

7 Guidelines to Knowing Yourself

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What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:24-25

In his day, Socrates was both loved and hated. Those who listened to him as he spoke in the *agora* or marketplace usually applauded the manner in which he took on the leadership of his day. His pungent, cutting remarks, however, were not greatly appreciated by the city fathers whose hypocrisy and fraud were often the subjects of his salty comments.

Eventually, Socrates was destroyed by his enemies who have long since vanished into obscurity. But his name is still voiced by those studying history or philosophy. Socrates wasn't just ahead of his time; there never was a time for men such as he. Today, things aren't much different, and they never will be. Of all his advice, no truth or saying is more powerful than his injunction, "Know thyself!" In spite of our knowledge of outer space, we've never conquered the inner space of the human heart or mind.

"Know yourself!" If you really want to know yourself, there are seven questions which you need to ask--guidelines which can help you really evaluate who and what you really are.

GUIDELINE #1: What do you really want out of life?

Your desires and ambitions--your secret yearnings--tell something of the real you. Fame, fortune, happiness? To do the will of God, to live a life of purpose, or to live for pleasure? All of these reveal the real you.

GUIDELINE #2: What do you think about most?

Simply put, your thinking controls your life. Jesus said, "The things that come out of the mouth come from the heart..." (Matthew 15:18). In a real sense, your life becomes an extension of your thoughts, which is part of the reason that it is terribly important to think positively, uplifting thoughts.

GUIDELINE #3: How do you spend your money?

The ledger of your checkbook is like a personal history of your life. It tells you what your value system is. You spend money on what you consider important, whether it is your home, your car, the food that goes on your kitchen table, or clothing your children. At the same time, money spent on entertainment or books is an expression of what you consider important.

GUIDELINE #4: What do you do with your leisure time?

Ancient Greece had as many holidays as working days, and Rome wasn't far behind, with one day off for every two working days. Today, we haven't arrived at such a liberal arrangement, but how you spend leisure time tells something of the real you. Some take advantage of off time to donate to their church or organizations such as Guidelines. Some paint houses for widows or do shopping for mom or dad who can't get out to the store, and others hoard leisure time strictly for themselves.

GUIDELINE #5: What kind of company do you enjoy?

Take a look at your close friends and you will see something of the real you. Far better to have a few really committed friends than a lot of "acquaintances" who call themselves friends, who quickly disappear when your money or popularity wanes.

GUIDELINES #6: Whom do you admire?

Your heroes tell something of the real person, the individual whom you would like to mirror. Tell me about the individuals or the things that you most admire, and you will begin to describe the real you, the one that Socrates said you should know.

GUIDELINE #7: What do you laugh at?

Are off-color stories repulsive to you? When something happens to you, can you laugh at yourself?

Knowing yourself is not always pleasant, but it is important. Think about it. It can help change your life.