

What's Your Standard?

Did you have big dreams for your life? Did you see yourself living a completely different existence than the one you're living today? If the life you currently have is a lot different than the one you thought you'd be living, then you might wonder why is it that you're living below your standard. It might surprise you to hear that wondering why or how you've ventured away from your standard of life is a good thing. It's a good thing because asking the right question is essential to changing course and moving in the right direction.

Knowing the difference between what you have and what you CAN have is key. It involves #1) measuring your standards against the true standard of Christ and then #2) taking the necessary actions to bring your standards up to God's; both of these two things—knowing the standard and living up to it—are needed to witness His blessings in a powerful way.

Sometimes we forget the living-up-to-it part. We think our standard is enough. For instance, I once heard of a woman who refused to marry a man who wasn't capable of giving her a 3 carat diamond engagement ring. In her mind, this ring represented a standard, and she was determined not to go beneath it. The basis of her standard was to place a high value on a material thing, so much so that this material thing was a pivotal factor in judging whether or not a man was suitable to marry. But as many of us know—placing a high value on something doesn't mean that you'll get it. This woman knew what she wanted and set a standard for it, but setting our own personal standard is only the beginning of the race.

A standard is something that is used as a basis for judgment or opinion. When the word "*judgment*" enters the picture, "*standard*" takes on a deeper meaning. To stand in judgment of anything means that you place yourself equal to or above the thing you judge. To judge a piece of jewelry, a car, or an endeavor is one thing, but the act of using material things as a basis for judging another person can put you in the danger zone.

Matthew 7:1 (KJV) gives us a very important piece of wisdom about the act of judging. It says "*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*" In this verse our blessed Savior is directing us how to deal with the faults of others. You and I may know and adhere to the standards of civil discourse and conduct, but the Lord is telling us that we ought not judge those who do not know as we do. We shouldn't exalt ourselves above others for any reason, and to say that a man or woman is less than acceptable based on a worldly standard is not the way of Christ.

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What else can you glean from this poignant, yet plainly written verse in Matthew 7? Well, another piece of wisdom that Jesus hits home is the fact that standards come with responsibility. In order to hold a worthy standard for our lives and then measure it against God's standard, some action on our part will be required. We may want the diamonds and pearls, but what about our character? Does the value we place in loving, caring, and supporting others exceed the value we place on the diamonds and pearls? Because if it doesn't, we are sending the wrong message; fulfilling the standard of Christ must always come first.

Having a standard for how you live and for what you want out of life places you in a position of being accountable to meet the requirements of those standards. If you find yourself in a job that falls below your expectations, or you have a relationship with someone who turns out to be far from the man you wanted to marry, then you know that one of two things will happen. Either the situation will stay the same, or the situation will change. How you deal with the standard of Christ determines the success of either of the two scenarios.

Matthew 7:2 (NIV) says, *"For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* Do you see what our Master is telling us? If you judge unfairly, then you will be judged unfairly. People have a tendency to judge with the wrong yardstick, but you and I cannot afford to do that. It's too detrimental to our relationship with the Father. The example of Christ is the only yardstick we can use. His standards for loving others through compassion, kindness, and generosity guarantee the kind of rewards we desire.

Isaiah 48:17(NIV)

This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go."

In reality, we humans are not all that great at setting up standards for life. One need only look at the world to see that. The standard for the Christian's life was set by God. He's the one who will teach us what is best for us. He directs our path through His love. Is that path rocky at times? It can be, because we don't always follow it as we should, but most of us who have accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior understand that with this choice comes a responsibility to stand and fight the good fight of faith. It's sometimes not easy to do, but do it we must.

A good many of us are not where we thought we'd be in life, but rest assured that through Christ we'll get there. We sometimes struggle with our own personal issues, whether it's our finances, relationships, jobs, or our beautiful children. Nevertheless, you must make sure that the Father's standard of Godliness and love will meet and greet people wherever you go. Whether it's a new friend, a new man, or anyone else you meet, the first thing people should see is the glory of the Lord exuding from your very being. This is the standard of Christ, and it's really the only one worth living up to. ●

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