

The Real Reason Faith Leaders Fall Away From Jesus

Lately, we've been hearing some sad stories about people who are walking away from their faith. Many have asked, "How does this happen?"

I don't have all those answers, but I know this, it is not an overnight, sudden occurrence when this happens; things have been off-track, or out of balance, for a while.

Some may cite disappointment, hurt, betrayal and just plain weariness; we're all familiar with such emotions. But when the priority placement of these downtimes is no longer subject to the discipline of the Word and to our covenant with the Father, we'll have a problem.

Today, we need to protect ourselves more than ever. And since we have an adversary who never quits, for us, it is a never-ending task to "armor up" until our race is run. Remember this, and you won't be surprised.

But how does this happen in the middle of our "church world"?

We know the front answer some might call simplistic or even judgmental, but when you take your eyes off Jesus, you're gonna have a problem.

A bit deeper, I've noticed a few things, subtle in the beginning, but tragic when in full bloom. When we lose focus and get off track, a few of these danger signs seem to be lurking in the background.

A lack of discernment: This is really a core problem. Too many hungry, well-meaning folks have been damaged and derailed by the lack of discernment and understanding.

The Word tells us to "try the spirits", to understand the

difference between that which is vile and that which is precious, realizing, not all who shout, "Lord, Lord" are really tuned in and reputable. Don't let blustery bravado, or an "in your space" body language demeanor fool you. Holy Ghost radar needs to be engaged.

A false sense of non-judgmentalism: This is clearly the infiltration of the politically correct message mingled with the doctrine of inclusion. "We're all God's children; we are all right," which eventually leads to "Anything goes, as long as it sounds right to us. Oh no, we can't judge anyone or anything!"

Not true! Jesus said, "Judge the fruit." What is in the wake of their past prognostications and performances? "Anything goes" seems to be the growing disposition. But now we can't say anything lest we be crowned narrow-minded, unspiritual and worst of all, unloving.

An overemphasis on one teaching, gift or manifestation: I firmly believe in the gifts and blessings of the Holy Spirit, but remember Paul's words regarding anything "out of balance," even good things, can lead to confusion. Out of this comes the spiritual elitism stuff that looks down on the little poor ones who lack the power and revelation of the "special people" club. Charismatics, especially, hate to be called on this one, but on the other end of the spectrum, some of the more stoic ones around us could use some excitement to balance them out.

A preoccupation with the spiritualistic: "The spookier, the better" is the byword for many. This is especially true in today's world with the great interest in the paranormal. The church world has thrill-seeking groupies, too. I'm amazed at seemingly solid folk who can't wait to jump on the tour bus of the latest Magical Mystery Tour. Watch the fads. Do your Word research. First Timothy deals with those who are no longer satisfied with sound doctrine but are always looking for the latest trick. It's witchcraft. Out of balance.

The business ballyhoo: Ballyhoo, “boisterous patter, overblown promotion.” In the natural, we are people who need balance if we are to remain healthy. The same goes in our Spirit walk. This means you can’t run from one chill bump to another, joining every parade or cause, neglecting your family, your bills and your job because you are following the “power.” This “I’m so busy” self-importance thing is a trap. Learn to say no and get home at a decent hour. Your family will thank you.

Leaders who project themselves as the clearinghouse of the power and revelation: These self-titled prophets, with pristine, entitlement mindsets (remember Matt. 23) prey on the well-meaning, weak and foolish and make a few bucks in the process. Watch your wallets; the love of money is almost always in play. I’m always amused at some of the ones who love to carry themselves with the “I’m always listening to what you can’t hear; please don’t bother me” act.

Beware of those who will repeatedly try to dominate your time, money and attention. Know the difference between personality and anointing. My loving advice: Run, Forrest, run!

The same ones cannot be questioned or disagreed with without penalty: “God told me” is Christianese for “Don’t question me” or you will likely hear the “Don’t touch God’s anointed” line. You’ll also notice, if you dare disagree or question, a relentless roar of opposition will rise up in a big-time way against you. It will be often treated as disloyalty, with the reverse spin accusing you as the unfaithful, unforgiving, unbelieving, ungrateful attacker. Start looking for Saul’s javelin about this time.

The bottom line in all this merits the right answer to some of these questions: Who gets the glory? Does our attention focus on man or God? Is there faith or confusion? Is there balance or foolishness? Can it withstand the smell test? Does it walk like a duck?

Answer these questions correctly, and God is glorified. Keep your eyes on Him, yours ears hearing the Word and your circle speaking faith and life.

In the meantime, don't be a covenant casualty!

When alarm bells of the soul start going off, don't forget the Hebrews pep talk, "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Let us look to Jesus [the real object of our focus and our service], the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:1b-2a).