

Self-Examination in the Christian Life
Class 3: Understanding What Makes Self-Examination Difficult and Why It Is Worth It
August 30, 2026

I. Review

- What Is Self-Examination?

Self-examination is meditating on your own life and heart before the face of God, looking through the grid of Scripture, meant to direct you to prayer of confession, thanksgiving, and supplication and to living out the truth of your identity in Christ more fully.

- Why Is Self-Examination Important in the Christian Life?

Christianity is not simply a worldview or a belief system, but a complete and utter change in who you are, what you love, how you live, and your motives for why you live in that way.

II. What Makes Self-Examination Difficult?

A. Fears

“We often resist taking an honest look at ourselves because we are afraid of what we might find there.” – Matthew Bingham, 224

B. Deception

Proverbs 4:23, Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Jeremiah 17:9, The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Hebrews 3:12-14, ¹²Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

C. Distraction and Busyness

Self-examination is about reflection—reflection on what has happened to me in my life, reflection on what I have done, on why I do the things I do, and on what is going on in my heart. Self-examination often begins by asking questions like,

- “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?” (Ps. 42:11)
- Or, “Why do I keep doing the things I don’t want to do?” (see Rom. 7:13-25)
- Or, “Why do I forget the goodness and faithfulness of God in particular moments?” (see Ps. 103:2)

But the truth is, we often feel too busy to take time to reflect.

This has always been a temptation, but is probably more difficult to overcome now than it ever has been. There have typically been times throughout history that people would have been left alone with their thoughts—on a commute to get somewhere (whether walking, carriage, horse, or car), on a leisurely walk, while you are doing chores, lying in bed at night, or first thing up in the morning.

Those were often ready-made for reflection—how the Lord has provided for you in your life, or why you just got so frustrated at your kids, or why you feel so anxious all the time.

But now, we are not forced to be left alone with our thoughts during those times anymore. Instead of thinking and reflecting, we can turn on a podcast or an audiobook or call a friend. We can scroll on our phone or turn on the radio or TV. This is even true with something as simple as electricity that lets you turn on a light to keep working instead of sitting in the dark with your thoughts.

III. Why Is Self-Examination Worth It?

Luke 7:47, “Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

Psalms 59:16-17, But I will sing of your strength;

I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning.

For you have been to me a fortress

and a refuge in the day of my distress.

¹⁷ O my Strength, I will sing praises to you,
for you, O God, are my fortress,
the God who shows me steadfast love.

Self-examination gives us eyes to see the grace of God in our lives—in detail, not just in broad, undefined strokes. And so, it fuels our thanksgiving and praise and our love.

It also prepares us to grow in holiness.

“Let him that would not enter into temptations labor to know his own heart, to be acquainted with his own spirit, his natural frame and temper, his lusts and corruptions, his natural, sinful, or spiritual weaknesses, that, finding where his weakness lies, he may be careful to keep at a distance from all occasions of sin.” – John Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, 201

Romans 8:12-13, ¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Group Discussions (3-4 people)

- What are you most looking forward to in this class?
- What do you hope God does in your life and heart through this class?
- What lingering questions do you still have about self-examination?

Task for this Week

- What area of your life is best made for reflection (and prayer)?
 - Examples: a commute to work or the grocery, laundry or dishes, just before bed or early in the morning, lunch in the middle of the day
- What often distracts you from reflection in that time?
- What can you do to consistently reduce and resist distraction in that time so that you can reflect on God’s grace in an unhurried way?