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NOT SEEING THE TREES FOR THE FOREST

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Sometimes, as the saying goes, "We can't see the forest for the trees." In some areas of life, we look at the immediate without considering the important. I have done it and probably so have you. I was listening to a Dave Ramsey broadcast the other day and he was talking about how a teenager can become a millionaire with a little bit of planning and putting off their immediate desires. If a 19 year old saves just \$2,000 per year (\$166/month) for 8 years and gets an average of 12% return on their investment, that original \$16,000 investment will be worth over a million dollars by the time they are 58 years old. The other option for the 19 year old is to get a car payment of \$166 per month for 8 years and have nothing to show for it in the end. Why not? We say, everyone else is doing it!

You see, we live life with a macro-wide angle lens and sometimes miss the micro-details that are so critically important. One of the areas we tend to do this is in examining ourselves spiritually (2 Corinthians 13:5). We see the "forest". We have been baptized, we attend faithfully, we participate in service and fellowship activities. Where we may need help from time to time is seeing the "trees." The visiting the sick, the clothing the naked, the feeding the poor, providing the shoulder for someone to cry on, the protecting the helpless, the day to day sharing our faith with others.

Perhaps we have allowed ourselves to be snared by a relatively easy trap, the trap we read about in 2 Corinthians 10:12... Paul writes, "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, *are not wise.*" We are warned against looking at what we do compared to what others do and coming away with a smug sense of pride. How are we to look at and evaluate our actions and habits in a spiritual light?

Jesus puts it in perspective in Luke 17:10- "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" Jesus is saying it is impossible to do everything that we should, so we should never boast about what we have done. Jesus' teaching brings us to a "fork in the road" in the "forest full of trees." We have a choice to make. Do we throw up our hands and say, "Jesus said we can't do enough so we will not do anything (or the bare minimum)? Or do we say, "Jesus said we can't do enough so we will do as much as we can to show him we know we do not deserve to even be recognized by him, much less to sit at his table and be served by Him?" (v. 7)?

Jesus was not setting up a system of salvation by works of merit, He of all people, knew that we were saved by the unmerited favor of the Father (Ephesians 2:8-10). But what He was doing was pointing out a tree in the forest that says, God loved you so much (John 3:16) that He allowed His Son to die for you! Don't you think that deserves your undivided, unshakable devotion and love? Could it be that Jesus is saying, "Find someone who is thirsty, and give them a drink of water?" Let's not make the mistake of "not seeing the trees for the forest!"