

"Devoted Christianity"

True devotion to Jesus Christ is not easy to find, but the Scriptures give us the instructions in how to devote ourselves to Christ. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And we're going to explore being devoted to Christ, so stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We know the Scriptures come from God. And the many prophecies that can be found in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New reveal the divine nature of Scripture. Micah 5 and verse 2 predicts Jesus will be born in Bethlehem more than 700 years before it took place. Psalm 22:16 predicts the crucifixion and Psalm 16:10 predicts the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah a thousand years before they took place. Yes, the Bible predicts the future with accuracy, unlike any other book in the world. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

The Lord Jesus asks us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength (Mark 12 and verse 30). And this means we must totally devote ourselves to God. Jesus Christ calls us to deny ourselves and take up our crosses daily to follow Him (Luke 9 verse 23). Now much of Christianity today is weak and compromised. Some Christians are what they call "cafeteria Christians." That is they pick and choose from the teaching of Jesus what they like and they reject the rest. Some are "fair-weather" Christians who follow the Lord only when it is convenient. Some are Christians in name only. And some are "Sunday-only" Christians who attend worship on Sundays but follow the world the other six days of the week.

I wonder if the Lord doesn't weep over the lack of devotion among many who call themselves Christian. The church at Thyatira said in Revelation 3 and verse 17, "I am rich and become wealthy, and have need of nothing." They, that is the people at Thyatira, didn't know they were "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. The Lord wants His people to be spiritually healthy and devoted to the gospel and serving and serving Jesus Christ.

We offer this study on devotion to Christianity free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have many free programs and materials on our website, www.searchtv.org and on YouTube.

We now worship in song, we'll read from Romans 6:16 to 18, and explore what it means to be a devoted Christian.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Romans chapter 6 verses 16 to 18. And talks about how people when they obey from the heart can make a change in their lives.

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, (that) you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Oh yes, we can change when we give ourselves from our hearts to the Lord. And aren't we thankful that we can change. Let's pray together.

Father we're thankful that You give us hope that things can be different in our lives. That we can make changes in our lives so that we can serve You and be pleasing to You. Because we love You. This is our prayer in Jesus name, Amen.

The early church wanted to know and practice their faith, even when they endured opposition and persecution. Acts 2:42 says, "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Verses 46 and 7 tells us what their commitment to Lord produced, "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number (that is the church) day by day those who were being saved."

A spiritually devoted faith is healthy and will attract others. The Lord Jesus taught us in Matthew 5:13 to 16 that, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Does anyone know you're a Christian? Can they tell by the life that you live and the words you speak that your faith matters to you? If you call yourself a Christian but live and talk like a pagan, then your behavior will speak louder than your claim to be Christian. Now instead of supporting the cause of Christ, you'll a shame the name of Christ. You'll not be able to convert anyone to Christ when your life says that you aren't fully converted yourself. Are you the kind of Christian that others admire and wish they could be like you? Are you the kind of Christian that others would seek you out to pray for them or to ask you a Bible question? The most wonderful person in the world today is a spiritually mature Christian who loves God and loves people.

Hypocrisy and compromise keep people from following Christ. Harsh words, anger, bad attitudes, immoral behavior, and a lack of love do harm to the name and cause of Christ. Paul reminded the Jewish Christians how the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because they were transgressing God's law (Romans 2 and verse 24). Paul said in Titus 2:6 to 8, "Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us."

When we think about it, first, the early disciples devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine. They knew that what you believe comes from the One Whom you believe. Christians hold fast to the gospel. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15 verses 1 and 2, "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain." Now early Christians believed and took their stand on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If the apostles' teaching had not mattered, they wouldn't have devoted themselves to teaching it daily. Doctrine matters, because God wanted us to know all the truth. There are many religious falsehoods being spread across the globe, and we need the apostles' doctrine to know what is true and also spot what is not true. Christians obey the truth not a half-truth or a false gospel. Romans 6:17 to 18 says, "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." Now their heartfelt obedience to a strict form of teaching led them to salvation, where God freed them from sin and made them His servants.

1 Peter 1 verses 22 to 23 reminds us that we are born again by the eternal word of God, when we obey the truth. He says, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." Now half a gospel will not save us, and substitutes for the standard form will not lead to eternal life.

Paul told Timothy to stick to what he knows is true. He said in 1 Timothy 4 and verse 16, "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." Now Paul wanted this same truth to be taught down through the generations. And so Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 2, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, (you) entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Now what we believe affects our relationship with God and our salvation. If we leave the truth and we turn to a lie, like the Israelites did when they worshiped idols, we can lose our relationship with God and our salvation.

Second, the early church also devoted themselves to fellowship. They wanted to be together as often as they could to encourage each other and to worship God. The Hebrew writer said to some Christians who had grown dull in Hebrews 10:23 to 25 and he says to them, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

Now many Christians who were once faithful to attend worship have gotten into the habit of watching religious television or videos at home, even though they can still easily attend worship. Now worshiping at home is not assembling together with the saints. Oh it may be watching them assemble but you're not assembling. Now television and videos are not a substitute for in person assembling. We gather for fellowship to encourage one another to love and good works. And you can't do that while sitting at home. You need your fellow Christians to strengthen you and help you grow in faith and love for the Lord and for others. And when you quit worshiping at church, you're quitting on the Lord Jesus.

Colossians 1:21 to 23 says, "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister." Now the promises of Christ contain an "if"! Devoted Christians must remain devoted to the Lord and not moved from their faith and hope.

Third, the early church devoted themselves to the breaking of bread. Now this phrase is not talking about church dinners, where they feed each other. This passage is talking about the Lord's Supper. Now Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, on the night before He was crucified. And when Paul went to Troas, he stayed there seven days. Acts 20 and verse 7 says, "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight." Now the early church met every Lord's Day, the first day of the week to observe the Lord's Supper.

Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 11:23 to 26, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this,

as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

Now the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the Lord's body and blood. And Christians pause as they eat to remember the sacrifice of Christ's body on the cross and the blood He shed to forgive our sins. Now it is a sacred time of quiet examination. We want to observe this Supper with the right mind and in the right way. Christians partake of the Lord's Supper or communion each Lord's Day, the first day of the week. Thankful to the Lord, they discipline themselves so that they will not forget what Jesus did on the cross.

Fourth, the early Christians devoted themselves to prayer. Romans 12:12 says to Christians be "devoted to prayer." How often do you pray to the Father in heaven? When was the last time that you really took time to pray? Do you set regular times to pray? 1 Thessalonians 5:16 to 18 says, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Now Paul didn't want the Thessalonians to forget about praying to God. Some Christians go weeks and months without praying at all. The Lord Jesus teaches us that we ought to pray at all times and not lose heart (Luke 18 verse 1). Now God answers our prayers in His time and His way, because He knows what is best for us.

The more you pray, the more you know how much you need to pray! You need that close connection with God. Paul was a great preacher, but he said in Colossians 4:2 to 4, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak."

Devotion to Christ means living the Christian life to the fullest. We love, we serve, and we devote ourselves to the Lord and to His ways. Paul said in Galatians 2 verse 20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." Because we are in Christ, we keep away from sin; we love and pray for all; we strive to do good to all; and we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to all who will hear it.

1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." We know our service to Christ has eternal value and makes a difference. Paul urges us in Colossians 3:23 to 24 that, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve." We know the Lord loves us and blesses our every effort for good when we devote ourselves fully to Him. Oh I hope you'll do that. Let's pray together.

Father we're thankful that Jesus our Lord devoted Himself fully to us by shedding His blood and dying upon a cross. Help us to be devoted and to give ourselves fully and freely to You in everything. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

2 Thessalonians 1:11 to 12 says, "To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." Oh I hope and pray the Christian life that you are living now will glorify God and you will be glorified in Christ. Will the Lord count you worthy of your calling? Have you lived in such a way as to show your gratitude for what the Lord has done for you?

I fear many Christians have ceased to care about the Lord's sacrifice on the cross for their sins. They've forgotten Judgment Day is coming, and God will hold them accountable if they've forsaken Him and have stopped gathering with the saints. I fear many have bought into a lie about when and how they're saved. They've forgotten the first gospel sermon in Acts 2:38 that tells people to "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

I tell you if you wish to be forgiven, repent. That's a real change of heart leading to a change of ways. You leave sin and turn to the ways of Christ. And be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Baptism is an immersion in water not a sprinkling of a baby but the action of a penitent believer. And that's when our sins are forgiven and washed away (Acts 22 verse 16). Now once you've become a child of God, you must remain faithful to the Lord and live the Christian life in sincerity and truth. Your love must continue all the way to the end.

Well we hope that today's study about devoted Christianity has encouraged you to grow spiritually and to be more faithful to the Lord. If you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map of churches that are in your area at www.searchtv.org. Now you can watch SEARCH on YouTube as well! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" on YouTube and be sure to like the programs you watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you show God your love and devotion by worshiping at church. Oh you need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, we try to here for you every week. So keep searching God's Word with us, tell a friend about this program. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from our hearts. It's from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.