

# Jumping to Conclusions

*Seeing Your New Being*

January 9, 2022

**Today we're still talking about that new you.** So, cue part two with this: **What are you doing?** As of right now, what's your story? Y'know your present goals and past accomplishments? What's been going on with you?



Last week we asked, *who do you think you are*, and talked about how *who you are* is a function of *what you think* and how *what you think* must be based on *what God thinks* – so today, we're looking at how to *see* what God thinks – *about who you are*. And He tells us just how simple it is:

Every tree is known by its own fruit. – Luke 6:44 NKJ



We don't see trees or people by what they think – but by what they *do* and *produce*. **We're known by our actions.** And that's why the standard follow-up question after an introduction is, “and what do you *do*?” It's a snapshot of the person as a whole because we know: **To best see who someone really is – we examine what they do.** Well same goes for God; that's why we're here on earth; *to do stuff!*



And a couple years ago, I referenced this as bad news for *me* because I *talk* much better than I *do*. So, I made a promise to follow through and actually *do* two things I had *talked* up: **1) I would stop sinning and become righteous and 2) I would dunk a basketball on my 40th birthday...** Happy birthday to me – this Thursday is the big day and I'd like to share something I've done...

Okay... here's the deal: I bought a jump program, a leg press, and I read up. I was training 3-5 days each week in my garage beginning January 2020. Then Covid. Everything got trickier but I stayed fairly consistent; then I strained my shoulder... then my thigh and then came a few pinched nerves. Ibuprofen a little time off. Meanwhile, I moved to associate pastor and learned how to do online everything. But I got back in the gym – until I pulled a tricep and experienced a profound new back pain; so I change the program and... 2021 try again! Got Covid. Slowly regained endurance, start yet again and my back really went out. X-Rays reveal moderate to severe degenerative disc disease, and now chairs are challenging. Then I got Covid again and... 2022!



**So, regarding my righteousness and my dunk-ability – what do you think? Am I A) A Fraud B) A Fool C) A Failure or D) All of the above?** Well hold your horses – before you use what I've done (or not done) to vote on who I really am, let's remember what we

talked about last week and let me make my case. First, let's see if I'm a *fraud*.

And let's follow the bouncing ball as our parallel parable for my journey to righteousness. So, did I really believe I would dunk? Yes. Now I ran the numbers and laughed at how ridiculous a proposition it was – but I truly believed I'd find a way! And even though I had to *change* my ways several times, **I knew that I needed to believe if I was going to achieve. I had to KNOW that God could get it done with little old me – if that was something He wanted to do.**

And even though dunking and righteousness sounded equally ridiculous, **I knew if God wanted to use me to illustrate how faithful devotions require going through the motions, He could.** Even though I knew building faith meant a good chance of an ugly beginning. Like when the disciples asked why they first failed to cast out demons:

[Jesus] replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." – Matthew 17:20 NIV

*Nothing will be impossible for you!* **Hard to believe but easy to begin!** Just do it. Even if it isn't pretty at first (imagine the failed exorcisms!). Which is why He *did* say, "**Nothing will be impossible**". Oh, *lots* is impossible now, but put in the practice with tiny, seemingly insignificant steps of faith – and you'll get there! Until then... yeah, it'll look bad and embarrassing. Even like you *don't* believe...



*But God sees you working! He's right there watching from the sideline!*

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. – Hebrews 11:6 NIV



if I'm a fool!

**Frauds are dishonest. The faithful are just clumsy.** And I wasn't lying about my intention or belief because I fully believe God is God and can accomplish whatever He wants! Even with a hunk of junk like me! So, what happened? Maybe I was just misguided; let's see

The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin. - Proverbs 10:8 NIV

Now, there are many disputable matters in the Bible which we continue to debate based on scope and meaning but there are some broad, shoot for the moon, non-negotiables that we are commanded without qualification: **We're commanded to be Blameless** (Deu 18:13) **Merciful** (Luk 6:36) **Holy** (Lev 19:2) **Complete** (2 Cor 13:9) **Pure** (1 Jn 3:3) **and Perfect** (Mat 5:48)! So as near as I can tell, aiming for and believing in the impossible is what wise hearts are supposed to *do!*



Remember the supposed superheroes and saints we talked about last week; **they were ordinary characters just like us, who earned**

God's 'kudos' for doing something spectacular amid countless fruitless attempts. Were they misguided?

Well, **we judge what we do based on the perspective we use.** And there are two ways to see frequent failure before a singular success: **Getting closer or falling short.**

**And following God's commands as we understand them to the best of our ability is never foolish, it's faithful.** Sure it can be confusing or embarrassing – but we each have to take our shots, and when we miss, take our lumps! Good news is, God sees misses as getting closer and sees all progress as positive. **He knows the score and gets that you gotta work on your aim!** Which is why Paul pushes this constant reminder:

Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. – 1 Corinthians 10:31 NIV

**When God's glory your goal and you don't take your eye off that ball... you can't be made a fool!**

A discerning person keeps wisdom in view, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth.

- Proverbs 17:24 NIV

As for the pain of the process, **remember that putting your new self on means throwing the old you out!** A missed shot makes you better when you see what went wrong and resolve *not* to do it again. **Admitting faults doesn't reveal weakness; it creates strength, communicates courage, and hints at the deeper story of the character behind the actions.** A story of someone with a God-given goal and a plan with a purpose. Not a fool.



Which leaves failure. Even if my heart and mind were in the right place, I did not do what I said I would do. I am a failure... *right?* Well it's true; I didn't dunk... and I aint sinless. But I did practice. And I made progress. I dropped a little weight, got a lot stronger and fought through a bunch of injuries and illnesses. I became more consistent and disciplined and even though my bad back put me further from the hoop, I feel closer to my goal. I feel how far I've come *more* than what's left.

And standing here after two years of repeatedly feeling like a failure, **I realize how comforted I am having endured my fears being fulfilled. I survived failure.** And I now know that I will again! Because it's part of the process that God designed to grow us into His loving, trusting kids.

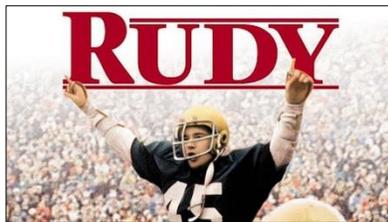
This is how love is made complete among us: ... In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because He first loved us. – 1 John 4:17-19 NIV

Everything we *do* reflects where we *are* on the path from ‘born this way’ to ‘just like Jesus’. And each of us can only go so far. Because our path to perfection was designed to teach us our need for help *and* God’s desire to give us what we need. So He sent Jesus to get us home!

**But do you know how far Jesus carries you? Exactly and *only* the distance from your best effort, to perfection.** He's not interested in doing what you could have done. He's only interested in doing what's impossible for you. And that’s why John tells us:

We are God's children *now*, and what we *will be* has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure. ... You know that He appeared in order to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin. ... Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous. – 1 John 3:2-7 ESV

There is a point where you come to the end of yourself located right at the pinnacle of your practice to *do* what you believe God has asked of you. **THAT’S the point where we’re supposed to live! Because THAT’S where He’s coming to pick us up!** And He knows right where THAT is because He knows exactly who you are. And sees exactly what you’re doing! *You...* not so much.



Take this ridiculous guy who saw himself as a football player. It’s what defined his life even though he never made it pro – in fact, he played a *total* of two snaps in college because he barely made the practice squad. And, he was barely eligible because he had terrible grades at the junior college he was transferring from! Talk about a delusional failure! **So why’d he get a movie?**

Because there’s a lot more story behind those actions. He battled being undersized, having a learning disability, homelessness, rejection, discouragement, and heartbreak after heartbreak. And when we see the story behind ol’ Rudy ‘s actions, we get a peek at God’s perspective and begin to understand how two snaps are worth celebrating as a perfect success, not failure.

**It’s always been the heart with which we do anything that determines what God sees in what we’ve done and who we are.**

Now don’t get me wrong. That video is incredibly embarrassing, and I profoundly feel like a fraud, fool, and failure. But isn’t that about par for the course when we look back at everything we’ve done. We’re Christians! **Our whole goal is to aim at the unattainable and do something about it even though every one of our honest attempts falls short in a very painful and public way!**

But remember, **we don’t get to judge who we are and what we’ve done.** On both counts, the narrow perspective of our biased human brain disqualifies us from making the call. We can only see superficial slices that manifest on the surface of this place – and we would be stunned by the deeper stories that God sees sitting behind every action and shocked to see the metric He uses to measure our success!

In fact, I don’t think we saw the real video of my dunk attempt... let’s roll the one God saw...



failure...

It's hard to believe I did it... but that's *our* problem! **As we make the decisions to take the action of someone who follows the Lord, we can lose sight of where we're at and who we've become, seeing the earthly appearance of coming up short.** But don't jump to any conclusions, as long as you know where you're going and put in the practice, you're far from fool, fraud, or

**You're already a winner!**