

Can You Do Better?

Can you do better in the areas pertaining to your responsibilities towards God, this local congregation, your family, as well as yourself? Consider, if you would, the following suggestions for improving yourself, as well as your family.

1. Make time to study your Bible every day. You make time for everything else you want to do. Make time to study your Bible.

2. Make time to pray every day. Sure, you have heard this time and time before, but do you practice it? Do you offer prayers of thanksgiving before you eat? Do you pray for your children and/or your grandchildren? Do you pray for your spouse? Do you pray for yourself? Do you pray for the church? There are so many areas of concern for which you should be praying, as well as blessings for which to thank God, you cannot afford to miss a day.

3. Teach your children God is more important than anything else in their life. You may say this often to your children, but how many times do you contradict it with actions? Things we allow our children to do, outfits we allow our children to wear, activities and priorities which trump worship services and Bible classes all tell our children God is not most important in their lives. Show your children God is most important in your life by making righteous decisions.

4. Teach your family the work of the local church is important and warrants your family's full attention. For many people, going to Sunday morning worship services is all that really matters to God. As such, these families will not attend Sunday morning Bible classes, but will show up for worship services, even though they have children who need to be in Bible classes. For these families, attending Sunday evening services is a rare event because everything else is more important. Likewise, these families give little or no consideration to Wednesday night services and Bible classes. Teach your family to place great importance on the work of the local church, including all the assemblies and Bible classes.

5. Make time each week to contact the sick, the shut-ins, as well as those who miss without reason. I strongly suspect this is an area in which all of us must make improvements. Call, send cards, or even send an e-mail to those who are in need. See what you can do to help them. Such signs of compassion and care mean a great deal, especially when one is too sick to assemble with the saints. If someone is suffering, but they are able to assemble with the saints, they are still in need of your care and concern. Remember these brethren as well.

6. Make sure your family is ready for Bible class. In one of our Sunday morning Bible classes, typically speaking, only two out of five or six students have their Bible lessons completed. Parents, this is your responsibility to see that your child prepares for Bible class. Don't do the lesson for them! But sit down and work the lesson with them. Give up some of your "precious" time to help your child prepare. Far too often, parents who are negligent in helping their children do their Bible lessons will likewise be negligent in doing their own Bible lessons.

7. Make the decision to be on time. Being on time for Bible classes and worship services is very important. When we come together to worship God, we should take the time to prepare. Rushing around in a wild frantic display does not prepare one for properly studying God's word. Too many times I have seen parents rushing into the adult Bible class, sitting down and relaxing as one would after running a marathon. Teach your family respect for Bible classes and worship services by going to bed on time the night before, waking up on time and leaving in time so as not to be late for the start of studying God's wonderful word.

8. Be an example for other Christians. If every member of this congregation lived as you lived, how strong would this church be? Consider the example you are setting for other members, as well as the children. What if everyone slept late on Sunday morning and did not go to Bible class? What if everyone skipped Sunday evening services because something else was more important? What if everyone skipped Wednesday evening classes and worship service? If every member of this church were just like you, what type of congregation would we have?

9. Don't Be a Wimp! Sure, there are a great many problems which we all face. Some of these problems become the reason why brethren will frequently miss services and Bible classes. However, these very same problems will not prevent these same brethren from going to Wal-Mart, to the Mall, to the Movies, to a restaurant, etc. I have been amazed by the strength of some brethren who push on no matter how much pain they are in. I have also been amazed by the weakness of some brethren who will miss every time they just don't feel well. Worship services

and Bible classes are far too important to sleep through or to miss because we don't feel like going, even the Sunday evening and Wednesday night services.

10. Do Not Show Partiality. Expect the same from your own family that you would expect from others. Be just as critical of your own family as you are critical of others. I have seen brethren who criticize others, but when it is their own family members, well, you know, it is just different. Do not show partiality!

These ten suggestions are a starting point. Will you make the commitment for you and your family?

- by John Duvall

Tolerance

We constantly see intense and hostile reactions to those oppose abortion and denounce homosexuality. There is an obvious hypocrisy on the part of social liberals in our culture who claim tolerance while intolerantly condemning others who disagree with them.

The problem seems to be that there has been a shift in the meaning of tolerance. Historically, it has meant a respect for a person's right to choose. Today, it has come to mean a required acceptance and approval of another's conduct. The Bible acknowledges the first, but denies the latter.

God grants each individual the right to choose their course of action. Moses, God's great law-giver of the Old Testament, stated this plainly when he said: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Notice God allowed their freedom to choose, but He warned that He could not accept their bad choices. This is the consistent pattern of God's tolerance.

Jesus also allowed choice ("... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" – Matthew 23:37), but He openly condemned sin and wickedness, and He warned of the eternal consequences (Matthew 25:31-46)

The apostle Paul consistently presented sinners with the choice to obey God or not, but when evil men were in error, his patience and tolerance endured "no, not for an hour" (Galatians 2:5).

Christians today are instructed to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). In doing so we are presenting our fellow men with the choice to serve God or reject Him. We tolerate their right to choose, but we can offer no endorsement of religious error and moral depravity.

- by Greg Gwin