only to turn over the sleeve and see a new wrinkle I had accidentally ironed in on the other side.

"This is my life," I told my friend. "Trying to live well and do good, only to discover a wrinkle in character pressed in firmly on another side of me." (It had been a week of apologizing for a handful of offenses, and I was sliding into despair that I might never become a better person.)

Into these thoughts came my morning Bible reading of Psalm 36:1-4 (NIV):

An oracle within my heart about the transgression of the wicked: There is no fear of God before their eyes. For they flatter themselves in their own eyes, that their iniquity cannot be found out and hated. The words of their mouth are wickedness and deceit; they have ceased to be wise and to do good. They devise mischief on their bed; they set themselves on a path that is not good; they do not reject evil.

David sings this message concerning the wicked, but what I hear is God's message to me about the righteous. So I've flipped David's statements, to create a clear checklist of what it looks like to follow God.

Six Things God-Fearing People Do

1. We focus our eyes on God and fear him.
2. We detect our sin.

3. We hate our sin. It grieves us.
4. We refuse to flatter ourselves (although wouldn't that be a lovely analgesic?)
5. We lie in bed at night plotting ways to live well.
6. We commit ourselves to a good course.

I watched the video testimony of a Jewish man named Ze'ev. His father survived the holocaust but lost everyone in his family. He believed there was no God. Ze'ev grew up as an atheist but then came to put his faith in Yeshua (Jesus). He described what it was like trusting in Jesus and said, "It's like I had a broken conscience and it was replaced—I received a new conscience."

Which takes me back to the ironing board and how I can spot every wrinkle in a shirt. In the same way, I can detect my sin. This is a sign that God is giving me a new, highly sensitive conscience. It reminds me that he cares about my life.

So I pray, "I see the wrinkles, Lord. Bring the steam and the heat."

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