

christian

WORKER



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

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NEEDED: FAITHFUL SERVANTS!

Mike Bonner

The church of Christ is so blessed to have faithful men and women to glean from in the word of God. It has been men and women of God who have given us powerful examples of courage, tenacity, and service to God and man. When considering being a faithful servant today, some questions arise, such as "what is a faithful servant?" "What is required to be a faithful servant of God?" "Who can be one?" "How can service be accomplished?" "Why is it needed?" Hopefully we can answer these great questions and seek to increase our faith and service to the Lord, His people and the society we abide in to the glory of God (Matt. 5:13-16).

What is a Faithful Servant? What is required from them as servants of God? A faithful servant is one who is trustworthy to the Master. Paul said, "moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1Cor. 4:2). This one pays attention to details. Jesus stated, "he that is faithful in little is faithful in much...". He on another occasion, would also commend for their faithfulness in little things (Luke 16:10; 19:17). A faithful servant today looks like Pricilla and Aquila or Phebe and Philemon, just common persons in Christ who are working out their salvation (Phil. 2:12). Furthermore, faithful servanthood is seen in men like, Fortunatus, Achaicus and Stephans, for Paul said they refreshed his spirit in their addiction to the ministry, in other words, their service (1 Cor. 16:15-18).

Who can be a servant of God? This question is good for many reasons. Everyone who is in faithful standing with Christ can be a servant of His. Those who cause

divisions and offences contrary to the teachings of Christ are not servants of God. Paul stated clearly, "for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly..." (Rom. 16:18). Therefore, anyone in Christ who is not contrary to the will of God can fulfill the services of Christ as said by Him, "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matt. 25:40). The question we must ask ourselves as Christians is, "am I willing to deny myself, take up my cross and follow Him" (Matt. 16:24). If the answer is yes, there is nothing to keep us away from having this attitude,

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"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

THE CHURCH AND ITS SERVANTS

Cody Westbrook

First Timothy chapter four divides neatly into three sections. Verses 1-5 warn Timothy of the reality of false teaching and practice, including asceticism. This points us back to the first chapter, where Paul reminds Timothy of his responsibility to teach sound doctrine and oppose those who would do otherwise. The second section of the chapter, verses 6-11, contain instructions in relation to the context beginning in 2:1. Timothy was to "instruct" or "remind" the brethren of "these things." He was to reject that which was false and hold to that which was good. Finally, verses 12-16 order Timothy in regard to his own spiritual well being. He was to exemplify the doctrine of Christ and give himself completely to the instruction of God's Word.

Throughout this year, the Christian Worker has been dedicated to studying through 1 Timothy with the goal of applying its content to the church as a whole. You may be wondering how 1 Timothy 4 contributes to that purpose. The answer is found in verse 6. Paul wrote, "If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ..." The term "minister" is not the word normally applied to preachers. It is the word *diakonos*, which is also translated "deacon" and generally refers to a servant. Though he was a gospel preacher, Timothy was a Christian and a servant of God, just the same as every other New Testament Christian. In view of this, this chapter contains 6 qualities that should be found in every faithful servant of God, regardless of their role in the church.

First, a faithful servant feeds of God's Word. Paul said,

If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of

faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed (1 Tim. 4:6).

In fulfilling his duties as a servant of God, Timothy was to engage in constant training and nutrition from God's Word. Tragically, too many servants are spiritually malnourished, and malnourishment—lack of knowledge—results in destruction (Hos. 4:6). We ought to have the attitude of Jeremiah who said, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart..." (Jer. 15:16). The Word of God should be our delight and we should meditate on it day and night (Ps. 1:2). How great is your desire to be filled with God's Word? How often do you feast upon it? How can we serve the Lord faithfully if we do not know His will?

Second, a faithful servant excels in spiritual athletics. Timothy was instructed to "reject profane and old wives' fables and exercise yourself toward godliness" (1 Tim. 4:7-8). He was to reject religiously bankrupt and silly myths and vigorously pursue a life that was totally consecrated to God for His glory. Spiritual training benefits us in this life and into eternity. We are athletes running a race for life (Heb. 12:1-3; 1 Cor. 9:24-27) and like any other athlete, it takes time and attention to perfect our craft—it takes dedication and sacrifice (Mark 10:29-30)! Do you invest time in spiritual athletics? Do prayer, study, worship, and service occupy a high place on your priority list? How could you serve God effectly without them?

Third, a faithful servant works hard. First Timothy 4:9-10 mentions laboring and suffering because of our faith in the living God. These two words are rich in meaning. "Labor" refers to hard, manual labor (cf. 1 Tim. 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:6; etc.) and suffering refers

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to agony and the struggle of an athletic contest (cf. 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Thess. 2:2). Servants of God wear themselves out in His service and agonize through difficulty all because God is alive! We "...believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1 Pet. 1:21). Are you laboring and agonizing in His service, to His glory?

Fourth, a servant is a good example.

Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity (1 Pet. 4:12).

Timothy was instructed to be a good example of godly living in order to silence his critics. Similarly, we all have our critics and a great way to silence them is to practice what we preach. Peter referred to this very concept in 1 Peter 2:11-12 by saying,

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the gentiles...

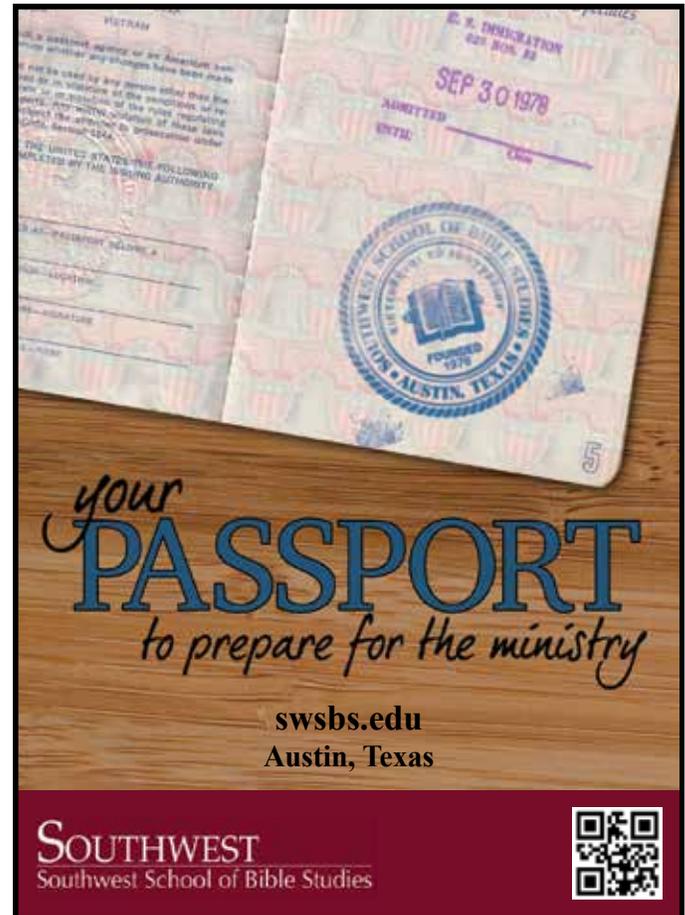
Servants must be mindful of the example they put forth. Are you practicing that which you proclaim?

Fifth, a servant shows spiritual growth. Timothy was instructed to give himself entirely to the things of God "that your progress may be evident to all" (1 Tim. 4:13-15). "Progress" is a military term that describes soldiers who travel ahead of the troops and clear away obstacles along the path. Timothy was to give attention to teaching and working so that his spiritual growth would be evident to all and encourage those around him to grow as well. What about you? Can those around you see your progress (Phil. 2:15-16)? Does it encourage them to grow as well?

Sixth, a servant of God saves people. First Timothy 4:16 says, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." Timothy was to pay close attention to what he did and taught. In so doing, people would be saved—including himself! A faithful servant should constantly be mindful of why he serves. What is the ultimate aim? The Christian's aim for service should be to glorify God now and in eternity (cf. Matt. 6:1-4). Why do you serve? What is your goal? Remember, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise" (Pro. 11:30).

As we strive to be faithful servants of God, it is good for us to meditate on these principles and examine our lives to see how they can be better applied.

CW



THE REALITY OF FALSE TEACHING

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

Bill Burk

Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy for the purpose of educating his protégé regarding proper church conduct (1 Tim. 3:14-15). The church cannot behave itself properly without the truth of the gospel (1 Tim. 3:16). The big picture of First Timothy involves the church properly preaching God's message (1 Tim. 1); with each member living out his or her proper role in light of its teaching (1 Tim. 2-3). The preacher of the gospel must take heed to himself and

the doctrine for his soul's safety and that of his hearers (1 Tim. 4). The word of God must serve as the anchor for both relationships with others and ministry generally (1 Tim. 5-6). The truth of the gospel saves (Rom. 1:16-17); but where truth shines, error looms as well.

Some brethren act as if God's accepts any teaching as long as the one teaching does so with sincerity. Good brethren may differ over some items that in the long run have no impact on eternity, yet regarding certain truths (Phil. 4:4-6), we cannot afford to capitulate. Paul addresses such in 1 Timothy 4:1-5 as he speaks of the reality of false teaching.

First, the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, warns of the reality of false teaching (1a). In the latter days, that is, the time between the first and second coming of the Lord, Paul states some will depart from the faith. The New Testament teaches this principle in abundance (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 2 Thess. 2:1-17; 1 John. 4:1-2; 2 Pet. 2:1-3, et. al). Timothy needed to watch for this trend and brethren must remain vigilant and informed as well that they might hold to the gospel while at the same time avoiding error and the condemnation it brings (Gal. 1:6-9). As long as the need exists to recognize and obey the truth (John 8:31-32; 1 Pet. 1:22; Acts 2:38-42); the reality of false teaching will remain and thus the need to stand against it (Jude 3). May we heed the Spirit's warning in this regard.

Second, hypocrisy and habitual sin lead to the reality of false teaching (1b-2). The doctrine Paul describes, like all false doctrine, has its source in the demonic. Jesus described the Devil as liar (John 8:44); and those who teach contrary to God's mandates do so because they have chosen to listen to Satan and his henchmen (2 Cor. 11:5-15) rather than God. The longer the unfaithful persist in sin and turn a deaf ear to truth (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-5), the more they harden their hearts (Matt. 15:8-9). As flesh seared by a branding iron loses feeling, so do those who continue to preach and live falsehoods. Timothy demonstrated a sincere, or unfeigned, faith (1 Tim. 1:19; 2 Tim. 1:3-5) and the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:19-24) and because of these things, he remained faithful, unlike those Paul describes in these verses.

Third, making rules for God, while ignoring those he has made, leads to the reality of false teaching (3-5). These false teachers taught that to reach a higher level of spirituality than Christians would need to remain unmarried and avoid certain foods.

Some believe Paul describes Judaizing teachers who mixed their misunderstanding of the Law (1:3-11) with gnostic philosophy (cf. Col. 2:16-23). In so doing, they made rules that God did not make. God fashioned marriage in the Garden (Gen. 2:18-25); and the Hebrews writer, inspired of the Spirit, pronounced it honorable among all (Heb. 13:4). The Jews observed certain dietary laws, yet along with the rest of Moses' legislation, Jesus nailed them to the cross (Eph. 2:14-18; Col. 2:14-15). Jesus taught that an evil heart defiles a man, not food (Matt. 15:18). Paul states that the Christian remains free to eat what he wishes as long as he does so with thanksgiving (4; 1 Thess. 5:18;). Therefore, these false teachers Paul mentions were making laws for God. No one has the right to add to or take away from God's word (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Pro. 30:6; 1 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22:18-19). False teachers still excel in handling the word of God deceitfully, speaking presumptuously things they have no business declaring (2 Cor. 4:2); beware of the reality of false teaching.

In the last chapter of 1st Timothy, Paul states that, motivated by greed, false teachers will refuse to consent to healthy doctrine, even the words of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6:3-4). He urges Timothy to separate from them (1 Tim. 6:5). Christians who want to please God and dwell with him need to do the same (2 John 9-11). To do so demands that the Christian understand the difference between true teaching and false, proving all things and holding fast that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21). Paul did not ignore the reality of false teaching and neither should anyone who desires to serve God well (1 Tim. 4:6).

CW

A GOOD MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST

1 TIMOTHY 4:6-10

Daniel F. Cates

Paul told Timothy that Timothy would "be a good minister of Jesus Christ" if Timothy would "put the brethren in remembrance of these things" (1 Tim. 4:6). To appreciate 1 Timothy 4:6-10, one should ask, what are the things that needed to be remembered by the brethren. The simple answer, and sufficient for the scope of entering this section

of Scripture, is that there was order to be kept in the organization of the church (1 Tim. 3:1-15), that there was a revealed mystery involving Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 3:16), that there would be religious division which included, among other things, asceticism (1 Tim. 4:1-3), but that the creation was good for man if man would be grateful for it (1 Tim. 4:4-5). One could argue more or less was intended by Paul, but these points seem to flow into this passage. In brief, Timothy would remind the brethren of the organization of the church, the deity of Jesus, the threat to the church, and the providence of God. Timothy's being a good minister would mean he had followed the Truth in which Paul had trained him. The word "minister" is not one meaning the preacher; rather this is the word from which deacon comes, the Greek *diakonos*, which means a servant; accordingly, then, all servants of God would do well to be so familiar with Truth that they could be such good ministers as Timothy was (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

To be this good minister, Timothy also would need to "refuse profane and old wives' fables," that is, to reject that which was "irreverent" and "silly" (ESV). Such attributes are not harmonious with Truth! Many false doctrines, like those of 1 Timothy 4:1-3, are obviously wickedness though they have many gullible adherents (1 Tim. 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 4:3-4; Tit. 1:14; 3:9). To be able to avoid such, Timothy had to train himself. He had to "exercise" himself "unto godliness" (1 Tim. 4:7; cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; 4:5). The word "exercise" is translated from the Greek word from which the English word gymnasium has come; it is *gumnadzo*. Think of the effort exerted at the gym; that same amount of mental effort should be exerted "unto godliness." Paul explained why in the next verse:

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (1 Tim. 4:8).

The "little" Paul spoke of regarding bodily, or physical, exercise was just that: Such exercise only benefitted the body, the physical aspect of man. Godliness on the other hand has benefits both for the physical man and the spiritual man [one will note that Paul spoke of his own exercising in Acts 24:16 (using a synonym of *gumnadzo*) and that the Hebrews writer spoke of the exercised senses of mature Christians in Hebrews 5:14 and their benefitting through chastening in Hebrews 12:11]. One who is godly will generally have a better life

than one who is worldly; far more than that, though, the godly has the greatest benefit--and one that even the most physically fit of the worldly does not have at all: Eternal life! Timothy needed to put forth the effort to exercise godliness, and so must all Christians today.

"This is a faithful [this word, *pistos*, is elsewhere translated "true"] saying" or, literally, "faithful is the word," is a favorite saying of Paul in writing to Timothy and Titus. This shows that the associated message was worthy to be trusted. That "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1) was worthy of being trusted. That "if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him..." (2 Tim. 2:11) was also worthy to be trusted. Likewise worthy to be trusted was the necessity "that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works" (Tit. 3:8). Twice, Paul added that something not only was worthy of trust, but also "worthy of all acceptance." "That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15) was worthy of trust and acceptance. So was what Paul had said concerning "godliness [being] profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8-9).

"Therefore" is a small expression never to be overlooked. Paul here says that it was because the profitability of godliness both now and eternally is a trustworthy and acceptance-worthy saying, that he not only worked but also was willing to "suffer reproach" (1 Tim. 4:10). This was trustworthy because God Himself is trustworthy being alive and effectual at saving men. That God is alive is accepted by those who would obey Him (Jos. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:36; Jer. 10:10; Dan. 6:26; Acts 14:15; et al). The question of this verse is how is God "the Saviour of all men"? First, in His sending Jesus to die for all (John 3:16), God was *potentially* the Savior of all men, but all would not accept the salvation (Acts 13:46); second, He is *actually* the Savior of all those who would be saved; that is, all of those who would obey--there would be no other means of salvation (Acts 4:12).

For Timothy to be a good minister, he would need to share this wonderful and worthy message with others. Any Christian today can share this same wonderful and worthy message and so be "a good minister of Jesus Christ"!

CW

A GOOD EXAMPLE

1 TIMOTHY 4:11-16

John Haffner

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy providing encouragement and instruction. This was to benefit not just the young preacher, but all who would come to believe on the name of Jesus and actively engage in the work of the church. The inspired Apostle stressed the great need for sound doctrine. In this sense, “sound” signifies what is healthy and beneficial for mankind. What greater benefit for our eternal souls could we find than the Gospel of Jesus Christ! In 1 Timothy chapter 4, Paul relayed the real danger of false teachers. These under the influence of Satan proclaimed an unsound, unhealthy, false doctrine. Such teaching must be resisted and refuted by those who devote themselves to the Lord Christ. To this end, Paul reinvigorated Timothy and all Christians to provide a good example, teaching and practicing the truth.

Timothy was told to command and teach these things (1 Tim. 4:11). In this regard, Paul has set himself as a good example as he follows the Lord (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17). Besides living the example, Paul has also given careful instruction to his true son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:1-2) so that he may know how to conduct himself in the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15). If we today are part of the body, then we will command and teach the truth of the gospel and charge that no other doctrine be admitted (1 Tim. 1:3; Gal. 1:6-9). Obviously, Christians hold no authority in themselves to command. We instead have an obligation from God to announce His Word and His authority. A good example in the church must faithfully proclaim the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37).

Timothy was told to practice these things in his own life (1 Tim. 4:12). The church needs good examples in all areas to carefully follow Christ (1 Tim. 4:6). Godliness is profitable for all things (1 Tim. 4:8). The phrase “let no one despise your youth” has been widely misused. Many want to express how people can and will be used by God even at a young age. You don’t have to be old to be a good preacher or a good Christian. This sentiment is true, but Paul’s point is actually a challenge to Timothy. He charges the young preacher to behave not as a foolish youth, but with appropriate maturity. He must act in such a way so that no person would have reason to despise him and, by extension,

the message (Rom. 2:17-24). Paul communicates the same idea elsewhere in the New Testament (Titus 2:15). Many Christians have overpowered their good message with their evil lifestyle. A good example in the church must choose wisdom full of good fruits, not lies and hypocrisy (Jas. 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:2).

Timothy was told to give attention to reading, exhortation, and doctrine (1 Tim. 4:13). Diligent study is critical, not just for the preacher, but for all who seek to work for God (2 Tim. 2:15). The term “reading” could have reference not just to private study, but also to the public reading of Scripture in the assembly. In far too many places, those who claim to be heralds of truth are providing only pep talks and self-help speeches (with little to no Bible included). Man’s wisdom is not a sufficient answer to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1). If we truly desire to build up the body of Christ, then we need the doctrine of Christ! Preach God’s Word to stir up God’s people to love and good works (2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 10:23-25). A good example in the church must be deeply familiar with the message he practices and preaches.

Timothy was told to use the gift, the miraculous ability, which he was given (1 Tim. 4:14). The use of this gift would confirm the truth of his preaching (Mark 16:17-20; John 20:30-31; Acts 14:3). Comparing 1 Timothy 4:14 with 2 Timothy 1:6, we find that Paul AND the elders laid hands on Timothy. As a true apostle, Paul could transfer the miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18; Rom 1:11). Timothy had the gift THROUGH the laying on of Paul’s hands, but he had it also WITH the laying on of the elders’ hands. In both the Old and New Testament times, leaders sent someone out into a particular work with the laying on of hands (Num. 27:22-23; Acts 13:2-3). The elders sent Timothy forth with their best wishes as a preacher of God’s Word. This type of support is still vital today. Although miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit ended with the completion of the New Testament (1 Cor. 13:8-10), we should acknowledge we’ve been blessed with many natural gifts, talents, and abilities by God. A good example in the church will use blessings to be a blessing.

Timothy was told to meditate on and continue in the truth in order to save himself and his listeners (1 Tim. 4:15-16). Contrary to the practice of some, meditation is not the emptying of the mind. Rather, it

is to attend something carefully, to have the truth of sound doctrine revolve around in and fill the mind as you ponder God's Word (Ps. 119:97). Timothy was to meditate, to give himself, and to be totally absorbed in God's Word and the work of the kingdom. Only in this way could he take heed, or properly pay attention to himself and the doctrine. The chapter begins by telling of those who depart from the faith and ends by telling of those who will continue in sound teaching. We know which of the two categories will be saved and which will be lost. A good example in the church must persevere in the teachings of Christ for salvation!

CW



continued from page 1

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable unto His death (Phil. 3:9-11).

How can the service of the Lord be accomplished? When considering the work of the local congregation, she is to be fervent (Rom. 12:11) in EVANGELISM, EDIFICATION and BENEVOLENCE. However, this article is not to exhaust those important topics. Yet, here is the point, as members of the church of Christ, we must find our strengths and talents and work within those and get better in those things we're weak in. For example, Barnabas was a great encourager and strove in that area (Acts 4:36ff). Philemon was very hospitable. Aquila and Pricilla were a great husband and wife team in the Lord (Acts 19). Epaphroditus was strong willed and loving (Phil. 2). Tryphena and Tryphosa were just laborers to the church and

were commended by Paul for such (Rom. 16:12).

When considering the service we can accomplish for the Lord in the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15), it requires us having the desire and receiving the encouragement to work out that good in which God begun in us at baptism (Phil. 1:6). We can further accomplish this work of service by teaching our children the value of service to the Lord and how it's paramount in the life of a Christian (Eph. 6:1-4). Our families must see the value of the soul, therefore preparing oneself to be an influencer and instructor of righteousness in the area of soul winning (Matt. 16:26ff; 1 Pet. 3:15; Pro. 11:30). Also, to accomplish the role and privilege of being a faithful servant, we have to see the need to build up in the most holy faith (Jude 20). We can do so much when we ban together for the cause of God, thus bringing Him glory in all things.

In accomplishing our role as servants of the Lord in the local work, we must be willing to receive criticism. This author has learned that zeal is not always enough to be the best servant the Lord can have. Those in Rome were told how their zeal wasn't according to knowledge (Rom. 10:1ff). One can want to serve the elderly in the congregation or even want to aid one who is spiritually ill (as Gal. 6:1 states), yet if they're not educated about the elderly Christian and their situation, they could make the situation worse and even cause a rupture in fellowship. Furthermore, if one is spiritually ill and suffering with fornication and/or illegal substances, if you're not cognizant, you can personally get harmed in the situation. We have to walk in wisdom and always communicate with the eldership or someone in the know for the greatest possible outcome. It is about God being glorified.

In conclusion, let's do our part in being faithful to the cause of Christ and His beloved church and watch the beauty of Jesus be seen in you as the song says. Our faithful service will result in the Lord saying, "well done, thy good and FAITHFUL SERVANT..." Our devotion to the Lord and His work will cause our works to follow us, meaning, the things we have done in this body will benefit those who come after us for years to come and the Lord will not forget those great works (Rev. 14:13; Heb. 6:10). May we always realize how valuable faithful service is and how our faithfulness will help our brethren in their spiritual walk as well. Let God be true.

CW



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