

*How Does God
Measure Your Life?*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 5

Chapter 1

THE MEASURES OF MEN 7

Chapter 2

THE MEASURE OF GOD 13

Chapter 3

THE MOTIVATION IS LOVE 17

Chapter 4

*COMMANDMENTS, REQUESTS,
AND PROMISES* 21

CONCLUSION 28

INTRODUCTION

“I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand” (Zechariah 2:1).

“And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over” (Ezekiel 47:3-5).

In all the sermons I have preached during the years of my ministry, I have never touched upon the subject of God’s measuring line until

now. The Bible says God's ways are past finding out (Romans 11:33). That means I could study and memorize the Word of God and I still would not be able to measure the things of God.

Men establish certain measures: A foot is twelve inches, a yard is three feet, and so on. Science is the measure of causes and effects. But there are measures that go beyond the measures of men. A scientist could make a chemical analysis of a mother's tear, yet the tear of a mother is far more than the phosphates, the sodium, and the other ingredients that comprise it. There is no power on earth to measure such a tear.

How is God measured? What is the measure of salvation, redemption, and the blood shed on Calvary? How do you measure Jesus Christ's payment for our sins? How is faith measured? How is mercy measured? What is the measure of hope and love?

As these pages will reveal, the Word of God should always be our measure. Everything we do revolves around the measure of our character in Jesus Christ. As we learn what God wants us to do and how to receive the power to obey Him, then the measure we take up our cross and follow Him will be revealed.

Chapter One

THE MEASURES OF MEN

“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:12-14).

Men always measure themselves by themselves in a process of relative righteousness. Someone declares that he is more righteous than one person and less righteous than another. We measure ourselves by what we have done. We measure ourselves by what we think. We evalu-

ate ourselves based upon what our family would want us to be, especially when we are young. We measure ourselves by our desires and our hopes.

The greatest problem that the human race has is trying to measure Adam. I counseled a pastor who, during our session, repeatedly said, "I don't want to be a pastor." But he is a pastor and a very good one. He said, "I don't even want people to call me 'pastor.'" He didn't want to speak, although he is very gifted. This pastor said, "I just don't think I should do that. I don't like it. I don't feel comfortable doing it."

This dear man was measuring himself by his emotional weaknesses. He wanted to quit. I told him to stop quitting things and to *start* something instead. To anyone who wants to quit something, I say: *Don't quit!* The Christian who starts something will grow stronger and require more faith and more grace to accomplish what's in his heart.

Redeem the Time

We need to make these the greatest days of our lives. Our time must be measured by eternity; our schedules by discipline. Our hearts must be measured by God's mandates, and

mercy by its expression of grace. Abraham's nephew Lot measured his life by money and possessions. The angels literally had to pull him out of Sodom and Gomorrah before the cities were destroyed by fire (Genesis 19).

Others measure their lives by need and not by God's provision. So many measure their lives by details instead of Christ. Often, Christians measure themselves by what is going on inside. They say that Christ is in them, and He is. The Father is in them; the Holy Spirit is in them; and the Word of God is in them. But they don't measure their emotions by the Word. Instead, they let their feelings measure their emotions.

God's ways are past finding out (Romans 11:33). Faith cannot be measured except by the Word of God. Hope is immeasurable. The love of God is limitless. The forgiveness of God is inexhaustible; it cannot be measured. If a person cannot forget a wrong done to him, then he doesn't have the divine ability to forgive; his measure of forgiveness is merely human. I see this kind of human forgiveness expressed every day and every week, even in my church.

Words make people terribly upset. Their emotions are measured by what people say. Their souls are measured by what they are

accused of. Their hearts are measured by the condemnation of Satan. This is not the glorious gospel. This is not the Finished Work.

God's Line from Eternity Past

God has a divine measuring line: it is His superabundant grace, His inexhaustible mercy, and His incomprehensible love.

God's line goes from eternity past to eternity future, and it takes care of the "now" in time. What happened at 9 o'clock this morning is gone forever; what will happen tomorrow does not exist today, and now just passed by. For us, to live is Christ. The uncle who abused you years ago isn't living inside of you; Christ is. The alcoholic mother who went out and did terrible things isn't living there either; it's Christ.

Our lives are not the sins that we commit. Sins cannot control us. We are not measured by our past or by what people did to us. No, God's measuring line extends from eternity past, when the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), to the present where we are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). We are seated above (Ephesians 2:6). For us, to live is Christ and tomorrow only brings hope because Christ is our future.

What kind of measuring line do you use? Is it how many sales you made last week? Is it how much sickness is in your family? Do these things determine your happiness?

Do you measure yourself by how many temptations you have, or by how many times you have failed? These things are to be measured by rebound. Guilt is outweighed by repentance, and condemnation is measured by no condemnation in the economy of God's grace.

Our lives are measured by the filling of the Holy Spirit, God's divine standard. Anything not crucified in our lives will become our enemy. Anything we don't die to will eat at our emotions like a cancer. We must stop feeding on the air and on the old sin nature's ashes. We must have a different measuring line. God has a measuring line, and anything we preserve in our flesh will vie to become our master.

Let's not measure ourselves by ourselves or compare ourselves with ourselves. Let's measure ourselves by the Word that has been distributed unto us. We have to stretch forth that Word and reach unto others in missionary work because our measuring line means to evangelize our city, our state, our nation, and our world. Our measuring line is God's great commission,

His great commandment.

Our measuring line in the Body of Christ is to love without self-preservation, without self-reservation, without self-equivocation, without self-justification, and without self-deception.

If sin abounds, our measuring line is that grace does much more abound (Romans 5:20). The Word of God is our measuring line.

Chapter Two

THE MEASURE OF GOD

Our measuring line today is that God's mercies are new every morning and His compassions fail not (Lamentations 3:22-23). On Monday, I get up, because His mercies are new for that day! I get up Tuesday and Wednesday and every day for the same reason. Every morning I plan to get up in peace and joy, praising God regardless of the circumstances. My measuring line is that Christ is in me. God is for me. Love is motivating me. Mercy is rejoicing against judgment toward me. My measuring line is Christ. He is my advocate, the attorney pleading my case. He is my high priest.

My measuring line is not my weakness, frailty, or vulnerability. It is not the circumstances of sickness, marriage, or finances. We don't measure a relationship by the fact that someone is tall, dark, and handsome. If that had

been the standard in the Old Testament, practically no one would have gotten married! The Jewish prophets were not tall, dark, and handsome, but they were beautiful in the eyes of God. God does not look upon the outward appearance but upon the heart.

Even in the midst of sin, David was seen as a man whose heart was after God. We cannot measure people by what others say against them or about them. We have to measure people by God's love for them. God's desire is to perfect every believer and to make us mature, therefore our measure for one another must be God's redemptive care.

We Are Not Our Weakness

People must not be measured by their present status; they are to be measured by what they will become by the grace of God. They must be seen for what they are becoming, by how they are growing. They are not to be measured by their weaknesses, but by their desire to be like Christ. May God help us to understand this.

Our eternal values are measured by how we function to the glory of Christ in time. Our words are not according to God's measure unless they edify. We cannot measure conviction unless it

stems from the purity of His Word.

A man's measure is determined by his commitment to grace, his obedience to God's mandates, and his response to the free and limitless love of God given in Jesus Christ.

From eternity past to eternity future, God sees us as perfect because of His measuring line of omniscience and foreknowledge. Calvary's Lamb was slain on our behalf from the foundation of the world. That means God knew every sin David would commit; He knew all that Abraham and Solomon would do. Yet, God never measured them by what they were going to do; He measured them by what they would become and who they were in His eyes of mercy. This is a good way to be counseled properly, to be blessed permanently, and to have abundant life fervently.

Prepared for the Call

When a man or woman is prepared, he or she will always get a call that is special. God always goes after prepared people. We are measured to be prepared vessels, meet for our Master's use, vessels of gold and silver in His great house. Prepared people are *sanctified*, which means to be set apart for a precise purpose. Jesus

asked the Father to “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Christ was saying, “Set them apart. Set their voices apart to sing my songs only. Set their tongues apart to speak edifying words. May they have sanctified tongues. Set their minds apart to think with Me, to concentrate and dedicate themselves to discipline.”

The Lord Jesus prayed that everything we have will be set apart precisely by His Word — our cars, our schedules, our studies. The microphone at our church’s pulpit is sanctified for singing the music of Christ and for preaching and teaching His glorious Gospel.

Chapter Three

THE MOTIVATION IS LOVE

Salvation is receiving the gospel of grace freely. Growing in grace is receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness through the Word of Life. As we begin to grow in grace, we experience it and give it away without performance or works. In the flow of the Holy Spirit, the Word has made it possible for us to be very careful stewards of God's grace and to measure where we are in our Christianity.

Our spirituality is based on the measure of our obedience to God; our faith is measured by believing His Word, and our ability to think by how much we receive the Word of God. We measure grace by what we freely give to those who do not earn it, and mercy by how often we put grace into action by faith. Our forgiveness is measured by the precious inexhaustible blood that Jesus shed on Calvary. We can so readily

measure things as God sees them!

The first way we are measured is by how much we receive God's love and grace. Jesus said if we ask anything in His name He will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son (John 14:13-14). Ask anything and He will do it! In John 14:15, Christ said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Notice that the motivation for our obedience is love. If the love of God is flowing in our hearts, then we are receiving that measure of God's eternal life which cannot be measured by time.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). We get to know the will of God by His commandments. We learn how we can bless God through what we have received from Him and by what He commands us to do. If we do love Him, we will keep His commandments. We will study to show ourselves approved unto God, as workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15). We will love others as Christ loves us (John 13:34). We will honor the Word of God, and thereby honor our marriages and our families.

The Importance of the Follower

The follower makes decisions that determine how strong the leader is going to be. This is true on a team, in a local assembly, or on a job. The principle is this: The follower always leads the way in authority because of free volition.

For a woman, this means she will determine how great her husband's potential will be because she leads the way by submitting to him. God addresses her first, in Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Husbands are addressed later, in Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

In Ephesians 6:1, God addresses children first: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right," then He addresses the Fathers, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

If we want to know what pleases God, we have His commandments clearly revealed through His Word. Those commandments are not grievous because we don't fulfill them in the energy of the flesh in a works program. "For we

are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Chapter Four
COMMANDMENTS,
REQUESTS, AND PROMISES

If I want to know how to please God, then I must tune in to the Lord Jesus Christ and read about what He hates. I know He hates Satan. I know He hates sin. He hates rebellion and impurity. He hates the actions of those who pour strong drink into their neighbor's cup. I know He hates the lawlessness and carelessness of evil. He hates pornography and X-rated films. If I love Him, I will hate these things too.

God has commanded that we are not to look upon the wine when it is red and jumps in the cup (Proverbs 23:31). He has commanded us not to lust after the opposite sex, because He hates lust. God said, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" in 2 Corinthians 6:14. Because he said this, the measure of our obedience will reveal the measure of our desire to love

God the best we can. So, we will choose not to marry an unbeliever.

It is a privilege not to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever but to love them with God's love. We are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, according to Ephesians 5:11, but we are to minister to unbelievers with reproof. There is no conflict. Yes, God loves sinners, but He hates iniquity and unrighteousness.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,” (1 John 2:15). That's a very clear command from the Father. “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever,” (1 John 2:17).

God has told us to be careful with the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. These are all of the world. He has sent us into the world, but He also keeps us while we are in the world, functioning, working, witnessing, loving, caring, and sharing. Still, we are not to love what the world loves. So if I love God, these commandments are not difficult, and love makes obeying them so easy.

The Measure of Seeking the Lost

If I don't evangelize, I have not even begun to love God. I should go from house to house the way the Bible tells me to. Otherwise, I haven't begun to love God, because if I love Him, the first thing I will do is obey His commandments.

If a ministry isn't deeply committed and dedicated to missions, then that ministry has not even begun to love God. Each of our churches should be sending out missionaries. It doesn't matter how small the church is. Within three to five years, a church should be able to say it has two missionaries here, two there. That is simply keeping His commandments. It's going out into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. What we keep will be lost, what we give away will come back multiplied.

We must be deeply committed to missions, or we are not loving God. Instead, we are just holding the fort by worshipping God, but we are not loving Him. Loving God is obeying God. It is fulfilling His will to go into all the world and to preach the Gospel.

Just as a pastor works with his comptroller and finance committee to budget money, he should, in his vision, budget how many mis-

sionaries he believes God will raise up and send out by faith. Then, if the pastor does a good job training and his people do a good job discipling, God will go beyond what the pastor asks or thinks for missions.

Our lives become so simple when we begin to agree with God (Amos 3:3), and we agree with God because we are being prepared to meet Him (Amos 4:12). We were saved by receiving His salvation. Now we are being delivered by receiving His power, and we are being blessed by expressing His life.

We learn so much about ourselves by the measure that we love the will of God. The quality of our love will be revealed by the measure of our obedience to the Word of God. What we really believe about the love, grace, and kindness of Jesus Christ determines so many things about our lives. It determines our happiness, inner joy, deliverance, and healing.

God's Requests

God also makes many requests that are not commandments. This is how we measure our obedience, our love, and the power we have in faith. We are commanded to go into all the world, to love one another, and to forgive. But

the Lord *requests* that by His mercies we present our bodies as living sacrifices to Him (Romans 12:1). He asks us to guard our hearts with all diligence (Proverbs 4:23).

We can learn so much about Jesus Christ by reading His requests and His prayers. He prayed that the Father would keep us and make us one, just as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one (John 17:21). Reading this I realize that God wants us to be so one with Him and His body! In 1 Corinthians 1:10, we are asked to have the same mind—even the mind of Jesus Christ. He wants a marriage and the family to be one. He wants the pastors, deacons, and elders to be as one, revealing the unity of the Trinity. The Lord asks us to have the same vision for the lost. I learn that I can please Him if I live in oneness by faith.

The Power of His Promises

There is another way I can please God. I can read His promises and know what He wants. He said to Israel, “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee,” in Jeremiah 31:3. I get to know the character of His love by that promise. In Hebrews 13:5, God declares, “I will never

leave thee, nor forsake thee." By this promise I come to know His commitment to me, no matter what my condition is.

I get to know so much about the Lord by His promises. I can know by His promises that He wants to deliver me and heal me. "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise," (Jeremiah 17:14). He sent His Word to heal (Psalm 107:20). I get to know what God desires for my life by His promises.

He promises that if we abide in Him and His words abide in us, we can ask what we will and it shall be done unto us (John 15:7). He will answer us so that the Father may be glorified through the Son's precious work on Calvary on our behalf. He says if I sow spiritually, I will reap spiritually. I know that as I sow mercy, forgiveness, and grace, I will reap mercy, forgiveness, and grace, and a multitude of blessings will come back to me. Oh, I learn so much from His promises!

By His promises, I know that if a woman submits to her husband, God will sanctify him and bless her. I know that if a husband will love his wife as Christ loved the church, all of heaven will come down into that marriage.

Something special will happen when we attend to the promises. We must receive these promises in the divine nature that comes with them. These promises can produce a birth in our souls, an expectation in our hearts, and the power of a motivating force for our lives.

Psalm 130 says there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared. How can we measure His forgiveness? We can't, because all the world's sins are paid for. How can we measure the beauty of a believer, in purity and sincerity, rebounding from sin? How can we measure what it means to know that when we name our sins He forgives us? We cannot measure it because His mercy and grace are immeasurable. Our prayers cannot be measured because there is a God of integrity waiting to honor them simply because He said He would.

CONCLUSION

From God's commandments, we learn what pleases God. From His requests and prayers, we discover what He wishes and hopes for us His body. Then, from His promises we learn what He desires for us personally. Can you see how this progresses and develops our character in Him?

Our schedules are measured by how disciplined we are in redeeming time. We measure our hunger for God by our commitment to receive His Word with meekness. By this we begin to discover how much we have fallen in love with Jesus. We hear His mandates and they are not grievous to us. We have been given the privilege to honor His requests in time. We have read the promises of God, and with His promises He has given us an answer that will measure up to any situation.

Sooner or later, the level of our character will

be revealed in our Christian experience. Things will rise or fall according to our character. The principles that we believe in the Word of God should be the basis for our decisions. As we find out *what* God wants us to do, we learn *how* to do what He wants.

But we must always understand this: God is far more interested in who we are than in what we do. He can bring us to the place where we are what we should be, and then we will always do what we should do because there will be an outflowing of the fruit of the Spirit in the measure of our obedience to Him.

Jesus said the chiefest among us would be those who serve. He came to minister, not to be ministered unto; He came to give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:27-28). This is how He measured His life, and the greatest people in the world today are those who measure their opportunities by serving others in love.