

4 Key Characteristics of a Faithful Christian

Although many godly traits are attributed to faithfulness, these four are vitally important. How can we increase faith and serve God with all of our heart? Here are just four ways:

1. Holiness is a priority. Charles Spurgeon rightly noted, "There will be three effects of nearness to Jesus—humility, happiness and holiness." If these three are not present, hard questions need to be asked: "Do I have a rebellious spirit? Do I love the things of the world more than the things of God? Have I let bitterness and pride set in?" We have to fight for holiness; our relationship with God is dependent upon it. Holiness produces faith and spiritual power; carnality produces faithlessness and a life void of spiritual power

Carnality gives God "His due"—a few hours on Sunday—but forgets His call to "come out from among them (the world) and be separate." Holiness is a fire burning deep within. Do we stoke the flames and increase the heat or continually put them out? We are so "stoked" when it comes to the things of the world, but why not the things of God?

Carnality quenches the fire of the Spirit and dries up the rivers of living water. We cannot love both Christ and this world. A carnal Christian does not pray, really pray and seek the heart of God. A deep prayer life exposes facades and crushes hypocrisy. A carnal Christian does not worship, really worship in total abandonment. Deep, penetrating worship cannot take place in a carnal heart until repentance takes place.

You won't find those who are carnal at prayer nights or worship mornings, but you will find them spending much of their time at Cinemark and the Mall. Check your calendar and checkbook. Where are your priorities?

If this is you, allow God to awaken and restore: “Therefore repent and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

Do you desire peace and joy again? Simply return to God: “You shall seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13). Full surrender is the fertile ground for seeds of joy and peace.

2. God’s Word is the source of authority. A faithful Christian is not continually looking for advice outside of God’s Word. Too often, we look to Merrill Lynch for financial advice, a local nail salon for marriage counseling and guys at work about how to prioritize our lives. Look to God for the final say; He is the “wonderful Counselor.”

3. Reliance on God’s strength, not man’s. “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9b). God will often break us down in order to build us up. He’ll take away our strength (what we have been trusting in) so we look to Him and Him alone. The refiner’s fire involves fire and heat. The waves of change involve being plummeted, tossed and turned: “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:8-9).

God reminds, “When you pass through waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame kindle on you. For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior” (Isa. 43:2-3a). God is always the fourth man in the fire (see Dan. 3:25).

4. Keep His Word despite setbacks. Faithful Christians keep the course regardless of the storm, regardless of the criticism, regardless of the heat. We must teach perseverance.

Many theologians are divided on the timing of the rapture, or if it will occur at all. Telling people, "Don't worry. You'll be out of here before it gets hard," is inconsistent with those who are suffering in other countries. And it does not prepare people for tribulation, challenges and difficult times. One thing we do know for certain is that Christ will return. In Rev. 3:11, He says, "Look, I am coming quickly. Hold firmly to what you have, so that no one may take your crown." The message of hope is always urgent.

Christian Heritage Fellowship offers a riveting example of why we should not wait to share the good news: On Sunday night, Oct. 8, 1871, D. L. Moody, preached to the largest congregation that he had yet addressed in Chicago. His text that evening was, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" At the conclusion of his sermon he said, "I wish you would take this text home with you and turn it over in your minds during the week, and next Sabbath we will come to Calvary and the cross, and we will decide what to do with Jesus of Nazareth." Then his song evangelist, Ira D. Sankey, whose hymns are sprinkled throughout most evangelical hymnbooks, began to lead in singing the hymn, but Sankey never finished the hymn, for while he was singing, the rush and roar of fire engines whistled by the church on the street outside, and before morning, much of the city of Chicago lay in ashes. To his dying day, Mr. Moody deeply regretted that he had told that congregation to come next Sabbath and decide what to do with Jesus.

Turn, or return, to Him today. We are not even guaranteed tomorrow. {eoa}

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