

*A Better World Begins With Me*  
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**Introduction:** It is very hard for a man to see his own shortcomings.

- A. Self-deception is often preferred to avoid short-term pain. **(Prov 16:2)**
  - 1. Those who do this are running from God. This is a path of a fool.
  - 2. God knows and tells us the dangers of life. Will we honestly seek wisdom? **(Prov 1:20-22; Jer 32:19)**
- B. Years ago Yvette made a point to me that is a product of the wisdom of God. “If I am unhappy and filled with unrest over a period of time, then the problem is a spiritual one and is a product of my own doing. I will only find relief when I open up my own heart to God’s will and change my thinking.”
  - 1. The scriptures bear this out. If I am right with God *then I will have* love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control dominating my life! **(Gal 5:22-23)**
  - 2. Even when I am wronged and have a cause to be angry, this anger is limited in time by a living faith in a God who is in control. **(Eph 4:26-27)**
  - 3. Those who fail to guard their hearts can fall into a snare that creates a poison in their thoughts and among those who share in those thoughts. **(Heb 12:14-15)**

**I. A Living Faith will overcome all earthly circumstances**

- A. A living faith will thrive in a certain kind of heart. You must learn to “pull weeds.” **(1 Pt 3:8-9)**
  - 1. Too many people have been poisoned by their past. It does not have to be that way. Those who do not trust God want vengeance to be their own.
  - 2. What a waste of energy to dwell on things out of your control.
- B. A living faith will teach you to use your energies on those opportunities that God has placed before you. **(1 Pt 3:10-11)**
  - 1. It took me years to realize this simple truth. I often tried to work in areas that I could accomplish nothing. (Ex. Work with those that are interested.)
  - 2. How many people have you known that has held on to their hurts like it is their last few cents? Are they seeking peace?
  - 3. Bitterness will lead you to putting a microscope on the one you hate. You will overreact and *slander* the one who has done wrong.
  - 4. There is a path to good days and a life that is loved and a path to a self-imposed torment.
- C. A living faith will teach you that God is in control and that you need not fear the consequences of this life. **(1 Pt 3:12-14)**
  - 1. This is simple, understandable but impossible to follow unless you trust God.
  - 2. True maturity is not found in just being able to point out the sins and weaknesses of others, but in doing that in light of the love of God. **(1 Cor 8:1-3)**
  - 3. God has not made me the master of my brethren. **(Rom 14:4, 15)**

4. When you understand this, you can have peace and joy in the presence of your enemies. **(Ps 23:4-5)**

## ***II. We need wisdom to guard our hearts***

- A. We must never become blind to God's blessings. **(Col 3:15-17)**
  1. If you are so overwhelmed by events that you can see and rejoice in the good things God has done for you then you are in serious trouble.
  2. Over the years I have seen those "go negative" on a local church or in brethren in general. There is no use in mentioning any good – they will not see it.
  3. This is a powerful and common tool used by false teachers. **(Gal 4:17-20)**
  4. Sadly I have seen brethren do this to their own children. Do you have a heart problem? Do you have a lousy attitude? Wake up and repent!
  5. How was Jesus able to endure the cross? **(Ps 22:3-5)**
- B. We need to carefully watch our associates. **(1 Cor 15:33-34)**
  1. We need to be around people who love God and will build us up by their actions and their words. **(Col 2:2; Acts 4:36, 11:22-23)**
  2. One of the saddest things that I have seen is when associations from within the church are centered over the hurts and hatred that brethren have for others.
  3. In the "fellowship of the miserable" most will quit the Lord in time. What happens to a child that is in such a home?
  4. I have known *many* preachers to destroy their own children due to a bad church experience. If I keep hurting long after the event, then it is *my problem!*
- C. I must fight to love and pray for the one who has hurt me. **(Mt 5:44-45)**
  1. Does the Lord want me to "forgive" and then "withdraw" from the one who has hurt me?
  2. Many are like the Pharisees and play games with words. Self-deception will put you in the same place as them. **(Lk 18:9-11)**
  3. This does mean we ignore one walking in sin. It does mean that we must guard our hearts.

## ***III. We should be filled with optimism to take the daily opportunities God gives us.***

- A. When we learn God's wisdom we will have energy and optimism. **(Mt 11:28-30)**
  1. An entire church can be changed over time when we learn these truths.
  2. What does worry and bitterness do for you? It takes you to the sidelines.
- B. People will open their hearts to those who are filled with thanksgiving and faith. **(Mt 5:16)**
  1. Some who could really help others have lost that opportunity by their attitudes.
  2. This is why in some churches that older men cannot be found to be elders.
  3. Do you live in the land of 'throw-away people' or are you a Barnabas?
- C. We need more workers. It all starts with the heart. **(1 Cor 15:58)**

***Conclusion:*** Do you realize the power of one changed heart?

- A. There was a commercial last year showing one person doing a good deed that led to another doing a good deed and so on. This is a true principle.
- B. In a local church we need "leaven" of a good kind. Not only a better world begins with me, but also a better congregation begins with me. Will you make that change?