

Examine Yourself

“For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths (II Timothy 4:2-4).” Many people now happily listen only to what they want to hear or see. They are willing to accept anything that agrees with their self-created world view and reject everything that does not fit their view. They ask no questions and want no answers but their own. They will shut their eyes to all manner of corruption to maintain their world view. Some people, including some leaders, will say anything if it supports what they want – even if it misleads, or they know it to be false. The cost of silently letting this happen is devastating. ‘I said nothing when they came for the socialist, the trade unionists, and then the Jews, because I was not one of them. Then, they came for me and there was no one left to speak out.’ (Martin Niemöller, German Lutheran WW II pastor)

The first casualty of such thinking is truth. Living by lies may work for a time, but it does not change reality and when reality finally must be faced, the consequences of having ignored it may be devastating and irreversible. Making choices based on lies, cannot address the issues at hand. We are called to seek the truth because the truth will set us free (John 8:32). Lies will put us in a cage.

The second casualty is community. It happened over and over through-out history. When people set themselves up as the center of the universe and declare everyone else to be evil, inferior, or a threat, the results are unspeakable, and in the end, those people destroy themselves. No one can survive alone. No two people always agree. To maintain their center of universe position, these power seekers will eventually turn on each other. Seeking the center means a life of fear in a gilded cage – appealing on the outside, but still deadly.

The third casualty is innovation, creativity, and progress. The people who are the most creative and innovative think outside the box. They will solve the problems people face because they are open to all ideas and possibilities. They respect the old and are open to the new, even ideas that may not fit in a gilded cage world. Isolating one’s self from anything different and condemning anyone who thinks differently can be deadly to the mind, the soul, and the body. The Dust Bowl in the 1930s was caused by not adapting farming methods to the environment. Some of the first Europeans in Australia starved to death because they would not eat the grubs and other outback survival foods the native people offered to keep themselves alive.

Examine yourself. Reexamine what God asks of you. “Here, O Israel; The Lord is our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:29-31).” Remember who your neighbors are (Luke 10:25-37). If you find yourself in a gilded cage, return to the Word for guidance and seek help from all your neighbors – friends and enemies alike – to open the cage doors and step out into the challenges and possibilities, messy though they may be, to seek a better world for everyone, because the “Lord God made them all.”

This week pray for:

- **Those touched by the California Chabad of Poway synagogue shooting Saturday morning.**
- **The people of Venezuela** who are in in the middle of major political upheaval.
- The two people who were killed and four who were injured in a **shooting at the University of North Carolina’s Charlotte campus** on Tuesday.
- Those still feeling the effects of **winter storms, continuing flooding, mudslides, earthquakes, or tornados this week**. One Alabama family who lost 11 members to a tornado.



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