

## **082822 "Introspective Christian" Luke 14:7-14**

Years ago, I watched a documentary that talked about the multiple intelligences' theory of Howard Gardner, an American developmental psychologist and a Research Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education at Harvard University.

Even recently, people used to believe that IQ or cognitive intelligence is not only a measure of how smart you are, but how your life will turn out. IQ indicates how old your mental age is in comparison to your physical age, relative to all test-takers. With 100 being the average, people with an IQ of over 130 – the top 2% - are separated for so-called "gifted" education. About one in a million have an IQ of at least 171.3, which is what you need to qualify as a "genius" solely on the basis of high IQ. Then, the focus shifted from IQ to EQ or emotional intelligence. EQ is a measure of one's ability to control emotion and manage interpersonal relationships. Daniel Goldman, a psychologist, said IQ is responsible for only about 20% of one's success, and the rest – 80% - is determined by EQ.

In the documentary, Gardner criticized that even though linguistic or mathematical ability have little direct impact on one's success, people place too much emphasis on those two particular skills at the expense of other essential abilities. Gardner classified intelligence into nine categories (linguistic; logical-mathematical; musical; kinesthetic or bodily; spatial; interpersonal; intrapersonal; naturalistic; and existential intelligence), and contended that everyone has these nine intelligences to varying degrees. He believes that what is important is understanding who we are, and what we are capable of.

The documentary ended on an interesting note. It researched successful people in various areas, who had 2-3 particularly strong intelligences among

the multiple categories. The producers found one striking similarity – successful people all had very strong intrapersonal intelligence, or the ability to reflect on and evaluate oneself. In other words, knowing how to look back on ourselves is crucial to any success. Even if a person excels in a certain field, if they lack the ability to look at themselves objectively and continuously, they will not succeed in that field eventually. Isn't it interesting?

I think this principle can apply to our faith as well. We are living as Christians on this earth, but what does it mean to live as true Christians? The answer lies in the words of Jesus! “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily (not weekly!) and follow me” (Luke 9:23). The first thing a Christian must do is deny oneself! This means that you keep looking at yourself objectively from the standards of God's Word. Usually, it is difficult to objectify oneself, so there is a large tendency to lean toward looking at and judging others rather than reflecting on oneself through the Bible.

Luke 14:7-14, which we read today, is divided into two parts. Verses 7 to 11 are concrete action plans. When you are invited, including at the wedding banquet, you do not sit at the top, but at the end. It can be interpreted as a teaching to be humble wherever you are! Also, the second part in verses 12-14 is when you invite others. (First part was when you were invited and the second part is when you invite others.) Do not invite only friends, relatives, neighbors, or the rich, but invite the poor, the handicapped, the lame, and the blind.

The point is, if you do good and serve people who have nothing to repay, God will pay you back in the end because they have nothing to repay. According to the logic of the world, it is natural to give when you have something to receive, but Jesus is telling us to find people who cannot repay

you and serve them in the name of the Lord! Both of these stories ultimately tell us to live a humble life with God in mind.

Jesus told us not to rationalize ourselves, but to examine ourselves in the word of God and (go one step further) to deny ourselves.

When a man asked George Mueller the secret of his service, Mueller responded this way: "There was a day when I died, utterly died; died to George Mueller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied to show myself approved only to God."

A grain of sand is the smallest form of rock, but it has so many more uses than big rocks and stones. Why? Because it's been humbled, lowered, and decreased. Instead of receiving riches and fame by being big rocks, we should strive to be God's honored instruments as little grains of sand.

Samuel Morse was born into a preacher's home in New England just two years after George Washington was elected the first president of the United States. After finishing his education at Yale, he went to England to hone his painting skill. Upon his return to America, he was recognized as a gifted artist and was soon in much demand. Morse's first wife died while he was away from home painting in Washington, D.C. He did not receive the news until it was too late. In his heartbreak he turned away from painting and began trying to develop a means of rapid communication over great distances. This eventually led to his discovery of the telegraph.

Despite his fame and the many honors that came his way, Morse wasn't proud or boastful. In a letter to his second wife he wrote, "The more I contemplate this great undertaking, the more I feel my own littleness, and the more I perceive the hand of God in it, and how He has assigned to

various persons their duties, He being the great controller, all others His honored instruments.... Hence our dependence first of all on God, then on each other."

When we walk in pride and are conceited regarding our talents and accomplishments, we are demonstrating that we do not understand or appreciate the role that God holds in everything we do. None of us are able to succeed in our own strength or wisdom; we should always remember it is God that makes what we do possible. As Paul put it "What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, think about a sandglass. The grains of sand in the glass keep falling to the bottom, but they come back up when it's time. How do you see yourself? The power of the cross of Jesus Christ is the power to cleanse us from sin. But first, we must see ourselves, deny ourselves, and ask God's mercy and grace. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.