

PERFECTIONISM

Paul Anderson, January 2014

PERFECTIONISM TEST

1. I constantly compare myself with others who are better than me.
2. I feel better when comparing myself with people not as good as me.
3. I give in often to self-condemnation.
4. I set standards for myself that are unattainable.
5. I consistently fail to reach my goals, so I give in and quit trying.
6. I procrastinate out of the fear of failure and the need to get more done.
7. I often wake up and go to bed discouraged.
8. I am a firstborn or only child.
9. I wish I could relax and be more childlike.
10. When I gave up childish ways, I also abandoned childlikeness.
11. I usually choose to play it safe rather than taking risks.
12. I both admire and resent people who are having more fun than I am.
13. I don't expect things to change; I have lost my ability to hope.
14. I often come late because I am trying to get more things done.
15. I probably concentrate too much on beauty, brains, or brawn.
16. I wonder why others are more successful when they don't work as hard.
17. I am probably overly defensive but I don't like to think I am.
18. I have a problem being vulnerable because it exposes the truth about me.
19. I have more answers than questions and see life as black and white.
20. I am addicted to the praise of others but never get enough.
21. I have a problem delegating because others might not do it right.
22. I am picky about minute things, but I don't think I am really that picky.
23. I am not as motivated as people think I am; "lazy" sometimes describes me.
24. I often don't enjoy the process going after the product.
25. I get depressed easily and don't snap out right away; I lack the bounce.
26. I take secret delight in the failure of others because it makes me look better.
27. Impressing others seems too important for me.
28. I put my marbles in the productivity basket rather than the identity bucket.
29. I tend not to see myself as a perfectionist because I am far from perfect.
30. I don't like feeling like a Pharisee but I wonder if I may be one.
31. I have a hard time seeing failure as a step to success.

(If you answered true to most, you are invited to repudiate perfectionism and come to a new understand of freedom in Christ through the cross from the penalty and power of sin).

THE PHARISEES AND PERFECTIONISM

They had all the marks of perfectionism in their culture (Matthew 23).

1. They externalized faith. They didn't practice what they preached. They cleaned the outside of the cup, but the inside was full of crud. They looked beautiful but were in fact white-washed tombs, full of dead men's bones. Looking good was more important than being good, which meant that they had no authority with the people.

2. They put people under the law that they could not and would not keep. “They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.” They were not the examples of what they taught.
3. Appearance was important to them. “Everything they do is done for men to see.” “You appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”
4. Praise from people was too important to them. “They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues.
5. They wanted respect more than they were willing to give it. “They love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’”
6. They pretended to be holy, but they were hypocrites.
7. They lived with black and whites, not gray. They had too many answers and too few questions. They were sitters, not seekers, researchers not searchers. They had information but not truth.
8. They concentrated on picky matters and ignored the essentials, swearing by the gold of the temple instead of the temple, tithing from their garden, but neglecting justice, mercy and faithfulness, straining out a gnat but swallowing a camel. They kept score in the most legalistic ways possible, and they held onto the scorecards. They were not subject to review, but they reviewed the lives of others. Their example shows the great danger of legalism, because they were the Bible-believing conservatives of their day, but the truth they started with morphed into self-righteousness.
9. They lived by the law, not by grace, which meant that they put their followers under greater slavery than they were in. Jesus was full of grace and truth. They had neither grace nor truth.
10. They were highly critical and judgmental of others and did not see their own flaws because they lived a life of pretending.
11. They did not trust the people they led. They were not fathers; they were tyrants, and it was not fun to follow them.

HOW TO OVERCOME PERFECTIONISM

1. Find the freedom and joy of confession and vulnerability.
2. Learn about grace and embrace it. It beats living by the law.
3. Get healing from childhood wounds and wrong expectations.
4. Discover your identity as a child of God and don’t let it go.
5. Receive the love that comes from God your Father.
6. Throw away the scorecard. You already have a perfect score in Christ.
7. Trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to change you.
8. Let your work become *the result of* rather than *the means to*.
9. Find a mentor who can help you walk in freedom and transparency (I John 1:5-10).