

## Reminders—

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing health battles or trials and our brethren who are travelling. (*As for me, I will call upon God, and the LORD shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice. Psalm 55:16-17*)

The men meet on the first Sunday of the month to discuss our work and duties. There is a sign-up sheet at the back for items needing their attention.

### **We need your help—**

Are you willing to help prepare the Lord's supper for one month? Sign-up!  
Are you willing to help keep various Scriptures on our signboard, out by the road, for one month? Sign-up!  
- Sign-up sheets are posted on the bulletin board at the back

Our articles appear in *Arkansas Weekly* every other week (February 13, 27). Often, past and current articles are available at our website. If you use the internet, check our website from time to time to see what is new, both so you can learn and also so you can refer friends there for further study of the topics found there. We're paying for the newspaper articles and website—let's maximize their use!

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# The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

February 17, 2013

[WWW.QVCOC.COM](http://WWW.QVCOC.COM)

## ***BALANCING DUTY AND DEVOTION***

*Kyle Pope*

**Question:** *“Why do you worship God?”* **Answer generally considered acceptable:** *“Because I love God and want to please Him.”* **Answer generally considered unacceptable:** *“Because it is my duty as a child of God.”*

Sometimes we tend to view it that things done out of duty and obligation are less sincere, but deeds done from devotion and affection are genuine. On the surface this sounds valid but when it comes down to the application of this thinking it may not hold true.

Who is truly the devoted father? Is it the man who lavishes attention upon his children when he feels tender kindness towards them, but then refuses to provide for their needs when he feels tired or frustrated? The loving father is the man who struggles to give them what is needed both in times of tenderness and times of frustration.

Who is the faithful employee? The one who is productive and responsible when he finds joy and satisfaction in his work, but lazy and negligent when he feels (what we sometimes call) “burnout?” Obviously, the best employee is one whose commitment to his job is consistent during the “up” times as well as when he grows tired of his job.

The Bible teaches both duty and devotion as valid motivations for our service to God. The greatest commandment is to —“...love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength...” (Mark 12:30, NKJV). This is devotion! Yet, notice how the wise man ends the book of Ecclesiastes — “...hear the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man” (12:13). Certainly, we could not say that this reverent obedience is only acceptable when it comes from the stirrings of tender love within our heart. Our heavenly Father is pleased when we choose to do

His will at times when we feel emotionally moved to obedience but also at those times when we do it even though we don't have the same emotional stirrings we might at other times.

In all things Jesus is set forth as our example of how life is to be lived. What do we learn from His service to God? Certainly He is the perfect example of devotion to God, however, there were clearly times when He acted out of a sense of duty rather than a joyful delight in the activity that obedience demanded. For example, John 12:27 relates Jesus' dread of the cross. The text reads — **“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.”** No devotion is seen here, unless we realize the fact that it was devotion to God that led Him to deny His own feelings in order to fulfill the Father's. Remember, no one enjoys abuse and persecution, but He submitted to what the Father demanded nonetheless (Matthew 26:39).

This tendency to devalue good deeds done out of duty is a sign of our times. The ungodly rationalize ending their marriages by claiming they don't "feel" what they once did. Mothers collaborate with doctors to execute their unborn children appealing to the defense that they are not "ready" to take care a child.

When it comes to our service to God we must avoid justifying our simple failure to obey the Lord's instructions by our lack of the proper devotion. Brethren over the years have allowed this kind of thinking to keep them from giving as they should, observing the Lord's Supper, sharing the gospel with others, worshiping faithfully, being constant in prayer, and serving others. While we should always strive to have a strong joy and devotion in our service to God we mustn't fall into the snare of thinking that when we don't feel as we should it is better not to act at all.

I wonder if those times when we do what we should regardless of our personal feelings are the times when the Lord is the most pleased with us. It is at those times we are giving up ourselves, and giving over to God. True worship requires balancing both duty and devotion in our approach to God. Let's remember — **“...This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments...”** (I John 5:3).

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### ***PSALM 13***

*How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O LORD my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him"; lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved. But I*

*have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me.*

-- Do you ever feel the way the psalmist did in the beginning of this psalm? When you do, then as the psalmist did, remember God's past mercy on you and others, both in the Bible and in your life. Then, even in hardship, your heart will rejoice.

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### ***FORSAKE ALL*** (Jesse Flowers)

Jesus taught the multitudes in Luke 14:25-35 about the cost and commitment of discipleship. In verse 33, He declared unto those gathered that day: "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

The apostles were sent by Jesus into the world to preach the gospel in order to "make disciples" (Matt. 28:19-20). When you and I obeyed the saving gospel of Christ, we willingly (Luke 9:23) became His disciples. Discipleship, as it pertains to the Lord at least, involves absolute loyalty and commitment. This includes family, ourselves, others, and the "things" of this life.

I'm made to wonder sometimes what twisted and distorted view some of my brethren have of discipleship today. Perhaps it's a matter of never fully understanding, appreciating, and accepting the teaching of Christ on this vital matter. Whatever the case may be, I know that our Lord finds it unacceptable (Rev. 3:16).

How committed to Christ are Christians today? Are we really willing to forsake all for Him?

1) Do you think some brethren would forsake all when they assemble only a 1/3 of the time with the church (Heb. 10:25)?

2) Is there evidence that many saints would forsake all when they are not even workers in the local church (I Cor. 15:58)?

3) Would we really be willing to forsake all for Jesus when we rarely mention Him to our friends and neighbors (Mk. 16:15)?

4) Do you think we would forsake all when we are not willing to forsake the TV in order to study the Bible more (2 Tim. 2:15)?

5) Would we really forsake all for Him when we quietly keep our faith and convictions to ourselves, rather than risk the possibility of ridicule and "persecution" (I Peter 4:14, 16; 2 Tim. 3:12)?

Could it be that we are presently a far cry from the kind of disciples that Jesus expects and demands? Let us learn and practice total commitment to our Savior, and be willing to forsake all!

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