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The Biblical Definition Of Worship *end*

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Lord but leave to live as they please the rest of the week. God is looking for your sacrifice of praise, but notice that it is not the fact that you are attending a "worship" service but are an active witness for Him in the world.

Hebrews 13:15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.

Confessing the name of Jesus in a hyped up emotional "worship" service is easy. Confessing Jesus to your non believing co-workers, family and friends is a different matter for most "Christians". The Lord would rather have your obedience to preach the Gospel and disciple all nations than to have your "sacrifice of praise" on Sunday morning.

1 Peter 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Those who are willing to suffer for the Gospel are expressing true worship.

1 Peter 4:16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy,

to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God— this is your spiritual act of worship.

So next time you go to church, raise your hands, and shout out to the Lord in "worship" keep in mind that He also expects you to live that worship out in real life. Don't bring your excuses with you as Saul did thinking that your mere act of worship will be pleasing to God and will absolve you of your sin. Confess your sins and repent of them, turning away from them. Then your worship in the time of "worship" will be true worship. Why? Because it will be worship born of obedience.



Address Correction Requested

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Fruit Of the Spirit Series—Faithfulness by Sandy Simpson

Faith without faithfulness is useless. So too is faith and faithfulness without an object of our faith. The reason we can have faith and be faithful is because we serve a God who is Faithful. In fact that is one of His names.

Faithfulness Of God

Unfaithfulness is, unfortunately, one of the defining sins of our evil day. In the business world, a man's word is, for the most part, no longer "his bond" (his word is no longer trustworthy). People are getting divorces, having sex outside of marriage - there is no longer such a thing as the "sacred bonds of marriage". Men and women are getting into all kinds of perversions everywhere. In the churches thousands who claim to love the truth now attack and deny it by what they say and do, and by following false teachers. We must also admit that none of us have been completely faithful to Christ, and to the light and privileges which God has entrusted to us! How refreshing, then, how

unspeakably blessed, to lift our eyes above this scene of ruin, and behold One who is faithful, faithful in all things, faithful at all times.

"Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands." (Deut. 7:9).

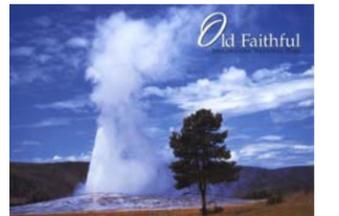
Faithfulness is a part of who God is. For God to be unfaithful would be to act contrary to His nature, which is impossible:

"If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself." (2 Tim. 2:13).

Faithfulness is one of the glorious perfections of His being. He is "clothed" with it:

"O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you." (Ps. 89:8).

When God became a man in Jesus Christ it was said, "Righteousness will be



his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist." (Isa. 11:5).

"Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies." (Psalm 36:5)

Far above all our ability to understand is the unchanging faithfulness of God. Everything about God is great, vast, incomparable. He never forgets, never fails, never falters, never forfeits His word. Every promise or prophecy the Lord has given He exactly fulfilled, every covenant or threatening of judgment He will make good, for "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not

Should Churches Be Christ-centered? by Sandy Simpson

Should biblical Christian churches be Christ-centered (Christocentric)? Should the doctrines of the Father (Patriology) and the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology) also be equally emphasized? Can a church be Patriocentric or Pneumacentric and be biblical?

The answer to these questions are quite simple from a biblical perspective. There have been charges leveled at some movements such as the Pietist Movement in Germany and other movements that they placed too much emphasis on Christ to the

exclusion of the Father and the Holy Spirit. This may be true to a certain degree. The doctrines of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit must be taught with equal emphasis so that Christians will know what they believe.

But should a church be Patriocentric or Pneumacentric? No. For instance, there are far too many churches today, having been influenced by hyper-Pentecostalism and the Latter Rain, that are Pneumacentric. They spend most of their time focusing on the Holy Spirit to the exclusion of preaching the

Gospel while, in fact, they don't even have a biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit. I believe that because biblical Evangelicals, to a certain degree, dropped the ball in defining the Person and role of the Holy Spirit it gave an opening to Third Wavers to step in with their erroneous ideas of Pneumatology. For more information on this subject, go to the "Apologetics—Holy Spirit" section of the DITC web site.

But should biblical churches be Christocentric? Though not to the exclusion of a proper understanding

Fruit Of the Spirit Series—Faithfulness *cont.*

make it good?" (Num. 23:19). So then the believer says, "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lam. 3:22, 23).

Scripture has many illustrations of God's faithfulness. More than four thousand years ago He said, "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease." (Gen. 8:22).

Every year that comes is a fresh witness to God's fulfillment of this promise. In Genesis 15 we find that Jehovah declared to Abraham, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But ... in the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." (Genesis 15:13-16)

Centuries came and went. Abraham's descendants groaned in their slave labor in the brick-kilns of Egypt. Had God forgotten His promise? No, indeed. Read, "At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD's divisions left Egypt." (Exodus 12:41)

Through Isaiah the Lord declared, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (7:14).

Again centuries passed, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law" (Gal 4:4).

God is true. His Word of Promise is sure. In all His dealings with His people God is faithful. He can absolutely be relied upon. No one ever trusts in vain in God. We find this precious truth expressed almost everywhere in the Scriptures, for His people need to know that faithfulness is an essential part of the Divine character. This is the basis of our confidence in Him. But it is one thing to accept the faithfulness of God as a Divine truth, it is quite another to act upon it. God has given us many "great and precious promises," but are we really counting on His fulfillment of them? Are we actually expecting Him to do for us all that He has said? Are we resting with assurance on these words, "He is faithful that promised" (Heb. 10:23)?

There are times in the lives of

everyone when it is not easy, no not even for Christians, to believe that God is faithful. Our faith is sorely tried, our eyes are filled with tears, and we can't see through our blurry eyes the evidences of His love. Our ears are distracted by the noises of the world. We are attacked by the whisperings of Satan, and we can no longer hear the sweet sound of His still small voice.

Our plans have not come to pass, our friends on whom we relied have failed us, a brother or sister in Christ has betrayed us. We begin to stumble. We try to be faithful to God, but now a dark cloud hides Him from us. We find it difficult, almost impossible, for our human reason to understand the difficult circumstances He allows while we have His gracious promises. But, oh Christian, seek grace to understand Isaiah 50:10: "Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God."

When you are tempted to doubt the faithfulness of God, cry out, "Get behind me, Satan." Though you can't understand God's mysterious your circumstances and how the love of God fits into them, wait on Him for more light. In His own good time He will make the situation plain to you. "Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." (John 13:7).

You will begin to realize that God has neither forsaken nor deceived you, His child.

"Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!" (Isa. 30:18).

"The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy." (Ps. 119:138).

God is faithful. He is faithful in dealing with sin. He is a consuming fire. Israel's history testifies to that fact. Pharaoh, Korah, Achan and many others are proof of God's faithfulness to judge rightly. Unless you run to the protection of Christ, the everlasting burning of the Lake of Fire will be your judgment as well. We can depend on God's judgment of sin.

But God is also faithful in preserving His people.

"God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful." (1 Cor. 1:9).

Our confidence, with the Apostle Paul, is not in our own ability but in God's inability to lie. God has promised to His Son a people for His inheritance, to deliver them from sin and condemnation, and to make them participants of eternal life in glory. He will no allow any of them to perish.

God is faithful in disciplining His people. The faithfulness of God is a truth we must believe not only in the good times, but when God is rebuking us. When God disciplines us with the rod, it is faithfulness which wields it. When we acknowledge this we humble ourselves before Him realizing fully that we need His correction. Instead of grumbling we thank Him for it. God never rebukes His children without a reason.

"I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right, and that You, in faithfulness, have afflicted me" (Ps. 119:15).

God is faithful in glorifying His people.

"The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it." (1 Thess. 5:24).

This is talking about the saints being preserved blameless till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God will glorify us not because of our own goodness (for we have none), but for His own great name's sake.

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." (Rom. 8:29-30).

God demonstrates His faithfulness by calling us out of darkness into His marvelous light, and this should fully assure us that it will surely happen. The foundation of God stands sure: "Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." (2 Tim. 2:19).

Paul was resting on the faithfulness of God when he said,

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (2 Tim 1:12).

When we understand this wonderful truth we will no longer be held captive to worry. When we are going through the valleys, we should think about the faithfulness of God. He has cared for you since you were young and will continue through your old age. He has heard your prayers in the past and will not refuse to supply your needs in any emergency. Rest on Job 5:19, "From six calamities he will rescue you; in seven no harm will befall you."

The understanding of this blessed truth should stop our grumblings. The Lord knows what is best for each of us. God is greatly honored when, under trial and tribulations, we have good thoughts of Him, we vindicate His wisdom and justice, and recognize His love even within His rebukes.

The understanding of the faithfulness of God will increase our confidence in God and our faithfulness to Him.

"So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." (1 Pet. 4:19).

When we trustfully resign ourselves, and all our affairs into God's hands, fully persuaded of His love and faithfulness, then we will be satisfied with his plans and design for our lives and realize that "He does all things well."

Biblical Examples Of Faithfulness

Many people in the Bible are great examples of faithfulness. Noah was faithful to build an ark as God had commanded him even though surely people thought he was crazy. Joshua was faithful to carry out the Lord's commands to conquer and possess Canaan. Elijah was faithful to bring God's messages even when it put him in danger of his life. Job was faithful to trust God when it seemed that God had abandoned him. Paul was faithful to spread the gospel while enduring all kinds of persecution and harm. There are many more. But probably the person we think of most when we think about faith a faithfulness is Abraham. Abram was obedient to God and left the land of his fathers to go to Canaan.

Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

He continued in faith and God blessed him with many riches and herds. When Lot and Abraham had to

The Biblical Definition Of Worship *cont.*

delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

Many of us are familiar with this story of Saul's disobedience. But notice that Saul's excuse for disobeying the Lord was so that he could allegedly worship the Lord by offering sacrifices of the cattle and sheep he took from the Amalekites. This is when the Lord, through Samuel, makes the memorable statement "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better

Bible Study *end*

laziness, demands for his rights? Does the slave/servant actually have any rights? His rights have been surrendered to the master who bought him. Should the servant expect the master to serve him? Can he say, "I've had a long, hard day in the fields. Now it's time for me to rest and you to serve"? After all his service has been finished, he can then eat and drink. Our "refreshment" and "rest" is coming in heaven, but not until our service is ended. This parable teaches us a very different principle than the other one does. It shows us the relationship of master & servant.

The servant is told to prepare the food and serve the master. After the master is through eating the servant can then eat. The master is always the master - not the equal of the servant. The master does not eat with the servant. Sometimes we see Jesus as our Friend only and think that He will serve us because we are privileged to be His friends. We have to be more careful about our assumptions and about the way we imagine Jesus to be. Many of our choruses make Him sound very soft and gentle. We must never forget that He is the Great Creator who is coming back as King of kings. We must never forget that He is the Master and we are the servants. Today false teachers are claiming, "I am Christ" or "We are all little Christs". This is the deception

than the fat of rams." I believe this is a lesson for Christians today.

In many churches around the world the concept of "worship" has been redefined and narrowed to mean the time when Christians come together to sing songs, raise their hands, dance around, and get all excited about the Lord together in church. For most of the younger postmodernist relativistic generation the concept of "worship" has become a thing you do once or twice a week to absolve yourself of guilt. The more you can work yourself into a state of bliss in feeling like you are really achieving a state of "worship" by letting yourself go in the music and rhythm of the "worship" time, the more you can justify what you are doing the rest of the week when you are not "worshipping" God. This "worship" then becomes an excuse and justification process

that Jesus warned us about in **Matt. 24:23-24**

Would the master thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? The real meaning is: is the master indebted to the servant? Is there some credit or reward due to the servant for carrying out the master's orders? Can we run up credit with God by our works? That is a book-keeping mentality. If you are a servant or a slave you do what you are told to do, not expecting a reward but recognizing that it is your responsibility as a servant. Why should the master reward him or thank him for doing what he was told to do - his job? This parable helps us to avoid pride and self-righteousness such as the Pharisees had. No matter how great our sacrifice or how successful we have been in our service for Christ, God's great gift of grace in Jesus Christ keeps us humble.

So now Jesus applies this short teaching: "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do..." That's a big order! We are responsible to do everything we have been told to do by the Lord. How carefully do we carry out what He tells us - in church, in our Quiet Time, in Bible Studies? It's one thing to learn, and quite another to do!! We remember the parable of the wise and foolish builders, and Jesus' words, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and

whereby Christians can rid themselves of the guilt of not obeying the Lord in their lives. This is not to say that true worship is not done in the time now called "worship". It can be a time of worship, but worship without obedience is no worship at all.

The Bible defines worship and sacrifice as obedience. We worship God by obeying the Lord. We prove we love Him by our obedience to His Word and to the Holy Spirit.

1 John 5:3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 1 John 3:24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

Those who obey His commands

do not do what I say?" How should we feel after we have faithfully done everything the Lord has shown us? "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty." We tend to like a lot of appreciation and thanks, if not rewards, from the Lord as well as from our employers, family and friends. This is saying that we should not be seeking special favors because we feel that we have done a good job. We need to remember that we are only unworthy servants, and not get puffed up by our "good deeds".

What do we learn from this short teaching? 1.) The believer is a servant or slave. He is expected to obey and know his place as a servant to his Master. 2.) Grace & salvation are a gift from God, not a reward for service. 3.) The servant of God labors to fulfill a duty out of love & loyalty to God. He does not develop a claim on God nor serve to receive rewards. 4.) The believer's servanthood is fulfilled in obedience to God's Son who should be served with diligence and loyalty.

In conclusion, how do we put these 2 teachings together? In one we are put in our place as servants, and in the other we are elevated to being served by the master. They are summed up in this statement: "Jesus promises rewards to those who are obedient and faithful servants and who serve without thought of

remain in His love.

John 15:10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

Those who do not do not remain in His love by obedience will be as Saul who did not remain king of Israel. Saul ended his life in disobedience to the law of Moses and the Lord by going to a medium to try to determine the outcome of a war with the Philistines instead of going to God.

1 Chronicles 10:13 Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance,

Let this be a lesson to all Christians who come to church to "worship" the

reward." How can we be the servants we are supposed to be? We learn the secret from Jesus in **John 13:3-4**. Jesus knew that He had been sent by the Father, that He had the power of the Father to do His work, and that He would return to the Father. Therefore, He could wash dirty feet and even die on a cross. If we know that we are sent by Jesus into a hurting world, that He gives us the power to serve, and that we will go to Him when our work is done, we can humbly serve others and even die for our Lord!



Juanita Simpson is a retired missionary still serving the Lord in Micronesia after 43 years of ministry.

Should Churches Be Christ-centered? *end*

of the other core doctrines of the Faith ... yes! Why? Because that is the emphasis the New Testament, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and the Apostles give to Christianity. Therefore we should do no less.

The New Testament is Christocentric.

The words "Christ" and "Son" are repeated 720 times in the NT, while the word "Father" is only used 297 times and the word "Spirit" only 274 times. The emphasis in the New Testament is clearly Christocentric.

The Father wants us to be Christocentric.

Matthew 17:5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. **Listen to him!**"

Phil. 2:9-11 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

The Son wants us to be Christocentric.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me.**

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. **He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.** Do you believe this?"

The Holy Spirit is Christocentric.

John 15:26-27 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, **he will testify about me.** And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

John 16:13-15 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. **He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.** All that belongs to the Father is mine. That

is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

Paul was Christocentric.

1 Corinthians 2:2 **For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.**

Galatians 6:14 **May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**

Peter was Christocentric.

1 Peter 4:11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, **so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.** To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Luke was Christocentric.

Acts 4:12 **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."**

The author of Hebrews was Christocentric.

Hebrews 12:2 **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorned its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

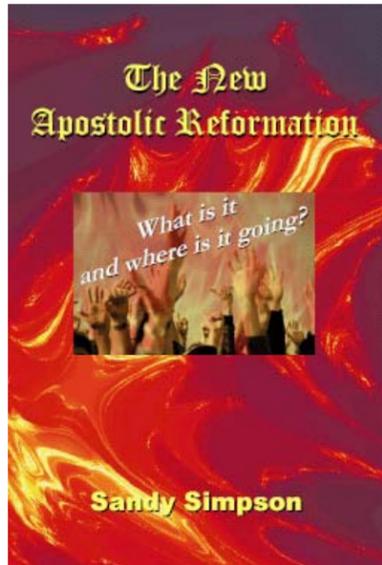
Conclusion

The fact is that true biblical Christian faith is Christocentric because that is the emphasis given by the Holy Trinity and the Apostles. We should teach about the Father and the Holy Spirit and have a right understanding of Who they are. But the central focus of the true Church has always been on Jesus Christ. Any church that gets its focus off the central theme of Christ is on the road to apostasy. You cannot have the Father or the Spirit without the Son. The Son is the "centerpoint" of all history and eternity. Let us preach the Son so that many will come to know the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

The Biblical Definition Of Worship *by Sandy Simpson*

1 Sam. 15:2-23 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. **Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys."** ... Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, to the east of Egypt. **He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs— everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.** Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the LORD all that night. Early in the morning

Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal." When Samuel reached him, **Saul said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions." But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?" Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."** "Stop!" Samuel said to Saul. ... Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?" "But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal." But Samuel replied: **"Does the LORD**



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Fruit Of the Spirit Series—Faithfulness *cont.*

split, Abraham gave Lot the first choice and Lot took the best. Abraham took his portion without protest and went and built and altar to the Lord to worship him. He was later faithful to rescue his nephew Lot from warring kings. He was faithful to ask the Lord not to destroy Sodom if only 10 righteous people could be found, which there were not. He was faithful to believe God for the promise of a son by his wife Sarah, who was Isaac. *Heb 11:11* "By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise."

He was faithful to give his birthright to his second son Isaac as the Lord instructed him. He was also faithful to take him up on a mountain to sacrifice him, but the Lord having tested his faithfulness provided a ram for that offering.

Heb. 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Because Abraham was faithful through his lifetime, God made promises to him that he would be the father of the great nation Israel, in fact two great nations. Not only that but through his offspring that whole world would be blessed.

Ac 3:25 And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, "Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed."

We can all thank Abraham for the blessings that have come down to us because of his faithfulness.

Stories Of Faithfulness

Faithfulness In General

Russian Faithfulness

The old Russian army had a tradition that when a sentinel had been posted he could be relieved or withdrawn only by the officer who had posted him, or by the czar himself. During the first World War, there was the story of a Russian soldier who was posted as a sentinel in a dangerous position. The officer who posted this sentinel was killed in battle,

and the soldier refused to leave his post until an order came from the czar him self.

Faithfulness means being willing to stay with something even when we are tired and even if there is no relief in sight. This is the kind of faithfulness we need to have being followers of Jesus Christ.

Michelangelo's Philosophy

Michelangelo, painting the matchless frescoes on the high ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, spent countless hours on his back from high scaffolding, carefully perfecting the details of each figure. A friend asked him why he took such pains with figures which could be seen only at a distance by viewers. "After all," said the friend, "who will know whether it is perfect or not?" "I will," replied the artist.

Faithfulness also means that we don't do things halfway just so we can say they are done. We complete the task we know what God requires, because, as the saying goes, "the beauty is in the details".

Faithfulness In Marriage

Did you know that half of people under age 40 have lived with an unmarried partner at some time? The number of couples choosing cohabitation instead of marriage rose 80% between 1980 and 1991. Cohabiting couples are often less sexually faithful than married ones. 20% of cohabitating women have cheated on their partners, compared with 4% of married women.

Faithfulness doesn't "just happen"; it requires a deliberate commitment.

Faithfulness To The Church

When I proudly told my 8-year-old granddaughter I'd been attending Bible class for almost 50 years, she looked at me sympathetically and patted my hand. "Don't worry, Grandma," she said. "Maybe this year you'll pass." -- Marlys Huffman This is a funny little situation, but those of us who have been walking with the Lord for a long time know that there is always more to know about God and His ways. In fact those who are faithful in serving the Lord in His Body are the first to tell you that, though God has taught them a lot, they still have so much more to learn.

Faithful In The Long Haul

Norman Geisler, as a child, went to a VBS because he was invited by some neighbor children. He went back to the same church for Sunday School classes for 400 Sundays. Each week he was faithfully picked up by a bus driver. Week after week he attended

church, but never made a commitment to Christ. Finally, during his senior year in High School, after being picked up for church over 400 times, he did commit his life to Christ. What if that bus driver had given up on Geisler on the 395th trip? What if the bus driver had said, "This kid is going nowhere spiritually, why waste any more time on him."

Faithfulness means being willing to stay with something even when we are tired and even if there is no relief in sight.

We don't always know the effect our being faithful in serving the Lord and His Church can have. Many missionaries have been faithful for many years before seeing the first fruits of the message of the gospel. This brings us to the subject of faithfulness to proclaim the gospel message.

Faithfulness To Proclaim The Gospel

Charles Spurgeon - Faithful In The Small Things

Charles Spurgeon preached to thousands in London each Lord's Day, yet he started his ministry by passing out tracts and teaching a Sunday school class as a teenager. When he began to give short messages to the Sunday school, God blessed his ministry of the Word. He was invited to preach in out of the way places in the country side, and he used every opportunity to honor the Lord. He was faithful in the small things, and God trusted him with the greater things. "I am perfectly sure," Spurgeon said, "that, if I had not been willing to preach to those small gatherings of people in small country places, I should never have had the privilege of preaching to thousands of men and women in large buildings all over the land. Remember our Lord's rule, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching & Preachers, W. Wiersbe, p. 221)

Faithfulness with humility towards God and men results in a great harvest as well as God being able to exalt us to a place where He can use us in bigger ways.

Robert Moffat - Faithful To Preach The Gospel

An elderly preacher was rebuked by one of his deacons one Sunday morning before the service. "Pastor," said the man, "something must be wrong with your preaching and your work. There's been only one person added to the church in a whole year, and he's just a boy." The minister listened, his eyes moistening and his thin hand trembling. "I feel it all," he replied, "but God knows I've tried to do my duty." On that day the minister's heart was heavy as he stood before his flock. As he finished the message, he felt a strong inclination to resign.

After everyone else had left, that one boy came to him and asked, "Do you think if I worked hard for an education, I could become a preacher—perhaps a missionary?"

Again tears welled up in the minister's eyes. "Ah, this heals the ache I feel," he said. "Robert, I see the Divine hand now. May God bless you, my boy. Yes, I think you will become a preacher."

Many years later an aged missionary returned to London from Africa. His name was spoken with reverence. Nobles invited him to their homes. He had added many souls to the church of Jesus Christ, reaching even some of Africa's most savage chiefs. His name was Robert Moffat, the same Robert who years before had spoken to the pastor that Sunday morning in the old Scottish church.

Lord, help us to be faithful. Then give us the grace to leave the results to you.

We don't know what God can do in the lives of people until we are willing to serve Him with faithfulness, continuing to share the gospel, both in word and in deed, with those in our circle of influence.

The Starfish - Faithful To Care About Even One

I recently read about an old man, walking the beach at dawn, who noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Catching up with the youth, he asked what he was doing. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left in the morning sun.

"But the beach goes on for miles and miles, and there are millions of starfish," countered the man. "How can your effort make any difference?"

The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. "It makes a difference to this one," he said." (Hugh Duncan, Leadership

Fruit Of the Spirit Series—Faithfulness *cont.*

Journal)

While we look for the Lord to exalt those who humble themselves, we must never get our focus off of individual people. That is where God is focused because He was not willing that any should perish, so He sent His only Son to draw all men to Himself. God reaches out to the lowest of the low in search of those who would place their faith and trust in Him. We can do no less.

Faithful To God

But the best definition of faithfulness is our continuing faith and trust in God. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. That is a famous song. It is based on a couple of verses in the Bible.

1 Jo 5:4-5 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

To have faithfulness we must have faith, and to have faith there must be an object of our faith. The faith of the believer is in Jesus Christ. But faith cannot be split between the things of this world and God. If it is, then it is not really faith in God alone. By splitting our faith between God and money, we are saying to God, "I don't trust you to take care of my needs."

Lu 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

God has promised to take care of those who trust Him, have faith in Him, just like He takes care of everything else. God created this universe, He sustains every atom of this universe, and He sent His only Son to die for all men.

Col. 1: 16-20 For by him all things were created - things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the first born from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Since God has done it all and continues to do it all, we ought to place all our trust in Him. He takes care of His creation, why can't we trust Him to take care of His creatures?

Luke 12:22-31 Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? "Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink, - do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

Don't be double minded. A double minded person is unstable in all his ways.

James 1:5-8 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord, - he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

The Lord wants our complete trust in Him. We need to choose to trust in the Lord fully. Choosing to have one foot in the world and one foot in Christ will not work either. Let me give you some examples of the kind of trust the Lord wants us to have.

Two Rowboats

Imagine that you are out in the middle of a lake and there are two rowboats and you are standing with one foot in each boat. One boat, however, is filled with holes and is sinking fast. It is obvious that unless you do something you will soon be in the lake. The boat with the holes represents ourselves with all of the leaks caused by sin. The boat without holes represents Christ. It should be obvious that with one foot in each boat we shall end up in the same place that we would have ended up in we had had both feet in the boat marked "self." The only safe place to be

is to have both feet firmly planted in the boat marked Christ.

The Cliff

Or to change the picture,, suppose that you were trying to cross from one cliff to another one which is a hundred feet away. It is five thousand feet down to the rocks below. You have, however, a one inch thick piece of rope which is capable of holding up several tons. There is a difficulty though, for you have only fifty feet of rope. I say, "Do not worry! I have fifty feet of thread. We can tie my thread to your rope and then tie that to trees on either cliff and then you can go across." You decline my offer and I respond, "What is the matter? Do you not trust the rope?" "Yes, you say, "I trust the rope but I do not trust the thread." Then let's change the story and make it ninety feet of rope and only ten feet of thread. You're still not comfortable. Then suppose we make it ninety-nine feet of rope and only one foot of thread. One inch of thread? You see, if you have one inch of thread, you will be just as dead on the rocks below as if you tried to cross on a hundred feet of thread. The rope obviously represents what Christ has done and the thread represents what we have done.

We can do nothing to save ourselves and if we trust in works or the things of this world, we will still die. We must trust in Christ alone.

We need to recognize that it is only by the grace of God that we are saved. When we realize that we also realize what wretched sinners we are. This realization almost always brings us to repentance. Then we must build up our faith in Christ. The indwelling Holy Spirit will help us with that. But we must not go back to trusting in the things of this world or our own righteousness to save us. Our righteousness is like filthy rags to God. We must allow God to give us new white clothes and then we must keep them from being soiled by the world.

God requires that we have faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

We must believe and continue to believe.

Re 21:7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

God sent His Son to die for our sins. We cannot do anything to buy that salvation. It is through Jesus Christ alone. But God does expect us to have one thing ... faith!

Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! O glorious victory, that overcomes the world.

What If?

What if...God couldn't take the time to bless us today, because we couldn't take the time to thank Him yesterday?

What if...God decided to stop leading us tomorrow, because we didn't follow Him today?

What if...we never saw another flower bloom, because we grumbled when God sent the rain?

What if...God didn't walk with us today, because we failed to recognize it as His day?

What if...God took away the Bible tomorrow, because we would not read it today?

What if...God took away His message, because we failed to listen to the messenger?

What if...God didn't send His only begotten Son, because He wanted us to be prepared to pay the price for sin.

What if...the door of the church was closed because, we did not open the door of our heart?

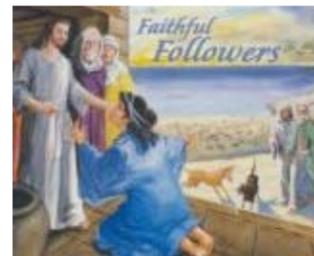
What if...God stopped loving and caring for us, because we failed to love and care for others?

What if...God would not hear us today, because we would not listen to Him yesterday?

What if...God answered our prayers, the way we answer His call to service?

What if...God met our needs, the way we give Him our lives?

God is faithful. Let's be faithful to Him!



Bible Study *by Juanita Simpson*

The Parables of Jesus – Part 11 Obedient & Faithful Servants Luke 12:35-40; Mark 13:33-37 and Luke 17:7-10

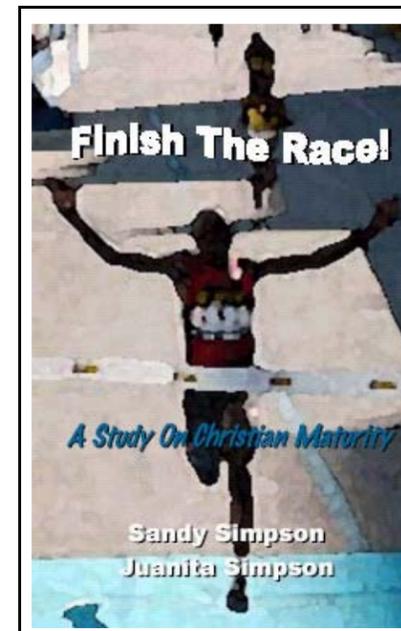
To whom was Jesus speaking when He told these 2 short parables? See **Luke 12:22 & 17:1** Jesus was teaching His disciples. If we are His followers, these short teachings especially apply to us. However, some parts of this passage seem to be addressed to people in the crowd who were not His disciples.

First we study the **Parable of the Watching Servants in Luke 12:35-40**. This short teaching emphasizes the importance of watchfulness and faithfulness. The instructions in **verse 35** have to do with being prepared to undertake a difficult and strenuous task. It's a picture of being ready at night. In the daytime they wouldn't need lamps and of course they would be dressed. At night they might be undressed and in bed, with the lamps blown out. Jesus is telling us that in the darkness that is coming on this earth, no matter how late it is, we are to be "dressed for service", not for sleeping or for partying! If you're dressed for service it shows that you have every intention of serving. The servant at that time had to put on a belt and tuck his long, loose-fitting outer garment into that belt to get the edge of the garment up out of the way. (Illustration: When the girls at Bethania High School where I taught stooped down to cut grass or clean

the floor, they first tucked their skirts up so as not to get them dirty and to help them be freer to do the job.)

They were to keep their lamps burning in preparation to guide the master out of the dark. If you don't have electricity you need to plan ahead to fill and light your lamps before it gets dark. (Illustration: When I used to turn off the generator at night at Bethania I always blinked the lights first as a warning that in a few minutes the lights would go off. That gave people time to light their lamps or get their flashlights.) The servants (or slaves) have to be prepared before the master comes. Waiting till the last second to prepare is too late, as well illustrated in the parable of the 10 virgins. (Matt. 25:1-13) This is why it's dangerous to wait till you're old to repent. The next verse tells us exactly why they have to make these preparations. The master is at a late wedding banquet, but he will return. When He comes He wants to find His servants attentively waiting for His return, prepared to serve in whatever way he orders. They must have the lamps lit so that when he arrives they can immediately open the door for him - and not be fumbling around looking for the lamp and the matches!

Those servants who are awake, watching, prepared when the master arrives will be blessed. "It will be good for them." They will be engaged in the right activity - watchfulness and faithfulness to their master who has been away. Jesus says



This book was written to help believers to realize the absolute necessity of growing to maturity in Christ. What many believers today do not realize is that the Bible teaches that growth in Christ is directly tied to learning to discern truth from error, good from evil. Yet many churches are urging Christians to push aside discernment in favor of experience. It is our hope that this book will inspire many believers to fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith (2 Tim. 4:7).

To order this book, send \$14.00 by check or money order to: Alexander Simpson, P.O. Box 1759, Pearl City, HI 96782 or you can order online at the DITC web site.

in **v. 37b**: "I tell you the truth". This is a striking formula used only a few times in Luke. It means that something shocking is about to be said. The shock is that the master takes the position of a servant and serves his own servant as if he were the master. This kind of thing is unheard of in the Middle East! This dramatic reversal of roles is enacted by Jesus in the foot-washing scene in **John 13**. Jesus took the place of the lowest slave, bowing before His disciples – **even Judas** – to wash their filthy feet. And Jesus will again serve His own when He returns. What a powerful message this is for Jesus' servants! The one who is prepared and faithfully serving, awaiting God's kingdom, will find himself served by the One for whom he is waiting. Does this mean that we can expect to be rewarded and served by Jesus when He returns? **We can't expect anything**. It is all of grace. Should we be looking forward to that and waiting for that reward? Jesus' second parable tells us what our attitude should be.

This sense of being faithful servants is added to in **verse 38**. The master wants to find his servants "ready" even if his coming is delayed to the second or third watch of the night (9 PM to 3 AM - the darkest hour!) Who is this master who will return? It is Jesus. What do you think it means for us to tuck up our skirts and have our lamps lit? It means that we are to continue serving no matter how late it is, and to keep our light shining no matter how dark it is.

What does it mean that His coming may not be until a very late hour? Will He come during or at the end of the Tribulation? **Luke 12:39-40** Jesus seems to be teaching that He will come unexpectedly when most are not looking for His coming. From the way Jesus states this short parable it seems that He may have been referring to an actual happening that the village was talking about. It was as if He were saying, "Guard yourselves that you may not be caught unawares like this householder who just had his house broken into." But why is Jesus compared to a thief in the night? Jesus is not a thief, but He will come at a time when He is not expected by most. If we are unsaved when He comes we will be doomed. If we are unfaithful servants of His, we will have to face His anger when He comes. If we are His faithful disciples, looking for His coming, we will not be surprised but will be full of joy.

The one who is always ready, always in touch with the Lord, always looking for His return will be the one

who is not surprised or alarmed when He comes in the middle of the night. Of course, that could refer to a time or to a season - the season of intensely dark and sinister days. Will Christians escape the darkness? Will He come before the Tribulation? Many churches teach that we don't have to worry about the trouble coming because Jesus will rapture us before the Great Tribulation. Maybe He will, and that will be wonderful if He does. But some of the things He says make it look otherwise. See **Matt. 24:7-13, 21-22**. Maybe some will lose their faith if Jesus doesn't rescue them before the Great Tribulation as they've been taught. We need to be faithfully serving whenever Jesus comes. We do not know the day nor the hour! Today there is a false teaching which many now believe, that we who are the Church must conquer the world and get it ready for Christ before He can come. Those who believe that will be in for a terrible shock when the Lord shows up like a thief at a time they didn't expect Him. Jesus is here giving a severe warning to those like the rich fool who think that the things of this world are all that is important.

Our second study is on **The Parable of the Obedient Servant in Luke 17:7-10**. In our day we can't understand this parable very well. We think that a servant who has had a long, hard day in the fields has earned the right to some appreciation, comfort and a few rewards. Especially in Middle Eastern culture the master-servant relationship implies acceptance of authority and obedience to authority. In our day we hardly can understand what that relationship meant. The servant offered loyalty, obedience and a lot of hard work, but the good master provided a sense of worth, security, relationship and meaning to the life of the servant. So this is a good picture of our relationship to God and to His Son. (Illustration: Some Negro slaves in the southern states of the USA worked under good masters who provided for them, helped them and cared for them. After they were set free by the Emancipation Proclamation, they didn't want to leave their masters but chose to remain as their servants.)

Would any master of that time call in his servant and tell him to sit down and eat? **Absolutely not!** The master doesn't owe him anything for doing the job he was assigned to do. The servant is expected to fulfill his daily assignment. His job is to simply serve according to the will of the master. Is there any room for complaints,