

# What If Some Were Unfaithful?

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*'What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar' (Romans 3:3-4)*

## **Defectors**

I have friends from my years in church who still call themselves Christians but who have moved away from the true Gospel. Some have embraced mysticism, a pagan storefront for relativism. They'll say that we can never really know about God. Don't force your views on me, I won't force mine on you. Others now view 'healthy religion' as a wisdom tradition, passed down through the ages, that helps you care for your soul! No dying to self, no *'I have been crucified with Christ'* (Galatians 2:20).

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## **Offence**

Others have become offended by orthodox, Christian faith. Talk of sin is 'oppressive'. Just live a life of love and peace. No salvation through Jesus, no lost eternity for sinners who refuse to repent. The battle cry of such is, 'If God is a God of love, would He really condemn [fill-in-the-blank]?' These friends, if they keep their Christian label at all, have reduced the message of Christ to *'Love thy neighbour'*, forgetting that to do this, we must first love the Lord our God, which is done when we obey His commands. (Matthew 22:37-39; John 14:15,21,23)

## **Disagreements**

But just because Christians disagree, it doesn't mean one of them has fallen away. In Scripture we how see Paul and Barnabas fell out over whether or not to take Mark on a ministry trip (Acts 15:39-40). Though they parted ways, both continued to serve Jesus. Later, Paul would write about Mark, *'..he is very useful to me for ministry'* (2 Timothy 4:11). And Paul and Barnabas clearly

continued to value each other and minister in a similar fashion. Seven years later, Paul writes in a friendly tone, '*..are Barnabas and I the only apostles who must work for a living?*' (1 Corinthians 9:6). But Paul and Barnabas' disagreement did not centre on doctrine. Their disagreement came over aspects of ministry. What about when a brother or sister begins to doubt Scripture or turn away from the fundamentals of the faith?

## Faulty Theology

Recently, celebrity Christians have once again taken the spotlight, talking about losing their faith. They are not the first, they will not be the last. There was a moment when Peter the apostle lost his faith. He was the first of the disciples to declare Jesus as the Christ. But when Jesus was arrested, He fell away from faith. Then Peter, who had walked on water, couldn't stand by a fire and admit to knowing the Lord. Why? Because Jesus-in-chains was not the Jesus Peter believed in. When Jesus had spoken of His coming arrest and death, Peter rebuked Him. Peter had seen Him as Christ, but not as the spotless Lamb. Peter's crisis of faith was born of faulty theology. If he had known Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb, the cross would not have been an offence to him.

Are we made in God's image or have we made Him up in ours?

Tozer wrote, '***What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.***' If we shape our theology and doctrine around what we want God to be like, or what we think He should be like, we will fail. But if we hold fast to the Scriptures, meditating on them day and night, whatever we do prospers (Psalm 1:1-3).

Can we stomach the God of the Bible?

Do we approach the Word of God with humility? Are we made in God's image or have we made Him up in ours? Peter's faith was restored when he encountered the risen Jesus. When he accepted that a once-dead, risen Jesus was better than the Jesus of his own manufacture. In that moment, Jesus did not faux-comfort him by talking about God's love for Peter, but rather challenged Peter on his love for God.

God's goodness and faithfulness are never in doubt.

Ours often is.

## What Will Keep Us From Being Unfaithful?

Have we the intestinal fortitude for the Jesus revealed in Scripture? Can we stomach the God of the Bible? During Jesus' ministry on earth, many left Him. Some because they couldn't bear the cost of the call (Matthew 19:21-22), others because they were offended by Jesus' teaching (John 6:53,61,67). Undoubtedly, Christians we know, even church leaders, may fall away. But if our own following of Jesus stands or falls on the faithfulness of other men, then we will certainly stumble too. God has given us leaders, He has called us to be one with His body, but our walk must come from personal conviction, founded on Scripture.

It should not be a surprise when someone who has walked with God walks away. Just

don't let it be you!

It's a cliché, but when a child does something silly, influenced by friends, the parent often asks, 'If they jumped off a cliff would you too?' But it's the same in the church. We know all men are broken. We know all men sin. It should not be a surprise when someone who has walked with God walks away. Just don't let it be you!

John writes, *'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us'* (1 John 2:19). Even after we have reasoned, after we have prayed and begged and pleaded, some will walk away. Perhaps, like Peter, it was their picture of God that was broken; unable to make sense of the experiences they encountered. Perhaps they were offended. Perhaps they couldn't bear the cost. Endurance, faithfulness until the end, is a hallmark of God that He wants to see in us. And it comes with the promise of reward. John continues, *'Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us — eternal life'*. (1 John 2:24-25)