

# Your Faith Is In Your Hands

**Introduction.** On a warm autumn afternoon in 1999, Anna Flores, thirty-seven, was walking with her child in downtown Chicago. Without warning a window from the twenty-ninth floor of the CNA building fell to the ground, striking Flores and killing her.

The tragedy was heightened a week later when CNA officials admitted they had known the window had been broken for months. They hadn't fixed it because other building projects were considered more of a priority.

In a public building, negligence has serious consequences. In 2002, CNA settled with the Flores family for eighteen million dollars. The window problem could've been fixed for 3.5 million dollars. But far more importantly, Flores' husband said, "I'm glad this is over, but I don't see too many things to celebrate," he said. "My daughters are still going to be missing their mother's love."

Spiritual negligence also has great consequences. The Bible teaches that we are responsible for ourselves (Romans 12:1-2). It gives us requirements that God places on us and then it leaves us to choose or to reject the path that leads to God.

Faith is essential to salvation (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6), and you and I are equally charged and required by God to nurture our faith in our hearts like a farmer who plants seed in the ground and looks forward to the harvest. He can't expect other farmers in the area to work his fields. He has to do it himself. When he finds weeds, he has to eliminate them so his crops can grow.

Consider the state of your faith this morning as we look at five major responsibilities every Christian has. Has your diligence produced strong faith, or has your negligence produced weak faith?

## ***I. You're Responsible For Your Allegiance***

- A. Samuel divinely revealed the key to developing strong faith in God (1 Samuel 12:23-24; cp. Deuteronomy 10:12; Joshua 24:14-15).
  1. Faith in God requires that you understand faith as the "good and right way." Surely everyone wants to walk in the "good and right way."
  2. Faith in God comes easily to those who "consider what great things He has done for you."
- B. Only the hardest and most selfish heart could turn from the Creator who has lavished them with so much love and blessings (Psalm 116:12).
  1. God has given us so many wonderful spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3) and physical blessings (Matthew 5:45; 7:11). He's willing to bless us beyond all we can imagine because of His love for us (Ephesians 3:21; 1 Peter 5:7).
  2. A husband should love his wife when he considers all she has done for him (Proverbs 31:27-29). A wife should love her husband when she looks around and sees all of the evidence of his love for her.
  3. A child should love and adore her parents because it was they who fed, clothed, comforted, guided, instructed, supported, and prayed for her. Only the hard and selfish heart would overlook all that one's family does for her.

## **II. You're Responsible For Your Growth**

- A. You can't put your faith in the hands of any other person. It's no one else's responsibility to grow your faith. No one outside the body of Christ has any vested interest in your faith growing. Even Christians can't force your faith to grow, no matter how badly they may want it. You've got to take responsibility.
- B. Christians have a duty to help one another grow. We teach, admonish, and encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:14). When needed, we discipline one another (2 Thessalonians 3:6). But in the end, my faith is my duty to receive, develop, and fuel to maturity.
- C. In spite of his folly, Solomon knew the secret to shielding the heart so that growth could occur. He recognized it was a personal matter that you have to work at. And he tells us in detail what is involved (Proverbs 4:23-27). Paul was invested in helping his readers grow their faith too (Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:14-15). There are many people and things that can distract us from the goal of the growth of our faith.

## **III. You're Responsible For Your Diet**

- A. We all know that if we don't come to the table and eat every day then we'll get sick and eventually die. The same is true spiritually.
  - 1. The Bible prescribes the diet we are all supposed to hunger and thirst for — God, Christ, and the word (Matthew 5:6; John 4:14; 6:35, 58; 7:37).
  - 2. This is what our diet should be every day. In the local church, great efforts are taken to assure that every member has access to the truth of the Bible.
- B. Snacking can be dangerous to your health.
  - 1. People who eat chips, French fries, chicken nuggets, and drink sodas all day have little appetite for good food.
  - 2. In the matter of developing your personal faith in God, "snacking" would be sampling the delicate morsels of denominationalism and religious books by popular authors.
  - 3. Digging into the popular doctrines of men might seem enticing, but in reality, all it can do is dampen your appetite for godliness.
- C. Go to the right source for a good diet (Romans 10:17). The only source in true religion is the spoken word of Christ:
  - 1. "Teaching them to observe [what] I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20).
  - 2. "He who has My commandments and keeps them" (John 14:21).
  - 3. "My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:35).
  - 4. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16).
  - 5. "Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them" (Matthew 7:24).
  - 6. "The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).
- D. After fixating on the words and doctrine of Christ, pursue your development with them using all of your energy and diligence (2 Peter 1:5-11).

## **IV. You're Responsible For Your Companionship**

- A. God commanded "selective friendship" for His people since the beginning (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). He instructed the Jews to refrain from marrying among the Gentiles, or they would lead the people of God to idolatry.

- B. Solomon is the perhaps the worst example of this problem. He proves to us beyond any doubt that God was absolutely right (1 Kings 11:1-8). The New Testament continues the warnings of “selective friendship” (1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Corinthians 6:14).
- C. Remember that you and I are not required to be friends with everyone.
  - 1. In fact, the scriptures make it plain that we need to be careful who we choose as our close companions.
  - 2. I need to have the self-awareness to know that people who act sinfully in many different ways are going to weaken me spiritually.
  - 3. I also need the honesty to admit that I’m no better than anyone else (Luke 18:13). If Solomon, the wisest man in history could be led astray by his choice of companions, then I can too.
- D. Pick people like Daniel and his friends to be around (Daniel 1:8-17). They put God first and stood for Him at every chance. I can’t imagine what a powerful influence that was to each of them in a pagan country.

#### ***V. You’re Responsible For Your Goals***

- A. In Acts 2:37, the Jews at Pentecost knew they needed to be saved, and made that their goal. They pursued the course charted by Peter to reach that goal. They received his word and were baptized (v. 41).
- B. They then continued in fellowship with the saints (vv. 42-47). While you might do everything you’re supposed to in order to be saved, maybe you struggle when it comes to faithfulness in God’s service.
  - 1. This new year challenges us to become what we’re created to be: A new person conformed to the image of Christ.
  - 2. George Eliot said, “It’s never too late to be what you might have been.” Use this new year to revive your spiritual longings, reinforce your biblical values, and restore your heavenly vision.
- C. Jeremiah 8:20 describes the woeful condition of those who didn’t follow the path to eternal salvation with diligence. Carelessness and idolatry didn’t lead them to God, but to their spiritual destruction.

**Conclusion.** In John 5:6, Jesus asked a man with a long-term infirmity, “Do you want to be made well?” You’re here and that shows the spiritual interest to make a fresh start and refocus your purpose for this new year. This year will likely be a mixture of joys, griefs, and gains. While we make plans, set goals, and seek to move forward, no one knows what problems, challenges, and obstacles lie ahead. Nor do we know what unexpected pleasures, successes, and serendipities await us.

Through it all, the greatest power we possess is the power to choose. You have a responsibility to develop these five areas of your life, and we’re all here supporting you to do that. Let us know if our assistance can help you be more godly in 2022.

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