

Can God Count On You?

Do you love God? How much? Are you willing to be fully committed to him in every way? Is there anything you would not do for God (Mark 12:29-30)? We live in a world that is constantly at war, at war with sin (2 Corinthians 10:3-6). Whose side are you on?

Can God count on you to increase your knowledge of his word so you can defend it against false teachers and their disciples? "You must continue growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). God wants us to go beyond a state of spiritual infancy and advance to maturity (Hebrews 5:11-14). We do this when we pray, study, and apply the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). Will you resolve to study the Scriptures on a daily basis?

Can God count on you to defend the truth against every foe? Too many people will defend the gospel if someone they do not like is perverting it. But, if one of their friends perverts God's word, they tend to be very tolerant, or they will make excuses for them. When truth is at stake, we should have no friends except God. Do you find yourself wetting a finger and sticking it in the air to see which way the wind is blowing before you take a stand on a controversial issue? The Bible says stand (Ephesians 6:13-14; Jude 3)!

Can God count on you to take an active role in the work and worship of the local congregation? God has not placed the responsibility for building up the local congregation on the shoulders of only one person. The evangelist's role is to preach the word (2 Timothy 4:1-5); the elders oversee (Acts 20:17, 28-32); the deacons serve (Acts 6:1-6), and everybody is to work! In short, everybody's must work if we are going to grow.

Can God count on you to be uncompromising in the fight against sin, shame, and immorality? When people in the work place laugh at homosexuality, unscriptural multiple marriages, the use of alcohol and drugs among the nation's youth, teen pregnancy out of wedlock, do you go with the flow or do you plead God's case (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:9-21)? If God can count on you, prove it!

- by Ron Daly

A Painful Operation

In 1809, Dr. Ephraim McDowell's examination of a patient revealed that she had an abdominal tumor which would soon kill her. Though abdominal surgery was unheard of in those days, the woman finally persuaded the doctor to operate.

The surgery lasted for twenty-six minutes and the twenty-two pound tumor was successfully removed. Since there were no anesthetics back then, the pain involved was almost unbearable. Why, then, would this woman so forcefully insist that the doctor inflict such agony on her? Quite simply, because she preferred the pain to its alternative - death.

One of the most painful examinations that any sincere seeker of truth must experience is the self examination which God requires of all men (II Cor. 13:5).

Our goal should be to examine our life with the same objectivity that God uses in evaluating our character. Since He knows about us (Heb. 4:13), and since His "gauge" is the only accurate one, we should relish any proper correction in our life that is necessary. If the exam reveals a flaw in my character, and if I want to avoid spiritual death, I will gladly accept the correction. If I want to die, I can simply ignore the warnings or refuse to take the examination. It's that simple.

- by Rick Duggin

Lack Of Confidence...The Besetting Sin

The besetting sin of the human family is a lack of confidence in God, manifested in every kind of departure from the word of God. If our confidence in God were what it should be, we would never want to turn aside from his way.

Eve lacked confidence in God, and so she followed the devil; Adam lacked confidence in God, and so he followed his wife. Why did Abel do what God said and why did not Cain do what God said? Abel had confidence enough in God to follow his commands; Cain did not.

No man today would depart from the plain word of God if he had full confidence in God; and the elders of Israel would not have asked for a king, had they not lacked confidence in God's way.

- by R. L. Whiteside

Examining With A Critical Eye

A trip to the doctor is seldom a pleasant experience. Usually such a visit is motivated by a physical malady of some sort that requires the doctor's medical expertise to diagnose and treat. We are already suffering some distress and discomfort, so we really want the doctor to show his best 'bed-side manner' to ease our minds and cure our bodies. We definitely DON'T want him to approach our situation with a harsh, negative attitude. We certainly don't want him to display a 'all is lost', 'there is no hope', 'this is the end' type of demeanor. We want him to be honest and thorough, to examine us with a critical eye, but at the same time we need him to be positive, encouraging, and helpful. And, if treatment is necessary – even a very serious type of treatment – we need him to handle it all in a loving and caring fashion.

Sometimes, unfortunately, dealing with our brethren is not a very pleasant experience either. It is, however, the case that occasionally we will need to deal with situations that we wish never had happened. Maybe someone has engaged in a sinful deed that has gained the attention of others in the church or the community. Perhaps it involved the teaching of a questionable or false doctrine. Or, it might just have been a case of very poor judgment on the part of a brother or sister. Whatever has caused this situation, honest and faithful Christians will feel compelled to address it.

How we attend to such matters says a lot about us, our character, our heart, and our love for one another. If we cannot, or will not, manage such instances with brotherly love and respect, then there is something gravely wrong. Just like the doctor who needs great 'bed-side manner', we need great discretion and tact in the church.

We can never ignore circumstances that require our attention. We definitely need to evaluate everything said and done in the church. We need a critical eye for everything involved in our work and worship together. But, we urge great caution, diligent prayer, and loving action on the part of every disciple. Think!

- by Greg Gwin