



CAN GOD BE TRUSTED?

The answer of the committed evangelical Christian leader is a loud and dogmatic YES! However, is this a true and honest reality in one's life or just an intellectually correct response without content and individual experience?

In other words, do we truly have faith? Biblical faith has as its object the God of the Scriptures and of the universe Who is absolutely trustworthy, Who cannot lie or fail. Faith then can be defined as:

- The expression of one's confidence in God Who always has one's best interest in mind. *"For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life"* (Rom. 5:10).
- An expression of child-like trust that expects, without fear, a loving and honest response from God in return, *"You have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"* (Rom. 8:15).
- That which establishes a relationship between an individual and God, much like the biblical marriage of mutual love, accountability and trust between husband and wife, *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her... as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body"* (Eph. 5:25-30).

Is God trustworthy? Certainly! But is this what we see and experience in church? Let us observe some areas in the life of the church and of the Christian.

Prayer--

From the pulpit and in Bible studies the message is loud and clear that prayer is a most important part of the Christian life. "There is great untapped power in prayer." "God commands His children to pray always in every place." "Little prayer, little spirituality."

The truth is that few Christian leaders depend upon prayer themselves. Yes, they do pray, but often it is because it is culturally expected and biblically appropriate. The evidence of this is exhibited when routinely a cursory prayer is offered before and after a business meeting. Yet there is little, if any, expectation of an answer from God.

The Christian leader fails to pray and entrust to God his times of spiritual study and counsel by not looking to Jesus, seeking His direction and wisdom. This lack of entrusting results in weak and emaciated fruit and ministry. Because of this, even in the commendable practice of personal devotions, there is little or no expectation of meeting with the Christ one calls Lord. **Then God cannot be trusted when it comes to answering prayer?**

Worship--

Can the Holy Spirit be trusted to lead the congregation in the worship of the Lord? The Christian leadership says that He can -- but do they believe it?

- They consult together, without the

Holy Spirit's input, on how to orchestrate the service to produce the best congregational response.

- The pastor, without asking Jesus the Head of the body about His will and desire, plans sermons which he thinks will speak to the needs of Christ's people taken from his own wisdom, imagination and mindset.
- The worship leader plans the hymns, choruses and special music that entertains and will lead the congregation's positive and emotional response to the pastor's message.
- When an invitation is given and there is little or no response, the congregation is accused of being insensitive to the Spirit's conviction and are manipulated and made to feel guilty for not responding.

If this is one's proof that the Holy Spirit is trustworthy, then **the conclusion, in the pew, must be that God cannot be trusted.**

Spiritual Life--

Sanctification, also called the deeper Christian walk or the Spirit-filled life, is often presented as the ultimate goal of the Christian life, but there are only a few committed Christians who enjoy it --even though the Bible presents this life as normative for every believer.

The instruction that Jesus gave to His disciples is ignored and misunderstood. *"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"* (Matt. 5:48). God speaking through Peter says, *"but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves. You shall be holy, for I AM Holy"* (1 Pet. 1:15-16). (Continued page 2)

The Apostle Paul states that Christ is his life in Gal. 2:20-21, and that Christ is the believer's life also in Col. 3:3-4. The Apostle John stated that it is unthinkable that a believer would continue to sin (See Rom. 5:1-2).

Jesus abides within believers for the purpose of living out His perfect life in, through, and with their cooperation. *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me... for apart from Me you can do nothing"* (Jn. 15:4-5).

Rather, the emphasis for living a godly life is placed upon the individual Christian to accomplish within his own fleshly capabilities and self-determination. Eventually, all of this self-effort fails. *"Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"* (Gal. 3:3). **Therefore, it appears to the Christian that God cannot be trusted to provide a godly life.**

Evangelism--

The great commission *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."* cannot be God's first priority since Christian leaders have another agenda. *"We have so much work here at home to take care of first."* *"There is only so much money available and we need to build a strong home base before we can extend ourselves to reach out to the billions who are lost."* *"God certainly would want us to take care of our huge debt before we spend extra money for the lost."* **Obviously God doesn't mean what He says and therefore He cannot be trusted.**

Is There Something Wrong?

Is this unduly extreme? Perhaps. But how does one explain the powerlessness of the church, her leaders and her people? Why is it that corporately we agree on one set of ground rules and yet individually each one reserves the right to do something different if it seems expedient? Why do we talk about the life-changing gospel and the power of God to transform lives and then see few, if any, lives that are measurably different from any others? When God does actually take control of

Faith is taking God at His word and staking our life upon Him that He will do it and show us how to participate with Him.

one's life, most are quick to discount it as being strange and extreme.

Contemporary Christianity is not much different than Israel of old. Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross, as it is usually understood, makes as little difference in Christians' lives as did the sacrifices for the people in Old Testament times. The Jews of old, after sinning, would offer up an animal sacrifice, then walk away forgiven, but unchanged--with no hope of being any different. Most Christians have the same idea that there is no hope of ever being any different in this life.

Abraham and Sarah decided, after waiting a long time, that they needed to help God bring about His promise of an heir through Sarah's maid. However, God rejected Ishmael, the son of the flesh as heir, and supernaturally gave them Isaac, the son of promise, *"The son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise... we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman"* (Gal. 4:23, 31).

True Faith--

Biblical faith is the confidence that God will do as He says and will show the Christian how to cooperate with Him. It is not a belief that, like Abraham and Sarah, has to degenerate into a "do-it-yourself kit" where God becomes a divine servant that jumps at one's every command. Nor is it a self-reformation program where one improves one's self with the special help of a 'god' that can be manipulated by one's every whim.

Can God be trusted?

Certainly, but only when believers entrust themselves into Jesus' capable hands and allow Him to graciously initiate --we in turn faithfully respond to Him and His leadership. We agree with the hymn writer who wrote, **"They who trust Him (Jesus) wholly, find Him wholly true!"**



Spring Canyon Participants 2004

This year's theme was *"Light Dispels Darkness."* We enjoyed reflections and teaching on Jesus being our Light and Life-- He is the Light of the World!

God blessed us with a unique group this year including 19 children! What a marvelous time of relational interaction! We also enjoyed snow at the end of May!

We had morning and evening sessions with speakers Averill Huffman, Deedra Bingham and Bob and Dottie Bingham. Jim and Nancy Healy graced us with our worship times and singing.

We will share some observations from the group:

"I saw people come together in "the light" in such a special way."

"I see my need for dependence--for His Word entering into my life brings Light."

"Light shone into areas in my life. The topics were timely."

"I want to respond to circumstances by entrusting myself to Him."

"I was surprised at the many references on light and darkness in Scripture. Thanks for a wonderful job of presenting God's Words and meaning at the conference."

It is evident that after reading each conferee's evaluation of the retreat that the reality of this gracious and intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus as the *Light of Life* was understood and embraced.

We truly were blessed by God over the special weekend. We are especially thankful for His protection and safety. Many came from various states and traveled far.

Thank you for your continued support for this discipling ministry.

May the Lord Jesus, the *Light of Life*, richly bless you!!