It's always a good idea to get a physical check-up at least a couple of times a year. These physical check-ups cost a little time and a little more inconvenience. But if the beginnings of a dangerous illness are discovered, the cost is well worth it.

Now, something is very wrong with the world, and a Christian is supposed to have the answer to the moral plague sweeping the nations. But something is very wrong with the average Christian church. There is supposed to be love, but there is envy, strife and division. There is supposed to be holiness, but there is instead often downright ungodliness. There is supposed to be power, but there is largely only weakness and spiritual anaemia. We are supposed to have revival, but on the whole we have still not seen any great awakening.

“My brethren, these things ought not to be.”

What is wrong with the church must be the sum total of what is wrong with each individual Christian.

If people can have medical check-ups for their bodies, why shouldn’t there be spiritual check-ups to examine the state of our souls?

If a physician can prescribe treatments for bodily ailments, does not the Master Physician have one for the diseased soul? Of course, He does. But before a cure can be accepted and applied, there must be diagnosis and verdict. To do this, some sort of spiritual check-up is needed for us all.

One caution: Like any check-up, this is going to cost you time and inconvenience. However, unlike the physical check-up it may also hurt somewhat. Of course, a sore spot shows infection present. When you go through this process, remember it is designed to expose, and that exposure might hurt! Be assured however, that a little pain now may save an awful lot of trouble later. If it is any consolation before you begin, this check-up is absolutely free.

It will only cost you, of course, on diagnosis, your sin. Of all things, you can afford to lose that, can’t you? Nobody in their right mind wants to keep a killer cancer.

Ready? To take this spiritual check-up you will need only pencil,

“What is wrong with the church must be the sum total of what is wrong with each individual Christian.”

“Lift our eyes heavenward. Earthward is bad enough, but inward is dreadful.
Lift us heavenward to where Jesus sitteth on the right hand of God.”

“Whither the Forerunner is for us entered,” Heb. 6:20
sorrow works repentance” and tears may
hardness that has formed from unconfessed
furrow your heart and break up all the
that hurts. Be courageous and face your sin.
temptation to pass quickly over any area
that come to mind. Don’t give in to the

Use the following three lists as check-up
charts to examine your life before the Lord.
Take each one slowly and carefully and
take the time to look up the Bible
references. Check each area that is a ‘sore
spot’ and on your own paper write out what
you will have to do to get it right. Confess
them to the Lord one by one as He shows
them to you. When you have finished, RE-
READ your list again, and add any others
that come to mind. Don’t give in to the
temptation to pass quickly over any area
that hurts. Be courageous and face your sin.
This first part will be painful. Let God
furnace your heart and break up all the
hardness that has formed from unconfessed
sin. If the tears start, let them. “Godly
sorrow works repentance” and tears may
soften your heart so God can work with it.
(2 Cor. 6:10; Ps. 38:18; 34:6; 18: 51:17; Eccles. 7:3;
Ps. 147:3; Ezek. 34:16; Luke 4:18)

You have been deceitful? (Rev. 21:8)
4. Slander—Speaking evil of someone. You
do not have to lie to slander. Have you
talked about someone behind their
back in a way you would not be willing
to before their face? Malicious gossip—
telling the truth with intent to hurt or
injure is slander. Are you guilty of
backbiting or criticism? (Matt. 7:1-5; I Cor.
5:12; Col.3:8; Matt. 5:21-24)

Immorality—Are you guilty of stirring
up desires that you could not righteously
feed? In outings with the opposite sex
have you failed to keep your body and
mind clean and pure, and bartered your
integrity for pleasure? (Matt. 5:28; Job 31:1;
2 Per.2:14; 1 Cor. 6:18)

Censoriousness—Have you spoken
about others without love? Did you
judge, think or say the worst thing
about a person in a situation you knew?
(Jn. 7:24; 1 Cor.4:1-7; Gal. 6:1)

Memory is highly efficient at remembering
wrong. Although it easily forgets merely
unpleasant or worthless things, it rarely
forgets unrighted sin. Much mental illness
today can be traced to guilt never wiped
from the mind by the twin tools of
confession and restoration—and receiving
forgiveness. Shock, drugs and other
medical and psychiatric treatment may try
to take guilt memories from the mind, but
God’s method is the only fully effective
one: FACE each wrong with its full load of
guilt, admit it to God and others who are
involved AS wrong, then ask and receive
healing forgiveness. (Ps 32:1-5; 1 Jn. 1:5-9)

1. Envy—Behind talk of other’s failures
and faults usually lurks envy. Did you
gossip and boast to exalt yourself
at another’s expense? Does it hurt to hear
certain people praised? If you have
nursed this spirit of Hell, repent
DEEPLY. (Job 5:2; Prov. 14:30; 27:4; Gal 5:25)

2. Pride— Pretending in thought or life to
be more or less than you really ARE. Do
you pay more attention to your looks
than your soul? Is there a trouble-
stirring spirit in your life? These are the
signs of pride. (Prov. 16:5; 12, 18: 21:9; 29:23;
Tit.3:9; 1 Cor. 1:26-31; 1 Pt. 5:1)

3. Ingratitude—How many times have
others gone out of their way for you,
perhaps really sacrificed to help you—
and you took this all for granted?
(2 Tim.3:2; Mal. 3:8-11)

4. Anger—Have you been bad-tempered?
Did you shrug off self-control and lose
patience or gentleness with someone?
(Prov. 14:29; 15:8; 21:9; 22:24; Eccl. 7:9; Eph.
4:26; Col. 3:8)

5. Cursing—Have you used gutter
language? Swearing has no place in the
life of a child of God. Never
use obscenities beginning with “G”, “J”,
or “C”; they are usually substitutes for
curses against God. Have you failed to
guard your speech? (Deut. 5:11; Matt. 5:33-
37)

Levity—“Needless frivolity, silly talk,
talking and acting like a moron”. Jests
that tend to undermine the sacred and
precious standards of life; “Bible” jokes
that make light of the Holy Word of
God; unprofitable, empty and often
stupid foolishness achieves nothing but
a dangerous devaluation of the Christ-
ian’s word. Real humour is a gift of God,
and will always edify or prepare the way
for the Holy Spirit; foolish levity is sin.
(Ecc.5:3; Prov. 24:19; Eph. 5:4)

INNER

1. Hardness—Did you fight back, murmur
or return evil for evil? Was your
response to trial un-Christlike when you
were wronged or hurt by someone? (Phil
2:14; 1 Cor. 10:10)

2. Habits—Have you continually over-
indulged natural appetites until they
have grown far beyond normal? Are you
a slave to food, drink or stimulants?
(Phil. 3:19; Prov. 23:21; 1 Cor. 6:19)

3. Half-heartedness—Can you remember
times when you deliberately shirked
your full share of responsibility? Did you
skip times of secret or public prayer to
please yourself when you should have
been meeting with God? Have you been
flippant and light with Him? (Prov. 19:15;
5:6; Jas. 4:4-17)

4. Hindrance—Have you destroyed an-
other’s confidence in you by needlessly
taking up their time? Have you pre-
vented them from doing God’s work for
yourself? (Eph. 5:16)

5. Hypocrisy—Did the life you lived be-
fore some people make all you said of
Christ and His gospel a lie? Have you
said one thing and done another? Were
others turned from God by your life that
declared to them your hypocrisy? (Matt.
6:5-6; 7:3-5; 23:28; Rev. 3:15-16)

6. Broken Vows—Is there a vow you made
to God that you have not kept? Did you
promise Him something that you have
since forgotten or gone back upon? If it
was unwise, you had better ask forgive-
ness and release; He expects you to
KEEP voluntary vows! (Ecc. 5:1-6)

SURGERY NEEDED?

If the Holy Spirit shows us sin, we must go
back to the place where the Lord first met
us. It is the cross again. We see the Lord
Jesus once crucified—for that sin—bearing
our penalty.
A line of blood trickles down from its
splintered base. The sight should shock and
grieve us; we see the awfulness of God’s
judgment. This is not the law, representing
God armed with holy wrath and deter-
mination to punish the sinner without hope
or help, but LOVE demonstrated in the
infinite cost and sacrifice God is willing to
go to in order to save us from sin. It is the
most terribly beautiful picture of the
Gospel, showing God’s hatred for sin and
heartbreak over mankind’s selfishness. If
we continue in sin, well might “heaven put on the robes of mourning and Hell hold a jubilee.” All God’s care and love—and DARE we still sin?

Walk out into the light of reality. Drop your self-deceit and face this sin for what it really is. Turn from it, from your heart. Take sides with God against it. Purpose in your heart NEVER to return to that sin again.

“Oh God, You know my foolishness, and my sin is not hid from You... for Your Name’s sake, pardon my iniquity, for it is great... If you, Lord, would mark iniquities, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.” (Ps. 69:5; 25:11; 130:3-4)

Will you do this now? Will you go to your gracious and loving Father as a little child and humbly ask His forgiveness?

“If we confess our sins, He is FAITHFUL and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 Jn. 1:9) “The LORD is merciful and gracious... He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities; For as the heaven is above the earth, so great is His mercy towards them that fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far hath His mercy towards them that fear Him; as if we did not exist here on earth. For He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities; For as the heaven is above the earth, so great is His mercy towards them that fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far hath His mercy towards them that fear Him; as if we did not exist here on earth.

GETTING RIGHT WITH OTHERS

NAME the BASIC SIN! You can never really right the RESULTS of your sin; no-one can really forgive you for these. However you must always right the sin by naming it clearly and asking forgiveness for it. Confess the sin that caused your words or actions; God will show you what it is. What was your REAL wrong? Write it down so you can see it. Are you sure that was what it was?

Make sure the WAY you ask is right. Such half-hearted “confessions” as these show false or incomplete repentance and are usually worse than useless:

1. “I’m sorry, but it wasn’t all my fault!”
2. Forgive me IF I have wronged you...”
3. “I was wrong, but SO WERE YOU!”
4. “Alright, I’m sorry” or just “I apologise...”

Full blame must be taken; the sin must be NAMED; pride must be crucified.

1. Do you know the basic sin you must get right?
2. Have you thought through what you are to say?
3. Is the time convenient for the other person?
4. Can you be alone when you see this person?

Do you have a truly repentant attitude? If you have trouble feeling sorry, think of all the hurt and loss your sin has caused. What did your sin cost Christ? (read Lk.22:39-44; Jn. 15:8-14). The Holy Spirit convicts by recalling from your memory in DETAIL all the results of your wrong. Go over your sin in detail, never in general. As you think deeply about the effect of your sin, you can.

The elements of these three sentences MUST be in any truly effective confession; 1. God has convicted me of something I did (have been doing) against you...? 2. “I’ve been wrong in...” (NAME the basic sin: being envious, proud, stubborn etc.) 3. “I know I’ve wronged you in this, and I want to ask you: will you forgive me?”

EXCUSES from pride: When it comes to getting right with others, our minds supply many “reasons” why we need not do what we know we MUST do. Be BRUTALLY HONEST with yourself. Deal with each AS AN EXCUSE. Determine to do what is right. It’s your life!

When you have gone through your list as thoroughly as if you were about to meet God before the throne of Judgment and determined to get right everything you can, you may burn your list and leave your sins forgiven and forgotten for good! Wrongs may not be wiped out completely from your mind, but they can be exchanged for memories of the joy of forgiveness! Should Satan try to recall a dark past shadow, you will be able to think instead of the bright memory of confession and forgiveness. The word of pardon from those who accept our confession will put wings on our hearts and move us mightily to praise God for His forgiveness.

Many millions are gaoled in their own guilt this very day in your world, not knowing what to do or who to turn to. To some, suicide seems the only possible escape. Minds are snapping from the terrible load of guilt from a filthy past. It is up to you now to put into practice what you know must be done. Your testimony will be a ray of hope to anyone you come in contact with.

Now, don’t just READ this; in His Name, go and DO IT!

—SOURCE UNKNOWN

“All the Spirit’s operations, how rough soever some of them may appear, are always useful to believers, and tend to make them fruitful. To this end the most sharp influences contribute as well as the more comfortable.” —JAMES DURHAM
What is worldliness?

by Christopher Alexion

The modern ‘gospel’?

The apostle shows us that while true worldliness has several facets, its essence is this: accepting the outlook of the unbelieving world...

A closer examination of such texts as Romans 12:2—‘Be not conformed to the world’, or 1 John 2:15—‘Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world’, reveals that, while true worldliness has several facets, its essence is an acceptance of the presuppositions of the world. This is the heart of Paul’s exhortation in Romans 12. After urging his readers not to be conformed to the world, Paul adds that we are to be ‘transformed by the renewing of [our] mind.’

Paul, in a manner certainly inconsistent with the anti-intellectual pietism of our day, places the emphasis on our thinking. He does this because from the heart (the mind) flow the issues of life (Prov. 4:23, cf. Matt. 15:17-20).

The mind is the battleground of the conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Paul insists that ‘though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds), casting down imaginations [arguments, NKJV], and every high thing that exalbeth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ’ (2 Cor. 10:5-5). This is what lies behind the apostle’s warning that we be not deceived by ‘philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments [first principles, presuppositions] of the world, and not after Christ’ (Col. 2:8).

Christians must not bow to the first principles of the world because Christ is not only their Saviour, He is Lord of their intellects. Knowledge, for the Christian, is inseparable from Christ and His revelation. He is the Logos (Jn. 1:1), the ‘wisdom of God’ (1 Cor. 1:24, 30), in whom ‘all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ are hid (Col. 2:3).

When Christians think in a manner inconsistent with these great truths, they are being worldly. Some Christians evince their worldliness by defending the faith by a compromise with the assumed autonomy of their opponents’ minds. Some do it by changing the corporate worship of God into a self-help program. Others shun matter itself as almost sinful, and even ascribe evil to inanimate objects. All this is not to say that worldliness has nothing to do with our outward actions. There are such entities as sins, and Christians, who have been redeemed from sin, are called to walk worthy of this redemption. To use salvation as a shield for sin is wrong. But misleading, superficial definitions of worldliness and the relegation of the intellect to the darkest corner of our pietistic life is no less wrong. And that’s one sin we ought to avoid.

No human question is more pivotal. No thoughtful answer fails to stretch our language, our categories or our aspirations.

In recent years numerous books have been written about Jesus, books that are shaped by faith or skepticism or follow the Western academic quest for the historical Jesus. The result has been a kaleidoscope of Jesuses, a thicket of viewpoints, some troubling to faith, some puzzling to the intellect, and a few that enrich our vision as they explore familiar terrain from new and promising angles.

The view is different for one who has followed Christ with heart, mind, soul and strength—it is a vision of Christ whose portrait is discerned in the mosaic pattern of Scripture, whose influence is traced in the great currents of history, and whose compelling call has shaped the story line of ordinary humans who have been charged with extraordinary faith and courage.

The minimalist criteria for weighing the authenticity of Jesus’ sayings and deeds yield only a thin outline of Jesus, the barely discernible image of a Jewish sage or prophet. But the criteria of Scripture’s testimony and the effective power of Jesus in lives and history point to a multidimensional Christ who defies categorization and measurement. Jesus is the one figure who, like no others, has changed lives, shaped culture and offers one sure hope for the future. He is the incomparable Christ.

—J.I. PACKER

What do you think of Jesus Christ?

—JOHN STOTT

Edited by Michael Bull (02) 4782 4695 PO Box 331 Katoomba NSW 2780 Australia  Be Still is available in PDF from www.bullartistry.com.au