

RICK WARREN: 7 Ways God Will Evaluate Your Faithfulness

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I'm going to give you a sneak peek at your final exam. You're going to stand before God one day, and He's going to evaluate your faithfulness. He's going to look at seven different aspects of your life to judge your faithfulness, and you should be highly interested in developing these areas of your life and leadership.

1. Do you possess the right values? A faithful person knows what's important in life and what isn't important in life. A faithful person knows how to invest his or her life. A faithful person makes their life count. A faithful person knows the significant apart from the trivial.

Proverbs 28:20 says, "A faithful person will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished" (NIV). This verse contrasts faithfulness with a desire to get rich quick. He's not talking about making money. He's saying that what we have to realize is there is more to life than just the accumulation of things. The Bible says we're to live like fish swimming upstream in a very materialistic world. Faithfulness is proven by our refusal to buy into the system that says the almighty buck is the No. 1 thing in life. Faithfulness is often proven by choosing a simplified lifestyle to allow more time for ministry.

2. Do you care for the interests of others? The second way God is going to judge our faithfulness is our relationship to other people. Did we care about the relationships of others and not just our own relationships?

Faithfulness swims against the stream of contemporary culture, which says, "What's in it for me? What are my needs, my

ambitions, my desires, my goals, my hurts, my values, my profit, my benefit?" But God says faithfulness is proven by our others-directedness and by giving our lives away, by looking at others rather than concentrating on ourselves.

3. Do you live with integrity before an unbelieving world? In other words, a mark of faithfulness is the kind of testimony you have with unbelievers. The Bible teaches that a pastor is to be above reproach in the community and to have a good reputation, not with believers but with unbelievers. When God evaluates your faithfulness, He won't be looking at your communication skills, but He will be examining the way in which you walked before those who are outside the faith.

4. Do you keep your promises? When God evaluates your faithfulness, He's going to look at all the promises you made. Proverbs 20:25 says, "It is a trap to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider one's vows." It's easier to get into debt than to get out of debt—that's making a promise to pay. It's easier to get into a relationship than out of a relationship. It's easier to fill up your schedule than it is to fulfill your schedule. The Bible is saying that faithfulness is a matter of "If you say it, you need to do it." You keep your promises. The No. 1 cause of resentment is unfulfilled promises.

5. Do you develop your God-given gifts? There's a tremendous emphasis in the Bible on using the gifts and the talents God has given you. God has made an investment in your life, and He expects a return on it. First Peter 4:10 says, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." Notice it says that if you don't use your spiritual gift, people are getting cheated. Faithfulness is based on what we do with what we have.

6. Do you obey God's commands? In 1 Samuel 2:35, God says, "I will raise up a faithful priest who will serve me and do

whatever I tell him to do" (LB). Circle "do whatever I tell him to do." God defines *faithfulness* as "obedience to the commands of Christ." We can be skilled leaders and communicators, but disobedience disqualifies us from being seen as faithful as God defines it. This is basic, but it's essential.

7. Do you pass on what you learn? The Bible talks a lot about the transferring process of multiplication. You're to give what you learn to faithful men, and those faithful men are to give it to others, and so on. None of us would be here today if there hadn't been faithful men and women in the last 2,000 years of the church. We're leading today because some faithful men and women took time to write down the Scriptures, and others preserved the Scriptures, and others translated the Scriptures. We're here because of the testimony of faithful people.

If God teaches you a spiritual truth and you're learning a spiritual truth, it's your duty to pass it on to others.

How do I become faithful? Galatians 5:22-23 says, "The fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness." It's one of the nine fruits. When the Holy Spirit lives in my life, I will demonstrate faithfulness. How do you know when you're filled with the Spirit? What is the test—some kind of emotional experience?

Not necessarily. You can have an emotional experience and not be filled with the Spirit. What is the test? The fruit is the test. How do I demonstrate that I'm filled with the Spirit? I demonstrate it when I'm faithful to the responsibilities that God has given me.

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