

The Divine Measurement

How God gauges the value and accomplishments of our lives

A famous movie star was asked in front of an audience how it felt to finally make it in the movies after dreaming about it since he was a child. The interviewer mentioned various trials this star had overcome to achieve his dream, and the crowd applauded the greatness of humanity demonstrated in how someone could overcome so much, then “arrive” and become what he’d always dreamed of becoming.

But the actor surprised everyone with his answer: “It’s boring,” he said. “My whole life I dreamt of doing films, and now I find it’s boring.”

As I watched the interview, I could hear the near appalling disillusionment in his voice. He was shocked that the thing that had driven him and shaped him left him empty when he attained it.

Stories abound of people who have been motivated by a temporary dream, only to attain it and then feel empty and aimless. It’s impossible to find true meaning in life if it’s based upon our idea of success—or even other people’s, for that matter. Men love you one minute and ridicule you the next. One year you’re cool, and the next you’re outdated and old. One season you’re successful, and the next you are a failure. This is true in finances, relationships, ministry, impact, influence; everything in life is on a quick fade.

What, then, really matters in life? What can we do that will last beyond us? Better yet, what can we do that matters to God?

As believers, we know that when we die, we will stand before our Creator at the judgment seat of Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:10). This is the place where we are evaluated and rewarded by Jesus

in the age to come. Just as athletes stand at the Olympic podium where the medals are given, at the end we'll stand before the author of our lives. Only He can tell us if we "hit the mark." He is able to be the evaluator of our lives, because He is the Creator, the one who holds the blueprints of humanity. Only He has the standard by which we can be measured. He is also a man who walked on the earth, showing us how to be human. He was tested in all the ways we are and is acquainted with our suffering (see Heb. 4:15). He is fully God and fully man, the only person who can judge us in perfect justice and truth. We can't evaluate one another and conclude that we are successful or not.

The greatest appointment of my life is the day I stand before Jesus, the great evaluator of my life. I will stand before one man, and I will have a conversation. My entire life comes down to what *He* thinks about me. My entire purpose lies in pleasing Him (see 2 Cor. 5:9–10).

Because of this, I'm not interested in what people define as the meaning of life. All that matters is how Jesus defines purpose. If the entire world applauded me, thought I was noble and praised me as the picture of what a human should be, it would mean nothing—absolutely nothing!—if Jesus did not agree. When I stand before Jesus, it will be just Him and me. No one will be there to tell Him how great I am, how many records I sold or the numbers of people I impacted. No one will be there to tell Him how bad I am and the sins I have committed. In that day what is true will be seen.

The most important thing about my life, then, is what Jesus is thinking. Whatever He is thinking, in that moment I stand before Him, is the most important thing about my life—even right now. When I stand before the Lord, He will ask me about how big my heart was in responsiveness to Him. That is what matters.

Our Ambition to Please Him

The apostle Paul understood this and, as a result, was preoccupied with Jesus' evaluation of him. It's what motivated him to run the race with endurance. In 2 Corinthians 5:9 Paul said, "We make it our aim ... to be well-pleasing unto Him" (ASV).

We want Jesus pleased because He is Creator. We were created for His pleasure, and we will never be satisfied until we satisfy Him. He is also judge, and we want to please Him because only He can evaluate the worth of our lives and give us meaning.

There was a moment in Paul's life when he consciously determined that pleasing God would be the primary dream of his life. He determined this would be the supreme preoccupation of his life, walking with the Lord and living his entire life to be well pleasing to Him. To "make it his aim" means it is the primary reason for why he had life on the earth. He isn't saying, "I made this one of my top 10 things on my to-do list." No, this was the primary ambition of his life.

We have many dreams in our heart that are biblical and of God. We have dreams related to ministry, money, marriage, health and impacting others. We have dreams and promises related to these very important subjects. They are biblical, and they are important to God, but they must be of secondary importance to this one, primary aim.

Nobody can make this your aim. It must be your choice. This is why it is powerful to the heart of God—because it is voluntary, and therefore it is love. You can be saved without setting your heart to live in extravagance before His eyes. There are many people who know Jesus as Savior and will be in heaven, but they lived their lives without giving much further thought to Him. They're saved and please Him in the sense that they have the free gift of righteousness, but there's another element of pleasing Him that comes when we set our hearts to live wholeheartedly before Him.

This is what Paul was talking about. Once you determine this is your primary life dream, if you're like me, you have to make it your aim and reestablish it, realigning yourself over and over again.

Because it's the nature of our weakness to get distracted from this aim, we must periodically stop and realign our heart to make this the primary ambition of life. When you picture your future, don't just picture yourself in love with a happy family, lots of money and lots of friends—the typical American dream. These are good things, but there's more to your life than this.

When you think of 20 or 30 years from now, do you have a dream to be walking in a way, in both heart and action, that is pleasing in God's sight? Do you know what it is to please Him, and have you determined in your heart to do it? This is the primary picture you should have of your life when you think about your future.

One element that can help to realign us with our primary purpose is by understanding God's perspective on us. Paul not only understood he had a great appointment; he also realized that the judge, the one evaluating him, was deeply invested and engaged with the details of his life. If we know Jesus is engaged and cares about the efforts we're making that nobody else cares about, if we know He sees the small acts of obedience, if we believe we are well known to Him—that He really cares about these things and remembers them, writes them in His books and rewards us forever—then our lives change. If we know we have an appointment to stand before our Creator and the Creator Himself knows even the intricacies of our lives and what we do matters to Him, then we have purpose. Jesus is the One who searches the heart and the mind (see Rev. 2:23).

The Great Equalizer

The exciting thing is that no matter the size of your natural talents or your station in life, the judgment seat of Christ is the great equalizer because our responsiveness to God is what He measures us by. He does not measure how big your ministry is or how big your bank account is. He doesn't even measure how many people you're able to impact. He measures the size of your heart. *This* is the true measure of a man.

Someone could be far more gifted and impact more people than you, but if your responsiveness is the same, you get the same reward. To be rewarded means there is an appointed day in history when Jesus wants to communicate openly to you, and to others, how He feels about the way you loved Him. He wants to express it openly.

What a tragedy it would be on that day for Him to have little to say about the way I lived on the earth. When we have the confidence that He is attentive and remembers even the smallest words spoken and rewards the smallest reach toward Him, this is faith. When we believe Jesus, as Creator, is this attentive and this eager, we will want to please Him.

A person who lives determined to give Jesus what He is looking for is able to become eternally great no matter what this life has given him (see Matt. 5:19). This is true liberation. No one can touch a person who lives like this. His money can be taken, he can lose relationships and positions, and he can be thrown into prison, persecuted or even martyred. Still he will attain what he was aiming for.

A person can be uneducated and unattractive, sitting on the back row where nobody notices him. This person has the same capacity to be as eternally great in God's eyes as the person who is the most educated, beautiful and seemingly successful in the eyes of man today.

God does not measure us as men measure us. Paul knew this. Church history is full of men and women who were free because

they lived before an “audience of One” even when they were thrown into prison for their faith. History proves that living before the eternal eyes is the power and worth of a person, and anyone and everyone can do it. I love Jesus’ ways!

Anybody who wants to be eternally great can be. We are not at the mercy of the rise and fall of external favor. Our definition of greatness isn’t affected by our assignment in life. We have assignments that are important, and we serve in these assignments with faithfulness; but the measure of success in these arenas is not in our hands. We can’t build our confidence on them. Our confidence is in serving in our assignment before the audience of One.

The issue, then, is whose applause we are living for. We may have the same assignment we’ve done for years, but the Lord wants us to readjust our hearts. People don’t burn out because their assignment is too difficult. They burn out because they’re doing their assignment before the wrong set of eyes, looking for the wrong applause. The heart is often revealed when we are criticized. If we are thrown off by criticism, we are living before the wrong eyes.

Failure is another test. When our life assignments seem to fail—we lose money, our ministries shrink or our relationships fail—of course we feel the pain. But if we are devastated by these things, concluding our whole life is a failure because of them, that is proof we aren’t living before the audience of One. We are living for the applause of man. Often Jesus will test our hearts in this way to show us where our true value lies. We realign ourselves again and again to live before His eyes.

Loving God in the Pain

The story that moves me most is that of Pat Bickle, the brother of Mike Bickle, founder of the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Mo. Pat was paralyzed from the neck

down after suffering a football injury in high school. Toward the end of Pat's life, after being paralyzed for 33 years, he became very ill and was unable to speak or even drink water. His mind was alert, and he was the same man he had been his entire life, full of wit and love for people, but he couldn't communicate. For weeks he lay like this.

In the meantime Mike's ministry was growing and thousands of young people were coming to his conferences. He had traveled the world preaching. He had written books, taught thousands and impacted many people.

As Pat lay there in the last few weeks of his life, Mike went to see him almost daily. On one of these days it was just Mike and Pat in the hospital room. Mike looked at Pat as he lay there, suffering more than most humans ever suffer, unable to speak, move or drink. He said, "Pat, right now you can fulfill the will of Jesus for your life as much as I can. His will for you today is that you love Him without offense and that you believe He is watching you even now. You can please Him and touch His heart as much as I can today. He sees your love for Him as much as He sees mine."

Tears streamed down Pat's face as he dared to believe that even in suffering, he could do God's will, even if it meant just loving Him in that horrible situation. These months in his life were not in vain. There was a purpose for his life, even in that place of great pain. Jesus was watching him and promised to reward him for every movement of his heart. Pat can be eternally great as much as his famous brother can be, because Jesus evaluates us based on our heart responses to Him and our love for Him, not on the size of our ministry or business impact.

He Sees You

This primary purpose of our lives to please Jesus must become our compulsion and our consuming dream. We want to be

preoccupied with Jesus and less occupied with the opinion of man. This is the prize set before us, and it must be the anchor of our souls. Nothing can take away this dream from you when it is your primary motivation, and it can be attained no matter what life circumstance you are in.

It doesn't matter what sphere you've been given. You could be on the backside of nowhere and have only two or three people listening to you, or you could be on a stage in front of millions. You could be healthy, full of charisma and charm, so that people naturally follow you, or you could be ill and unable to communicate clearly.

You can be rich or poor, beautiful or not. You can be educated or uneducated, from any nationality, any social background and still fulfill the vision Jesus has for you and therefore be eternally great and successful at fulfilling your life purpose.

Eternity is the great equalizer, and the true measure of a man is found in Jesus' eyes. You can have the hardest past, full of abuse and pain, or you could be the one who caused others pain by abusing, yet you can still today turn things around and fulfill the dream of His heart for your life and live with confidence that your life is not in vain.

You may never be great in the eyes of man. You may live your whole life overlooked, but there is one man who sees, and He is so attentive to you that He knows your thoughts and your deepest emotions (see 1 Cor. 4:5). He sees all and judges all, and His evaluation is what matters. You will stand in front of Him, face-to-face, in a very short amount of time, and His evaluation of you will be what defines you for billions of years.

This makes life today powerful. Not only is there a man who is fully God who is attentive to you, but also He promises to reward you. Every act of love you give Him will be rewarded in

the age to come, and only then will the truth about you be seen.

Your life is hidden, and you will not appear until He appears in glory. The fullness of your greatness is hidden even from your own eyes in this age, and it will not be revealed, even to you, until Jesus is revealed (see Col. 3:3-4). You do not see the heights of your dignity or the depths of your depravity by your natural eyes in this age.

Only Jesus can see the end from the beginning, and He knows who you will be millions of years from now. He knows where this is going. In the age to come we will see the full truth about all the glory Jesus has given us. It is glory we possess now in His eyes, but we cannot see.

The billionaire and the pauper are the same, evaluated by the same set of eyes and the same standard of Jesus. Eternity will tell the truth about who we are, and one day what is real about us will be seen.

Right now you are in the “womb of eternity,” being fashioned for a day that is yet to come. The pressure, pain, pleasure and blessings are all part of the Creator’s plan to form and fashion you into the image of love equally yoked to Himself in wholehearted abandonment in love. But it must be love defined by Jesus, not by humanism. He is looking for love on His terms.

What is that definition? What pleases Him? Our life is found in answering this one question.

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