



[1 Corinthians 11:31-32](#)

(31) For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. (32) But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

King James Version

Verse 31 teaches that [God](#) allows us the opportunity to exercise self-discipline and avoid His judgment by watching—searchingly examining ourselves, detecting our shortcomings, and recognizing our own condition. Yet, if we fail to exercise discipline, He will not. As in the example of Jonah, He is faithful and will complete His purpose ([Philippians 1:6](#)). If we fall short, He will discipline and chasten us because He does not want to see us destroyed. God's purpose—oursalvation—doesnot change. Again, the only variable is how much we choose to suffer before He accomplishes His purpose. We choose whether we will be humble or be humbled.

In many cases, not necessarily all, we choose our trials. It is the same in any family. If one son is dutiful and obedient, and the other is rebellious, pushing the envelope at every opportunity, it would come as no surprise which son suffers the greater trials (or receives the most discipline) in both number and severity. Each child has a choice. We also have a choice—toexercise the discipline now, or to receive it from God at some time in the future.

So, how do we searchingly [examine ourselves](#), detect our shortcomings, and recognize our own condition? How do we find the path we should be taking? God promises us in [Proverbs 3:6](#), "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." *The Message*, a paraphrase, renders this verse as, "Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track."

When we acknowledge His presence—whichstriving to [pray always](#) does—Heshines His light on the decision or thought. Consciously including God in the process makes the right choice more obvious. It also makes the choice a conscious one of obeying or

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disobeying God, rather than relegating it to habit or impulse.

Too often, we are not exercising self-control because we are hiding from God's presence, just as [Adam and Eve](#) did ([Genesis 3:8](#)). We may hear that "still small voice" ([I Kings 19:12](#)), but we turn off our minds and just go with the flow, unresistingly following the dictates of our human nature, which has been under Satan's influence since our births.

This tendency makes striving to pray always, being in constant contact with God, the best way to accomplish effective self-examination. By communicating with God before every decision, even before every thought ([II Corinthians 10:5](#)), we invite God into the situation, putting the spotlight of [truth](#) on our thinking and motivations—humannature's worst nightmare.

With God's presence through His [Holy Spirit](#), we are able to recognize our shame and our helplessness before God, helping to create a stronger awareness of [sin](#) that we cannot easily evade by rationalizing it. When face to face with the holy God, we cannot easily say that our sin is only a little thing. Nor can we use others as examples, saying, "They are doing it, so what is the big deal?" With God there, right in front of us, all our excuses fail.

Once we bring God into the picture, the right way is more obvious, removing the many excuses our human nature concocts to allow disobedience. Then, the stark choice of obedience or blatant rejection of God faces us. When this occurs, it is a good time to pray for the will and power to do the right thing ([Philippians 2:13](#)).

— Pat Higgins

To learn more, see:
[Praying Always \(Part Five\)](#)

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