

THE VOICE



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SOME GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIANS

It is tragic that many who embark on the road to eternal life fail to continue, and so never reach their destination. God cannot be censured for these failures for He has been generous and benevolent in His instructions. The Guidebook prepared for this journey accurately points out every step that must be taken. Those who faithfully follow this guide are sure to reach their eternal home (Psa. 48:14; 72:24; 119:105; Isa. 35:8-10; 2 Tim. 3:15-17). The problem of failure lies entirely with man's failure to follow the Guidebook. The journey is begun with fervor and enthusiasm, but, like ancient Israel, their faith falters. They become footsore and fainthearted and long for the fleshpots of Egypt. Soon they are lost in the wilderness. They never learn the great difference in starting power and staying power, and that success always comes with a price tag. Every athlete knows full well that he will never reach his goal without planning, hard work and determination. He knows that his life must be so disciplined and ordered that reaching his goal takes precedence over every other consideration. The Christian life is no exception. Obstacles must be removed and priorities established before one can "run with patience the race set before him". Following are some simple guidelines that will help the traveler on his way:

I. A DESIRE TO KNOW AND DO THE WILL OF GOD

This guideline is placed first because it is basic in the development of a strong Christian character. It is basic because it goes to the root of one's life and reveals the attitude that one has toward the word of God. It shows the condition of the heart (Prov. 4:23; 3:3-4; 23:7; Matt. 5:8). An earnest desire to know and do the will of God is the key to spiritual success (Mt. 7:21-23). One with this desire will search the scriptures to learn God's will, accept it and abide by it. (Acts 8:30-38; 17:11; Psa. 1:1-2). Without this desire one cannot hope to make a successful journey, nor be worth much to God's kingdom. He has cut himself off from the only source of spiritual nourishment (Matt. 4:4; 1 Pet. 2:1; Heb. 5:12-14). Consequently, he fails to grow, soon loses interest in spiritual things, and is at the mercy of the destructive forces of Satan. Hence, God repeatedly

emphasizes the importance of knowing and doing his will (John 6:44-45; Eph. 5:17; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:15). Dear Reader, when have you examined your attitude toward God's word?

II. ALWAYS OBEY PLAIN PASSAGES

True, the Bible contains some difficult passages. These should be studied carefully and prayerfully, always seeking a better understanding. However, one who is a true seeker for eternal life will never "fly in the face" of plain passages that are easily understood. To do so is to show gross disrespect for God's word and disregard divine authority. Moreover, such a one sins on two counts. First, he transgresses God's law (1 John 3:4), secondly, he violates his conscience and so sins (Rom. 14:23). Repeated violations harden the conscience, destroying one's moral integrity and thus making moral and spiritual living impossible. Hence, "The most deadly thing a man can do is to trifle with his conscience; for in so doing he trifles with the compass of his soul". (R. C. Bell, Commentary on Romans, p. 161). One cannot afford to flagrantly disobey a "thus sayeth the Lord".

III. ALWAYS PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

One of the price tags of success in any field or endeavor is the setting of priorities. The successful student, business or professional man knows that some things must be first. Everything else must "give". Likewise, Christ set priorities for his disciples (Matt. 6:33). The welfare and advancement of God's kingdom must be first in point of time, importance, and emphasis and when choosing an occupation, marriage partner, or recreation. God must have first consideration to the extent that one places first things first. To that extent one will be a successful Christian.

IV. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Check the list of Bible characters who pleased God and you will find their life filled with prayer. Abraham's journey can be traced by the altars he built. Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Daniel, etc. all were men who prayed. Jesus prayed all night (Luke 6:12). Christians are admonished to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17), "continue instant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12)... "We ought always to pray and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). This admonition does not mean "an attitude of prayer" as some assert. It means to never cease praying, as one never ceases eating or sleeping. Prayer is the life of a Christian. One who does not pray will soon falter on the road to heaven. How much do you pray?

V. ALWAYS SHOW RESPECT FOR THINGS SACRED AND HOLY

This guideline also indicates the condition of the heart. To show disrespect for things sacred indicates an impure heart. One who sneers at spiritual things, jokes about heaven, or speaks lightly of things holy has a warped and evil attitude. To use the name of Jesus or God in a light, flippant manner is to blaspheme. Christians are to serve God with reverence and godly fear (Heb. 12:28).

VI. ALWAYS HAVE AN OPEN MIND; BE WILLING TO LEARN.

A closed mind is dangerous because it thwarts growth and development, incites prejudice, and promotes conceit. Jesus condemned those who shut out the truth and refused to listen (Matt. 13:13-15). The careful Christian continues to examine and re-examine his thinking, convictions, and actions in the light of God's word. He is not afraid to have his position examined and scrutinized, for he is a lover and seeker of truth.

VII. CORRECT YOUR MISTAKES WHEN YOU REALIZE YOU ARE WRONG

The honest Christian desires to be right at all cost. He knows there is no virtue in sin and error. He hates sin even in his own life and like David, says, "Examine me, O Lord, try my reins and my heart" (Psa. 26:2). Surely there must be something wrong in the heart and life of an individual who refuses to say "I have sinned", but continues in sin when he knows he is out of harmony with the will of God! Consider Saul of Tarsus when he learned he was practicing a false religion, he immediately made correction. Dear Reader, how honest are you?

- Lindsay A. Allen