

# Faith is Taking God Seriously

Many Christians claim to have faith but do not take God seriously.

To take God seriously means to take His Word seriously.

When someone speaks to us, but we ignore or even reject much of what they are saying, we are certainly not taking them seriously.

In fact we are guilty of disrespect.

The same applies to God.

If we ignore or reject much of what He says to us through the Holy Scriptures, we are not taking Him seriously.

We are, in fact, treating Him with disrespect.

Yet this is the way many of us treat God's Word.

We treat scripture like a smorgasbord, picking out portions that appeal to our taste and rejecting the rest.

Let us apply the above to four aspects of our relationship with God to test if we have the "*smorgasbord attitude*".

## God's Promises

The four gospels contain many wonderful promises made by Jesus, but before we claim them we need to ascertain to whom each promise was made.

Approximately half of the promises were made to Jesus' disciples, the rest to non-disciples.

What is the distinctive mark of a disciple of Jesus?

Luke 14:27, 33 [NIV] "*And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*" ... "*In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.*"

**The distinctive mark of a disciple is commitment.**

We have to make an unreserved commitment to obey and follow Jesus, regardless of personal cost.

Therefore, before we apply any of Jesus' promises, we need to ask ourselves certain questions.

Am I a disciple of Jesus: does this distinctive mark of commitment apply to me?

Which of the promises then apply to me?

Am I sure I have the right to claim each promise?

Let us examine some of the promises given by Jesus, recorded by John.

John 14:13-14, 19, 27 [NIV] *“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” ... “Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.” ... “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

Peter confirmed that these promises were made only to a group of committed disciples as he spoke on behalf of them all.

Luke 18:28 [NIV] *“Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!”*

To claim these promises without fulfilling the condition is not faith, but presumption. God’s Word warns us against such actions.

Psalm 19:13-14 [King James] *“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”*

We need to ask ourselves the question: *“Am I a disciple of Jesus or just a church member?”*

## God’s Commandments

1 John 2:3-4 [NIV] *“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”*

Our response to God’s commandments reveals our true spiritual condition.

Obedying them is sure proof that we know God.

The Bible contains many commandments covering various areas of our lives, but Jesus sums them all up in one attitude of mind that will govern all our thoughts and actions.

John 13:34-35 [NIV] *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

By obeying this single command we fulfil the entire law.

Galatians 5:14 [NIV] *“The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbour as yourself.”*

**Any activity religious or secular that does not produce love is merely wasted effort.**

1 Timothy 1:5-6 [NIV] *“The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk.”*

Love is the end purpose for which all the commandments were given by our Creator God.

It is on this basis that we must assess our obedience to God, our discipleship.

We need to ask ourselves the question; *“Is my life an expression of God’s Love?”*

We can evaluate our lives by using the *“love check list”* that God’s Word gives us.

1 Corinthians 13:1-8 [NIV] *“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, **it keeps no record of wrongs.** Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”*

The key that will unlock such a love filled life is found in the statement *“love keeps no record of wrongs.”*

When the total forgiveness we have received from God through Jesus our Saviour is reflected in our attitude to others it will unlock the love of God that is in us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

## God’s Prohibitions

1 John 2:15 [NIV] *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

Here God compels us to make a choice, we cannot love this world and God the Father.

In the language of the New Testament, *“the world”* comprises all activities that are not in harmony with the righteous government of God, and its appointed Ruler Jesus.

1 John 5:19 [NIV] *“We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”*

Satan has control of this present world.

**2 Corinthians 4:4** [NIV] *“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

Satan is the god of this society, and as his name implies, he is the adversary of the Creator God.

Satan is rebellious against God and if we love the world then we join him in this rebellion.

The pull of Satan’s world is extremely strong, it offers many allurements and enticements. Some are seemingly innocent, yet within them is the subtle poison of rebellion.

The media is one main channel of this world’s influence, with all the forms of entertainment it offers.

The entertainment offered by media does not follow the Biblical concept for it leaves the people entirely passive.

The God-ordained joyous celebrations ordained by God for His people totally involves the active participation of the people; they are never merely passive spectators.

The fact is that most of contemporary entertainment is permeated by moral and spiritual impurities that have a subtle defiling effect.

A Christian within whom dwells the Holy Spirit should always first consider will the Holy Spirit be reading, watching or listening to this film, TV, book or music with me?

We should never expose the Holy Spirit [God] to anything that glorifies sin or dishonours Jesus Christ.

We should make it a principle not to keep in our homes any book, video, film or picture that dishonours Jesus.

This may seem radical, but Christianity is a radical religion.

## God's Warnings

Matthew 24:4, 11 [NIV] *"Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you." ... "...and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people."*

Deception is the greatest single danger that confronts Christians in the last days.

This was addressed to disciples who had spent 3+ years continuously with Jesus.

If these disciples needed such a warning, how can any Christian today imagine that they are immune to this danger?

Some Christians feel that this warning against deception does not apply to them.

This reaction is, in fact, an indication that deception is already at work in them.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 [NIV] *"The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."*

Paul reaffirms the warning against deception in connection with the rise of the anti Christ.

The anti Christ is more an attitude of mind than a person, the way people's minds are influenced by Satan, the adversary of Jesus Christ.

This is the very parallel influence to the working of the spirit of Christ the Holy Spirit in Christians.

To which spirit do we yield?

Romans 6:12-14 [NIV] *"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace."*

### **We have to choose, we cannot serve Satan and his world and God.**

Many charismatic Christians have the attitude that any message or ministry accompanied by supernatural signs must necessarily be from God.

This is not true, The Bible indicates that Satan can also produce various kinds of supernatural signs. The glib acceptance of everything supernatural as being of God is actually opening our minds to deception.

There is only one sure safeguard against deception!

A deep love of the truth.

This goes beyond merely listening to sermons and presentations of scripture, or even reading of The Bible.

It implies an intense and passionate commitment to the authority of scripture that affects every area of our lives.

This will produce within us an instinctive reaction against any message or ministry that is not totally faithful to scripture.

Acts 17:11 [NIV] *“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”*

This group of people were commended by Paul. Such an attitude has the total approval of God and is a safeguard against deception.

God offers to each of us the *“love of the truth”*.

Are we willing to receive it?

Will we take His warning seriously or will we ignore it?

Remember, faith is taking God seriously.