

# **BIBLE STUDY: HOW TO BE FAITHFUL**

**Pastors Convention, 19- 22 March 2012**

**Hartebeespoort, Good Sheperd Retreat Centre**

**Presented by: Dean TJ Mafereka**

Faithfulness to the Gospel calls for courage. If you want to be faithful you ought to have courage, if you don't have courage you will end up being unfaithful. Let us look on Pilate for being unfaithful as we see it in John 19:12

Because Pilate's safety was endangered, he ended up handing Jesus Christ over to be nailed on the cross. Many people are in danger of doing the same thing when their safety is endangered by loyalty to the cross.

## **FAITHFULNESS OR PERSONAL SAFETY**

This is how things usually go in the world, like what happened to Pilate, "You are not Caesar's friend" people begin to fall from the truth, as leaves from the trees in autumn. For flesh and blood cannot bear to have Caesar as an enemy, just as Pilate turns blind at this word. For our houses, home, wife, child and all we have are under the protection of Caesar. If Caesar is our enemy, then our house, home, wife, etc are in danger. Therefore when Pilate heard that he would not be Caesar's friend if he released Christ, this was no little or insignificant blow to him.

Pilate clings to his body, his possessions and his honour and keeps Caesar as his friend although he knows that he is doing Christ injustice. Even so many people are good evangelicals or pastors in our time, but since they don't consider the Gospel of sufficient value to endanger their bodies, lives, goods, and honour for its sake, they follow Pilate.

Human holiness and righteousness are capable of, what their foundation is like, and how firmly they stand when the body suffers or is exposed to danger. As long as power, honor, and goods are retained, human righteousness and holiness abide, but with the collapse of earthly things they, too, fall.

## **BE SOBER, BE VIGILANT 1Peter 5:8**

For Christians to be faithful they must be sober, be on their guards and stay awake. It is true that for a Christian to resist the devil must be sober physically for a drunkard cannot be alert, nor can he think of defending himself against the devil. But a Christian must be still more watchful against sleepiness or drunkenness of soul.

Therefore if you do not want to be misled and lose what you have (faithfulness) you must be wide wake, and not snore. For surely the devil will neither sleep nor snore but will from every hour assault you wherever you are. Therefore you must be fortified on all sides with the Word of God wherever you are, in private or in public, in church or at home, in table and in all your associations. For us to be faithful we should be constantly be occupied with the Word of God earnestly to reach out for it, gladly to bear, sing, tell and read it, in order to guard against the shameful sluggishness.

## Lesson from Scripture: *Noah in Genesis*

Noah was a God-fearing man who lived in a time of great sin. People around the world were worshipping other gods and idols, and sinfulness abounded. God was so upset with his creation that He considered wiping them off the face of the Earth completely. However, the prayers of one faithful man saved humanity. Noah asked God to have mercy on man, and so God asked Noah to build an ark. He placed representative animals on the ark and allowed Noah and his family to join them. Then God brought forth a great flood, wiping out all the other living things. God then promised Noah that He would never again bring a judgement such as this on humanity.

### Life Lessons:

Faithfulness leads to obedience, and obedience brings about rich blessings from the Lord. Proverbs 28:20 tells us that a faithful man will be richly blessed. Yet being faithful is not always easy. [Temptations](#) abound, and as Christians our lives are busy. It is easy to become distracted by the movies, magazines, telephone calls, Internet, etc.

Yet being faithful means making conscious choices to follow God. It means standing up when people disrespect your faith to explain [why you're a Christian](#). It means doing what you can to become [stronger in your faith](#) and [evangelize](#) in a way that works for you. Noah was probably not accepted by his fellow man, because he chose to follow God rather than commit great sins. Yet, he found the strength to remain faithful - which is why we are all still here.

God is always faithful to us, even when we are not faithful to Him. He is there by our side, even when we do not seek Him or even notice He is there. He keeps his promises, and we are called to do the same. Remember, God promised Noah that He would never again wipe out His people on the earth as He did in the flood. If we trust in God to be faithful, then He becomes our rock. We can trust in all He has to offer. We will know that there is no trial too great for us to bear, and thus become a light to the world around us.

## [Joseph: Bible Character Study](#)

### [Joseph' life: I - Genesis 37: 1-4](#)

#### Q. What can we learn about Joseph in the bible?

- Joseph was seventeen years old. He was a shepherd.
- He did not participate in his brothers' misconducts. In fact, he brought reports of their mischief to his father.
- He was the favorite of Jacob. Jacob loved him more than all his brothers. Jacob made a coat of many colors for him.
- His brothers hated him for this reason and could not even talk with him well.
- Joseph was rather naive to tell his dreams to his brothers about his future supremacy and his brothers' submission to him. That intensified their hatred towards him.
- So, when the opportunity came at Dothan, they planned to kill him. But Rueben tried to rescue him by persuading them not to kill him. His brothers sold him to the caravan of Ishmaelite going to Egypt.
- His life was changed in a moment, from being the beloved son to the slave in an unknown land, Egypt.

## **Joseph at the Potiphar's House: II – Genesis 39:1-20**

### **Q. What can we learn about Joseph from this passage?**

- He was a good administrator.
- Faithful servant
- Fair and handsome (Gen 39:6)
- God was with him.
- God made him prosper and successful.
- God blessed his master through him. (Gen 39:2) (check out Blessed is the Man – Psalm 1
- Potiphar, his master had entrusted him with charge of all of his house affairs.

### **Temptation of Joseph:**

- He was young and handsome. He was the head of the house. None would have known if he'd have given in to the temptation by Potiphar's wife.
- He had a healthy fear of God. (Gen 39:9)
- His temptation period was long.
- He tried to resist her as much as he could, but when time came he had to flee from the place. (How to overcome temptation)
- Due to false accusation of Potiphar's wife, he was cast into prison. (Gen 39:20)
- Once again, he paid the price for being righteous!

## **Joseph in the Prison: III – Genesis 39:20 – 41:37**

- Once again, God was with him in all his trials.
- One may argue, why did God not rescue him from his troubles? But God's plan and purpose are higher than ours. We may see the immediate, but God sees at our future.
- Joseph continued to be faithful, he did not give up.
- The Lord again blessed him in all his work. The Jailer gave him charge of all the other prisoners.
- In prison, he helped the chief butler (cup-bearer) to restore his position in Pharaoh's office. But the cupbearer forgot his promise to mention about Joseph's innocence to the Pharaoh.
- After two years, when Pharaoh had two dreams, the cupbearer remembered Joseph and his skills to interpret dreams.
- So when Joseph was brought to Pharaoh, he interpreted dreams about seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine.
- He suggested the preparation for the famine by storing food during the good harvest years.

## **Joseph: The Chief Minister (Governor) of Egypt: IV – Genesis 41:41-56**

- The Pharaoh liked his proposal. And he made Joseph the Head of state to implement his plans for upcoming famine.
- He was 30 years old. So after 13 years of suffering and struggle, God made him the most influential person in all known world at that time.
- His wisdom and planning saved lives of people from not only Egypt but many other nations.

## **Joseph's Life: The Unusual Family Reunion: V – Genesis 42-50**

- The famine brought all people from different nations to Egypt for help, including his brothers from Israel.
- They could not recognize him, but he knew them. He remembered the dream he had, when he was a young boy.
- Joseph, after testing them in different ways, made him known to them. (Gen 45:1-15)
- He forgave them and persuaded them to settle in Egypt with their father, Jacob.
- Joseph lived for 110 years. (Gen 50:26)

### **Lessons learnt from Life of Joseph:**

- God's plans and purpose are greater and better than ours!
- God's providence and favor to the righteous
- Suffering to God's people is not always bad!
- Self control in youth
- Patience and perseverance in the time of troubles
- Honesty, strong work ethics
- Fear of God and Faithfulness to God

## **Are You a Good and Faithful Steward?**

### **God's Faithful Stewards**

God places high regard on stewardship, and He expects His people to become faithful stewards as well.

*Steward* as used in the New Testament (translated from the Greek word *oikonomos*) means an administrator, a caretaker, a custodian and a manager. This word refers to a person who is a faithful manager, overseer and caretaker over his or her own or others' property and interests.

God inspired Paul to make it clear that He requires His people to be faithful stewards of all that He gives them (1 Corinthians 4:2).

Let's understand the role of a faithful steward especially as it applies to us today in God's Church.

One of the most important, if not *the* most important, keys to faithful stewardship or management is vigilance. A vigilant steward is to be watchful, alert, attentive and awake in every aspect of life.

Our lives can be boiled down to four areas that require faithful and vigilant stewardship or management. These areas include our time, our possessions, our health and our relationships with God and man.

When we think of becoming good stewards, we most often think of how we manage our finances and our faithfulness in paying God's tithes and offerings.

However, because our lives are made up of much more than our finances, our growth as faithful stewards must encompass the vigilant management of every area of our lives. Otherwise we will miss the mark that God wants us to hit.

## **Time Robbers**

This world is filled with time-robbing distractions. We, as God's people, must learn to manage our time so the most important tasks are accomplished ahead of the many time robbers that can preoccupy us. These time robbers titillate our senses and make us feel as though we are doing something important. For example, playing golf or soccer, watching a sports event, going out to a show or doing anything else that occupies our time when our prayer and Bible study have been left undone is poor stewardship and management of our time. If we place things that this world offers ahead of our growth in character through local church Bible studies, choir rehearsals or visiting shut-ins, we are mismanaging our time.

The principle of good stewardship applies to every area of our lives including how we manage and maintain our possessions. Our possessions really belong to God. If we neglect to clean and repair our homes, our cars, our "stuff," we make it evident to God that we are putting other less important things ahead of our stewardship of the possessions with which God has blessed us.

Our health is also an area that requires stewardship and management daily. Our daily diet, our daily exercise and the time we allow for a good night's sleep, are all areas that require diligent stewardship.

## **Stewardship of Relationships**

Finally, our relationship with first God and, next, our fellowman must be managed as the top priority in our lives.

Nothing must be allowed to distract us from our daily worship and relationship with our Creator. We must make the time, in spite of our busyness, to pray and to study God's Word every day. Otherwise, we are going through life as a soldier who is naked in battle, with no weapons or armour to protect him from his adversaries.

Our relationships with our fellowman must also be a daily priority. Our example at home, on the job, at school, on the road and in fellowship with our brethren must also reflect Christ in us and outgoing concern, away from the self.

## **Stewardship Parables**

Let's look at two familiar parables from the perspective of faithful and vigilant stewardship.

First consider the parable of the 10 virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). As we understand, they all slumbered and slept. Perhaps they all neglected their stewardship responsibilities for a while. However, eventually half of the virgins woke up and got to work as vigilant and faithful stewards. But the other half remained neglectful of their stewardship responsibilities. They continued to mismanage, they continued to lack vigilance, they kept following the crowd and they did not pay attention to the proper stewardship of their life.

When the Bridegroom (Jesus Christ) returned, the faithful stewards were able to enter into the marriage supper with the Groom, but the unfaithful stewards were denied entrance and lost out on their reward.

The parable of the talents directly follows (Matthew 25:14-30). In this parable, Christ uses talents or monetary units that He figuratively distributed to His servants to maintain and increase until His return. These talents actually represent individual abilities and qualities that Christ expects His people to cultivate once they are called and placed into the Body of

Christ—the Church.

As is pointed out in this parable, those who grow in stewardship are rewarded and those who mismanage—who float, who do not pay attention and fail to even begin to make the slightest improvements and growth—are punished and lose out on their reward.

### **Looking for Growth**

The lesson for us is this. God and Jesus Christ are looking for an increase from us. By doing our very best by growing in stewardship and not floating or doing nothing, we fulfil what Christ says in Luke 16:10, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much."

However, once called and placed into the Body of Jesus Christ, the stewardship that is required of us is not a result of our own power or abilities. The strength, inspiration and growth in the management of our lives must come from God through the Holy Spirit in us, otherwise, our labour is in vain and the growth in stewardship is self-righteous, human growth.

We must always remember the source of our strength to please God, as Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"

Let's strive to be continually growing as vigilant and faithful stewards of God's way through His Spirit in us. We will then hear this from Christ when we are standing before Him at His second coming: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:23)

### **Bible Tips: The Fruit of Faith and Faithful**

#### **1. We must prove our trustworthiness and faithfulness in even the smallest duties.**

Jesus said, "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches" (Luke 16:10-11).

#### **2. For the gift of eternal life, we must persevere and remain faithful to God to death.**

God says, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

#### **3. One day, Christ will return to earth to generously reward His faithful followers.**

"Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21, emphasis added).

**Thank you. I now arrest my presentation by saying let us continue to be faithful servants of GOD.**

## Faithfulness Questions

- Who is called faithful in Num. 12:7?
- How is God faithful (Deut. 7:9)?
- What did the faithful priest do (1 Sam. 2:35)?
- How did David show himself faithful (1 Sam. 22:14)?
- What responsibility was given to these faithful men (Neh. 13:13)?
- What will the Lord do for the faithful (Ps. 31:23)?
- What does a faithful ambassador bring (Prov. 13:17)?
- What does a faithful witness not do (Prov. 14:5)?
- What are faithful (Prov. 27:6)?
- Who shall abound with blessings (Prov. 28:20)?
- What could they not find in Daniel because he was faithful (Dan. 6:4)?
- What happened to the servant who was faithful over a few things (Mat. 25:21, 23)?
- What is he who is faithful in what is least (Luke 16:10)?
- Who will not be trusted with the true riches (Luke 16:11)?
- What will happen if you have not been faithful in what is another man's (Luke 16:12)?
- Who was given authority over ten cities (Luke 19:17)?
- What is required of stewards (1 Cor. 4:2)?
- Who was Epaphras a faithful minister of (Col. 1:7)?
- Who counted or considered Paul faithful (1 Tim. 1:12)?
- What must the deacon's wives be faithful in (1 Tim. 3:11)?
- Who is the Word of God to be committed to (2 Tim. 2:2)?
- What are faithful men to do with the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:2)?
- What was Moses faithful in (Heb. 3:2, 5)?
- Until when were they to be faithful (Rev. 2:10)?
- What are those who are with the Lamb called (Rev. 17:14)?
- Who is called Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11)?

- By Pastor Todd R. Cook ([toddrcook@biblestudies4u.info](mailto:toddrcook@biblestudies4u.info))