

 AB FINANCIAL NEWS

★ SPECIAL EDITION ★

# CHECK YOURSELF FIRST

*The Discipline of Looking Inward Before Looking Outward*

*Anchored in Scripture · Rooted in the Wisdom of the Shimagle*

*Adapted for the Ethiopian and Eritrean Diaspora*

— A Maraki Group Mind & Wisdom Edition —

Special Edition | Hosted by AB | Maraki Group

## WHY THIS EDITION EXISTS

There is a small habit some people have developed without thinking much about it.


When the audio on the other end of a phone call is too low, they do not immediately ask the other person to speak up. **They check their own phone's volume first.**


When an email seems delayed, they check their own outbox before complaining the other person never replied. When a text feels cold, they re-read what they themselves wrote before assuming offense. When a meeting goes badly, they ask what part they played before blaming the other people in the room.

It is a small habit. It costs almost nothing. And it changes everything.

This edition is about that habit — and the simple, ancient principle behind it: **before assuming the problem is outside you, check whether it might be inside you.**

The people who run this check consistently are the rare adults that everyone secretly wants more of in their lives. The colleague who is easy to work with. The spouse who is safe to disagree with. The friend who never assumes the worst. The relative who, when there is a misunderstanding, asks first instead of accusing first. None of this requires extraordinary virtue. It requires one habit, practiced daily.

 **THE THESIS:** A community held together by people who check themselves first is fundamentally different from one held together by people who blame first. **The discipline is small. The consequences are enormous.** Most of the resentments that quietly destroy families, friendships, workplaces, and marriages would never have grown if both parties had run this check before opening their mouths.

 **AN HONEST WARNING:** This guide also names the *shadow* of this discipline. There are people for whom 'check yourself first' has already become 'blame yourself only.' For them, this guide must protect, not pressure. **Self-attribution before other-attribution is a virtue. Self-attribution *only* is a wound.** Section 5 takes this seriously. If you tend to over-blame yourself, please read it carefully.

## 1. THE PHONE VOLUME PRINCIPLE

Return to the small example we opened with. A person is on a phone call. The audio on the other end sounds low. They have two options.


Option one: *"You're breaking up. Can you speak louder?"*


Option two: *look at the volume bar on their own phone, and slide it up.*


Both might solve the problem. But *the order matters*. The person who reaches for option two first is, without realizing it, practicing a discipline that scripture, philosophy, and our own ancestors have all named as essential to a well-ordered life.

That discipline runs in three layers. Most people only think of the first. The deeper two are where almost all our hardest relationships actually live.


### 1.1 The Three Checks

 **The Technical Check.** Is my equipment the problem? Is my phone on silent? Did my email go to drafts? Is my Wi-Fi actually connected? Did I send the message to the wrong number? **Before blaming, verify.**

 **The Interpretive Check.** Am I reading this correctly? The short reply may have come from a hospital waiting room. The unreturned call may be sitting unheard because the phone died. The relative who 'ignored' my message may have read it at 2 AM and meant to respond when fresh. **Before reacting, reinterpret.**

 **The Accountability Check.** What is *my* part in this? The roommate who is upset that dishes pile up but has never said so. The parent who resents an adult child's distance but has never picked up the phone first. The employee who feels overlooked but has not asked clearly for what they want. **Before complaining, examine.**

Most conflicts dissolve at one of these three checks. The person who skips all three and goes straight to grievance *multiplies* conflict in their life — and never understands why they always seem to be surrounded by it.

 **A QUIET TEST:** Think of one chronic frustration in your life right now — a person, a situation, a recurring complaint you bring up often. Run the three checks. **Is there a technical issue you have not verified? An interpretation you have not questioned? A part you have played that you have not yet named?** Most chronic frustrations have at least one of these waiting to be noticed.

## 2. WHAT SCRIPTURE SAID FIRST

Scripture is unusually direct on this discipline — far more so than most people remember. Long before any modern self-help author named 'taking responsibility,' the Bible was teaching it with a clarity that has not been improved upon.

### 2.1 The Cornerstone Verse — The Beam and the Mote

There is no sharper statement of this principle in any literature than the one Jesus gave on the Sermon on the Mount:

"Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? ... Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." — Matthew 7:3-5 (KJV)

"በወንድምህ ዓይን ያለውን ጉድፍ ስለ ምን ታያለህ፤ በዓይንህ ግን ያለውን ምስሶ አታስተውልም? ... አንተ ግብዝ፤ አስቀድመህ ከዓይንህ ምስሶውን አውጣ፤ ከዚያም በኋላ ከወንድምህ ዓይን ጉድፍን ለማውጣት አጥርተህ ታያለህ።" — ማቴዎስ ፯፥፮-፭

Read it slowly. The image is deliberately absurd. **A man with a wooden beam protruding from his own eye is trying to remove a speck of sawdust from his brother's eye.** The picture is comic — and devastatingly accurate. This is what nearly every dispute looks like from the outside. Two people each focused on the small flaw in the other, blind to the much larger thing in themselves.

Jesus does not say *do not address the mote*. He says: **first cast out the beam**. The order matters. Self-examination is not optional — it is the prerequisite for seeing anything else clearly. **You cannot diagnose your brother through a log.**

## 2.2 The Most Practical Verse You May Have Never Noticed

If Matthew 7:3-5 is the famous verse, Proverbs 18:17 may be the most useful. Almost no one quotes it. Almost everyone needs it:

"He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." — Proverbs 18:17 (KJV)

"በራሱ ጉዳይ መጀመሪያ የተናገረ ሰው ጸድቆ ይመስላል፤ ነገር ግን ባልንጅራው መጥቶ ይመረምረዋል።" — ምሳሌ ፲፰፥፲፯

Built directly into scripture is this caution: **the first telling of any dispute always sounds right**. Always. That is how human storytelling works. The teller has access to their own context, their own intentions, their own pain. The absent party has none of that representation. **Until the other side is heard, you have not heard the dispute. You have heard half of it.**

This is why scripture, in its great wisdom, refuses to trust the first complainer — and asks us not to trust ourselves when we are the first complainer. **Including the first complainer inside our own head.**

## 2.3 The Right Order — Hear, Speak, Anger

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." — James 1:19 (KJV)

"ስለዚህ፥ የምወዳችሁ ወንድሞቼ ሆይ፥ ሰው ሁሉ ለመስማት የፈጠነ፥ ለመናገር የዘገየ፥ ለቀላጣም የዘገየ ይሁን።" — ያሳጭ ፩፥፲፱

Notice the three verbs and their order. **Hear first. Speak second. Get angry last — if at all.** The modern reflex is the exact reverse: get angry first, speak immediately, hear later (if ever). James is not asking us to suppress anger. He is asking us to **slow it down enough** that the first two checks have time to do their work.

## 2.4 The Prayer of Honest Self-Examination

Perhaps the most beautiful verse on this discipline is David's prayer at the end of Psalm 139. He has just spent the Psalm reflecting on how completely God knows him — every thought, every word before it is spoken. And he closes with this:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." — Psalm 139:23-24 (KJV)

"አምላክ ሆይ፥ መርምረኝ ልቤንም እወቅ፤ ፈትነኝ መታሰቢያዬንም እወቅ። ክፉ መንገድ በእኔ ቢኖር እይ፥ በዘላለምም መንገድ ምራኝ።" — መዝሙር ዳዊት 139፡23-24

Notice what David asks. He does not say *I will search myself*. He asks **God to search him**. This is profound. David understands what we should also understand: **the self-check, run alone, is unreliable**. We cannot see our own blind spots — that is what 'blind spot' means. We need someone outside ourselves to help us see. David asks God. We can also ask trusted people who love us enough to be honest.

## 2.5 The Direct Command

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." — 2 Corinthians 13:5 (KJV)

"በሃይማኖት እንዳላችሁ ራሳችሁን ፈትኑ፤ ራሳችሁን መርምሩ።" — 2 ቆሮንቶስ 13፡5

Paul does not say *examine others*. He says **examine yourselves**. The discipline is not unique to Jesus's teaching or David's psalms. It is woven throughout scripture as a continuous expectation of the people of God.

☐ **THE PATTERN:** Across the entire Bible, the consistent posture is: **examine yourself before you examine others. Cast out your own beam before you reach for their mote. Do not trust the first telling of a dispute, even when you are the one telling it.** This is not optional teaching. It is one of the foundational disciplines of a person who walks rightly with God and with neighbor.

## 3. THE THREE CHECKS — EXPANDED

We named the three checks briefly in Section 1. Here we unpack each one with the kinds of examples our community actually faces.

### 3.1 The Technical Check — Is My Equipment the Problem?

This is the easiest check, and the one most often skipped — because pride bristles at the possibility that we are the cause. But almost every household, workplace, and family carries an embarrassing list of arguments that turned out to be technical issues **nobody bothered to verify**:

- "You never sent that document" — actually sat in the sender's outbox for three days.
- "You ignored my call" — went to voicemail because the phone was on silent for a meeting.
- "You didn't respond to my WhatsApp" — the message failed to send, with the red exclamation point the sender never noticed.
- "The package never arrived" — addressed to the wrong apartment number.
- "They blocked me" — they just changed phones and your number is no longer saved.

In every one of these cases, the complainer becomes **dramatically** embarrassed when the truth emerges. The damage to the relationship is real, even after the apology. **The thirty seconds it would have taken to check first would have saved hours of repair work later.**

🔧 **The technical check is the gift of humility** the world quietly gives back to those who use it. The person who checks their own phone volume first will never look foolish demanding the other person speak louder when the issue was always on their end.

### 3.2 The Interpretive Check — Am I Reading This Correctly?

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This check is harder. The technical world is mostly verifiable — you can look at your outbox. But interpretation lives in the murky region between what was actually said and what we *heard*. Most cold-tone misreadings happen in text and email, where **we hear our own anxiety in someone else's silence**.

A short message is read as cold. A delayed reply is read as rejection. A neutral question is read as criticism. A canceled plan is read as a deliberate slight. None of these readings is impossible. But none of them is the only possibility — and often, none of them is the most likely possibility.

Scripture names this discipline plainly. Love, Paul writes, "*thinketh no evil*" (1 Corinthians 13:5). The phrase means: love does not assume the worst interpretation. Love runs the charitable reframe first.

👁️ **THE CHARITABLE REFRAME:** Before responding to a felt slight, generate *two alternative explanations* for the other person's behavior that have nothing to do with malice toward you. Most of the time, one of them will turn out to be closer to true. **And even when none of them is true, you will at least have responded calmly because you considered them.** The cost of being charitable when you didn't have to be is small. The cost of being accusatory when you shouldn't have been is enormous.

### 3.3 The Accountability Check — What Is My Part?

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This is the deepest check, and the one most worth practicing. It asks: **what have I contributed to this situation that I have not yet owned?**

In nearly every chronic complaint, there is an *unspoken request the complainer has not yet made*:

- The roommate angry that dishes pile up — who has never actually said, clearly and calmly, 'I would like us to agree on a dish-washing rhythm.'
- The wife who resents being unheard — who has not said, plainly, 'I need ten minutes of your undivided attention each evening.'
- The adult child upset that the parent is critical — who has not, gently and as an adult, said, 'When you correct me in front of my own children, it makes our visits painful.'
- The employee certain the manager dislikes them — who has not asked for a calm, direct conversation about how to improve.
- The friend who feels abandoned — who has not actually picked up the phone in seven months either.

In every case, **there is a piece of the complainer's own behavior that, if they owned and addressed it, would likely change the situation significantly.** The accountability check is the work of looking honestly at that piece before raising the complaint with the other person.

This is *not* the same as saying the other person is blameless. It is saying: **I will not let the other person's part become a way to avoid looking at my own.** Both can be true. Usually, both are.

## 4. WHAT OUR CULTURE ALREADY KNOWS — THE SHIMAGLE TRADITION


Like the other guides in this series, we should say plainly: **the discipline of checking yourself first is not foreign to our people.** Our ancestors built it into the very structure of how disputes were resolved.

### 4.1 How the Shimagle Worked

When two people in the community had a serious grievance, they did not settle it alone. They did not let it fester. They did not allow it to grow into a feud. They went to the *Shimagle* — the elders.

And the Shimagle did something profound. **They did not let either party make their case alone.** Both sides were heard. The first complainer was never assumed correct. Often the elders would gently turn the first question back: *"And what did you do?"*

Each party was required, by the structure of the gathering, to examine their own contribution before claiming the other's fault. Reconciliation began with mutual self-examination, not mutual accusation. The Shimagle were not judges in the modern sense. They were elders who held a space in which both people could see themselves more clearly than they could when alone.

 **THE QUIET WISDOM:** The Shimagle is, in effect, **the communal version of the phone-volume check.** It is the institutional embodiment of Proverbs 18:17 — the recognition that the first telling of any dispute sounds just until the other side is heard. **Our ancestors did not need to read this principle in a self-help book. They had built it into the architecture of their society.**

### 4.2 Bringing the Shimagle Posture Home

Most of us, in the diaspora, no longer live near a council of elders. The formal Shimagle gathering is rare. But the posture the Shimagle taught — the discipline of refusing to be the only voice in the room — is something we can practice anywhere.

Before raising a serious grievance with a family member, ask yourself the Shimagle question: *"And what did I do?"* Before posting an angry message about another person on social media, ask: *"What would a Shimagle ask me to consider?"* Before assuming a relative back home is being unreasonable, ask: *"Has anyone heard their side of this — including me?"*

And when a real conflict does emerge between people you love, **consider whether a third party — a trusted elder, a wise friend, a pastor or priest or imam — should be brought in.** Not to take sides. To hold the space. The Shimagle tradition exists precisely because our ancestors knew ***we cannot run the self-check cleanly alone.*** David asked God to search him. The Shimagle asked the community to help. The principle is the same.

## 5. TWO SHADOWS — WHEN THE DISCIPLINE BECOMES A WOUND

**This is the most important section of this guide.**

Every virtue has a shadow. A discipline that protects most people can, in the hands of certain others, become a tool that injures them. **'Check yourself first' is one of the most useful disciplines a person can learn.** It is also, for some people, one of the most dangerous. We will not pretend otherwise.

Two specific failure modes deserve careful naming. If either one describes you — or someone you love — please read carefully. Scripture's wisdom on self-examination was never meant to harm the humble. It was meant to humble the proud. The distinction matters.

## 5.1 The Over-Blamer's Shadow

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Some people have already learned, often the hard way, to **always** assume it is their fault. The wife in an abusive marriage who keeps checking herself while her husband never checks anything. The employee who absorbs every blame until they are crushed under weight that was not theirs to carry. The child of a critical parent who has internalized a constant, low background hum of self-suspicion. The person whose every relationship trained them to apologize first, fastest, and most.

To these readers, this guide says clearly: **scripture does not teach unilateral self-blame**. The discipline of self-examination is meant to be **honest** — which means that, sometimes, the honest verdict is: ***"I am not the one at fault here. The other person is, and I should say so."***

**⚠ WARNING SIGNS OF OVER-BLAMING:** You may be in this shadow if: you apologize before you understand what happened; you assume every silence means someone is angry at you; you feel responsible for other people's emotions in ways that exhaust you; the same person repeatedly hurts you, and you keep returning to 'what could I have done differently?'; you cannot remember the last time you decided someone else was clearly in the wrong. **If several of these are true, the work for you is not more self-examination.** The work is learning to **trust your own honest verdict** when the verdict says someone else is at fault.

Jesus, who taught us about the beam in the eye, also said: ***"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him."*** (Luke 17:3). **Rebuke him.** The same Bible that commands self-examination commands honest confrontation when it is needed. **The two belong together. Without the second, the first becomes a self-imposed prison.**

## 5.2 The Chronic Doubter's Shadow

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The second shadow is subtler. It is **the person who runs the self-check so thoroughly that they freeze**. They cannot raise a legitimate concern at work because they have not yet ruled out 100% of their own contribution. They cannot ask a relative to change a hurtful behavior because they first need to be certain they themselves are perfect. They cannot set a reasonable boundary because they are still 'examining themselves.'

This is **humility weaponized into paralysis**. It looks virtuous from the outside. It feels safe from the inside. But it is **not what scripture teaches**. Scripture's 'examine yourself' is not 'doubt yourself into silence.' David, after asking God to search him, kept writing Psalms, leading armies, and giving correction to his sons. Paul, after telling the Corinthians to examine themselves, wrote them a long letter telling them what to fix.

**⚠ WARNING SIGNS OF CHRONIC DOUBT:** You may be in this shadow if: you cannot bring up a concern until you have rehearsed it twenty times in your head; you let things continue that are clearly wrong because you 'might be missing something'; you find yourself silenced by your own self-examination rather than guided by it; you watch people get hurt — including yourself — because you would not act on what you knew. **For you,**

**the recovery is: the self-check is a tool, not a permission slip.** You do not need 100% certainty about your own innocence to raise a legitimate concern. You need honesty about your part — and then you must still act.

## 5.3 The Right Balance

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The mature posture is not *self-check only*, and it is certainly not *blame-first*. It is this:

🪄 **THE PROPER PROPORTION: I will examine myself honestly.** First. Carefully. Without flinching. **And then I will also speak honestly — including, sometimes, the honest verdict that someone else is at fault and needs to hear it.**

Healthy people do both. They are humble enough to look inward first, and *brave enough to look outward second* when the situation calls for it. They are not pushovers. They are not accusers. They are *Shimagle-shaped* — capable of holding both truths at once.

## 🔧 6. PRACTICAL TOOLS — THE PAUSE, THE QUESTION, THE REFRAME

A short, practical toolbox. These are the moves you can practice this week, today, in the next conversation that goes sideways.

### 6.1 The Ten-Second Pause

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Before reacting to any felt slight — a curt text, an unexpected criticism, a meeting that went badly, a relative who said something that landed wrong — **count ten seconds**.

Most of the worst messages we send (the angry texts, the cutting emails, the replies that escalate arguments to places they never needed to go) **would never have been sent if we had paused ten seconds first**. The pause is not weakness. It is the small space in which the three checks can run. Practice it like you would practice a deep breath.

### 6.2 The Three Silent Questions

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Before responding, say these silently to yourself, in order:

- "Did I check the technical?"
- "Did I check the interpretive?"
- "Did I check my own part?"

If you cannot honestly answer **yes** to all three, **you are not yet ready to respond**. Wait. Run the checks. Then speak.

### 6.3 The Charitable Reframe

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Generate **two alternative explanations** for the other person's behavior that have nothing to do with malice toward you.

For the cold text: maybe they were driving. Maybe they were dealing with a sick child. For the unreturned call: maybe their phone died. Maybe they meant to call back and got pulled into something. For the canceled plan: maybe something genuinely came up. Maybe they were too tired to say so.

You are not required to *believe* the charitable explanations. You are only required to *consider* them. The act of considering them often softens the response enough to avoid damage.

## 6.4 The Question Before the Complaint

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Instead of leading with the grievance, **lead with a question.**

Compare: "You ignored my message" versus "Hey, did you get my message from Tuesday?"

The first damages the relationship *before* you have the facts. The second preserves the relationship *until* you have them.

Almost every grievance can be rephrased as a question that opens space for both parties to be honest. '*You never help with the kids*' becomes '*Could we talk about how the evening routine is going?*' 'You're always late' becomes 'I want to understand what's making mornings hard for you.' **The question is not less honest than the accusation. It is more honest — because it admits you don't yet have the full picture.**

## 🏠 7. WHERE THIS MATTERS MOST

The phone-volume principle applies everywhere. But there are four arenas where it matters most for our community. In each, the small habit of checking yourself first is the difference between relationships that endure and relationships that quietly erode.

### 7.1 Marriage

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Most fights in marriage are not about what they appear to be about. The argument over the dishes is rarely about the dishes. The argument about the in-laws is rarely about the in-laws. **Underneath nearly every recurring fight is an unspoken need that one or both partners has not yet learned to name clearly.**

Running the three checks before raising an issue with your spouse is one of the most powerful marriage interventions we know. **Most marriages do not end because of one terrible thing. They end because of ten thousand small accusations that should have been questions.**

### 7.2 Parents and Adult Children

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The "*they never call*" pattern almost always has shared responsibility neither side will name. The parent waits for the child. The child waits for the parent. Each interprets the other's silence as proof of indifference. Each is, in their own way, *first in their own cause* — Proverbs 18:17 again.

The check that breaks this pattern is the accountability check. **When was the last time I called first?** Honest answer, no excuses. Often, the chronic complaint dissolves the moment one side stops waiting.

### 7.3 The Workplace

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Assuming a manager's silence means displeasure — when often it just means they are overwhelmed — damages careers and mental health in equal measure. The interpretive check is essential here. Most workplaces are running on too little sleep and too many priorities. **Your manager's curtness is almost never about you.** Your colleague's delayed reply is almost never personal. The charitable reframe is not naïveté in a professional setting — it is psychological survival.

## 7.4 Faith and Disappointment with God

Even here, scripture asks us to examine ourselves. When prayer feels unanswered, the first move is not always to question God's faithfulness. Sometimes the question is whether *we have been honest* — with Him, with ourselves, with the situation. The Psalms model both: David questions God honestly, and *David questions himself honestly*. Both belong in a faithful life.

This is *not* to say that every spiritual struggle is the fault of the struggler — that would be the over-blamer's shadow we already named. It is to say that the same humble posture we bring to human relationships, we can bring to our relationship with God. **Sometimes the answer to the prayer was waiting on a question we had not yet asked of ourselves.**

## 8. CLOSING — THE QUIET GREATNESS OF SMALL CHECKS

Return to the phone volume.

It is such a small thing. A person on a call, hearing the other side dimly, reaches first for their own volume slider rather than demanding the other person speak up. Most people who do this have never named it as a discipline. They simply do it because something in them — formed perhaps by a wise grandparent, by years of small lessons, by the slow tutoring of life — has taught them that the first move is to examine themselves before examining the other.

And without ever making a sermon of it, these are the people who become the steady ones in every group. The ones who are easy to live with. The ones whose marriages last. The ones whose friendships endure decades. The ones whose children grow up safe. **None of them are perfect. They simply learned to check themselves before they checked anyone else.**

This is what scripture has been asking of us all along:

**"Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."** — *Matthew 7:5 (KJV)*

"አንተ ግብዝ፣ አስቀድመህ ከዓይንህ ምስሰውን አውጣ፣ ከዚያም በኋላ ከወንድምህ ዓይን ጉድፍን ለማውጣት አጥርተህ ታያለህ።" — ማቴዎስ ፯፡፮

First the beam. Then the mote. **In that order, always.**

And to those who have read this far carrying the over-blamer's wound: **you have done your beam-work already, probably ten times over. The verse for you is not Matthew 7:5.** Your verse is Luke 17:3: **"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him."** That is also scripture. That is also obedience. That is also love. The two sides of the discipline are not in tension. They are partners. **Examine yourself honestly. Then speak honestly.** That is the Shimagle posture. That is the Christian posture. That is the posture of every adult worth being.

Slide your own volume up first. Then, if the other side is still too quiet, ask them to speak louder. You will be heard, either way. And the asking, when it comes, will land with the weight of a person who has done their own work first.

That is what makes the small check, finally, **not small at all.**

## AB'S CLOSING WORD

*Check your phone before you raise your voice.  
Check your heart before you raise an accusation.  
First the beam. Then the mote.  
It is the small order that makes the great life.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DISCLAIMER

*This special edition is a **sibling to two earlier guides in this series: **The Honest Thinker**** (on stress-testing what we believe) and **The Small Joys** (on receiving the good things God has placed in our day, even in a heavy season). Together, the three describe a posture for thinking, feeling, and relating — a humble mind, a grateful heart, and a self-examining conscience. Each guide stands alone, but together they are stronger.*

*The **Phone Volume Principle** that opens this guide originated in conversation with a reader who described their own quiet habit of checking their own volume before complaining about someone else's. The example is small. The principle is enormous. We are grateful for the observation and have built the guide around it.*

*Scriptural quotations are drawn from the **King James Version** in English, paired with widely-recognized **Amharic** renderings consistent with the Ethiopian Bible Society tradition. Readers are encouraged to consult their own family Bibles — Ge'ez, Amharic, Tigrinya, or English — and to read the surrounding chapters of any verse that moves them.*

*The **Shimagle** reflections in Section 4 honor a tradition of dispute resolution that has held our community together for centuries. Specific practices vary across Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo, Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo, Catholic, Evangelical, and Muslim communities; readers should follow the practice of their own community.*

*Section 5 (Two Shadows) is offered with particular care. **If you are reading this in a relationship where you are repeatedly hurt and have been taught to 'check yourself' as a way of being silenced, please understand: that is not the discipline this guide is teaching.** The discipline of self-examination is meant to be honest, mutual, and free. It is never meant to keep a person trapped in a situation that is harming them. If you are in a relationship that is unsafe — emotionally, physically, financially, or spiritually — please speak with a trusted priest, pastor, imam, counselor, or someone you trust. **Self-examination is not the same as enduring harm in silence. The two must never be confused.***

*This guide is offered for spiritual reflection and personal formation. It is not a substitute for pastoral counsel, professional mental-health care, marriage counseling, or legal advice. Where you sense that your situation requires real support beyond a written guide, please seek it. There is no shame in needing what the rest of us also need.*

 **TUNE IN DAILY | 6:00 PM EST**

*English & Amharic*

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