

This will be our last opportunity to remind you of the **Gospel Meeting with Mike Collier, May 2-7**. Topics are as follows:

- Sunday: The Example of Philip—Getting Ready to Grow—Habits for Spiritual Growth
- Monday: The Importance of a Positive Attitude
- Tuesday: Becoming Involved in Religion
- Wednesday: I Want to be a Worker for Jesus
- Thursday: Five Essentials for Doing the Work of the Lord
- Friday: Increasing opportunities to Share the Gospel

This meeting represents a golden opportunity to bring someone to hear Christ.



April 25, 2010

WHY ARE YOU SO EXTREME? Jim Stauffer

The dictionary defines faithful as, "True or trustworthy in performance of duty, the fulfillment of promises or obligations, etc.; constant; loyal; a faithful servant; faithful to one's agreement."

This would certainly be a worthy achievement in life. We would all be pleased to leave this world recognized by all who knew us as faithful in all our undertakings.

Thus far we have presented a view of faithfulness that most would agree with. However, we have presented that view generically without specific personal attachment.

In the everyday activities many times faithful people are accused of extremism rather than recognized as faithful to their beliefs and obligations.

It may be a young lady who truly believes she should profess godliness in her dress and demeanor who is said to be extreme when she rejects worldly dress and conduct. By refusing to dress or behave immodestly she is remaining faithful to the instruction Paul offered in 1 Tim. 2. Yet her faithfulness to her belief and the obligations of it are not recognized.

Then again, it might be a young businessman who has pledged himself to be led by the Spirit as Paul taught the Galatians. But friends and maybe even family encourage him to "climb the ladder of success" by social networking including drinking alcoholic beverages and attending parties with the "proper" people. He refuses to participate in drunkenness and reveling because he is faithful to the obligations of his faith in Christ. His friends and associates wonder why he is so extreme in his opposition to things that would benefit him materially.

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Send a Copy to a Friend

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MEETING TIMES
 Sunday - Bible Classes: 9:30AM
 Worship Services 10:20AM & 6:00PM
 Wednesday - Bible Classes 7:00PM

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And it most assuredly has happened in the case of gospel preachers who refuse to teach anything that is not supported by Scripture. They are reminded of well known preachers and large congregations who do teach such things. It is pointed out they could become much better known and more widely accepted if their positions were not so extreme. But they persevere because they are faithful to the charge Paul gave preachers in 2 Tim. 4.

It is amazing how beautiful faithfulness is from a distance and yet how its ugly, extreme nature comes out when we view it up close.

You cannot take more extreme action to maintain faithfulness than Joseph took in fleeing the temptress, the wife of Potiphar. So extreme was his faithfulness he spent considerable time in jail for it.

How about Noah, a preacher of righteousness, who preached for 120 years while building an ark in preparation for a flood caused by rain, which he had never seen or experienced. Again, extreme faithfulness to God.

Then there was Abraham who prepared to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to God out of faithfulness to the command of God. No one would blame him for rejecting this command. No one but God, that is. He was faithful even to the point of personal pain and loss.

We see these stories as beautiful examples of faithfulness, not as evidence of rigid extremism. Yet when the opportunity for such faithfulness is presented to us we see things in a different light.

Now we want to be rational and logical. Maybe like Adam and Eve, who were after all, simply trying to become wise as God was.

Or maybe allow the consideration of earthly and familial aspects of life to overrule faithfulness as did John Mark and Demas.

Until we can personalize faithfulness and practice it even when it causes us pain or loss, we will never understand fully what it means.

To change the famous expression of Barry Goldwater during the 1964 Presidential Campaign to apply to spiritual matters, let it be said, "Extremism in the pursuit of the Will of God is no vice and moderation in faithfulness to His cause is no virtue."

Are we what we claim to be or do we just wish we were?

WHAT IF GOD WAS PRAISED LIKE FOOTBALL

A friend of mine recently made this comment, "Around here football is a religion!". At first his words sounded like an innocent declaration of the passion and allegiance many of us have for our favorite teams. But after a little reflection, his words seemed to

burn a hole in my conscience. Is football our religion? God adamantly warned His people of the dangers of idolatry. (Ex. 20:3-6) Their passion for false gods eventually led to their earthly captivity as well as separation from God. (Ezek. 20:1-32 We may not have wooden figurines on the mantels of our homes, but that does not mean we may not have our idols.

So how do we know when we may have crossed the line from sport to idolatry? Please consider the following "what if" scenarios:

What if we gave as much money to evangelism and charity as we do to tickets, travel and team merchandise? Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt. 6:21)

What if we could name the apostles, judges, and great heroes of faith like we can name our team's starting lineup, reserves, and even recruits? "Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Rom. 15:4)

What if fathers taught their children about the Lord and His works as much as they do about defensive formations or offensive strategies? "Fathers bring your children up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)

What if we proudly displayed our love for the Lord as we do our team's logos from our homes and cars? "Praise the Lord all you Gentiles and let all the peoples extol Him." (Rom. 15:11)

What if we arrived early and participated in a worship service with the same dedication we have for crowded football stadiums with limited parking, little leg room and no protection from inclement weather? "For I was glad when they said to me, Let us go to the house of the Lord." (Psalms 122:1)

What if we hated Satan and His schemes to conquer souls as much as we do a rival who is threatening to take a game from us? "Be sober because your adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

What if the joy of winning souls and the pain of losing souls matched our passion for winning and losing a football game of which we are not even a participant? "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10)

There is nothing inherently sinful about cheering for a favorite team and enjoying a game. However, sports must not take precedence over our duties and responsibilities to the Lord. The only victory that truly counts has already been won. Jesus conquered death so that we may live in Him. (Romans 5:8; 6:3-7) Allow Him to clothe you with His atoning garments (Gal. 3:27; Rev. 7:14) and join His team in fighting against our true enemy. (Eph. 6:10-16)

Phil Robertson