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## Trust In God Yields Responsive Action

We've heard from countless numbers of you over the years about the tension created among your biological relatives as you've wholly committed yourself to living for Jesus as Lord of your life. It's not the authentic *unbelievers* who seem to be the greatest problem, but rather the lukewarm who attend religious services and activities but sense nothing wrong with their compromise with the world's ways of doing things.

Any spiritual conversations that arise between you and them often seem to find you trying to persuade or talk them into obeying God's Word. You're probably encountering in them the stronghold of **Deceit**, especially the symptoms of rationalization and wrong doctrine or misuse of Scripture. Another likely unclean spirit is the stronghold of **Religiosity and Spiritual Lethargy**, with several symptoms that stand out: religious busyness, Bible knowledge without love for God, no spiritual power, and spiritual blindness.

One practice in particular may befuddle you in regard to your lukewarm relatives: their reliance on rationalization. Consider this definition from a biblical perspective: **rationalize** — *to attempt to explain or justify your own or someone else's behavior, actions or attitudes with solely logical, intellectually plausible reasons, even if these do not align with God's Word.*

It pains us to see our absolutely faithful and trustworthy Lord treated with such doubt, and the commands found in His Word so blatantly ignored. Reliance on rationalization is a sin, for the *motive* for rationalizing underlies almost all acts of disobedience to our Lord. And, rationalization is the devil's snare (2 Timothy 2:26) which he uses to entice people to rebel against God.

For example, the Bible makes clear that Adam and Eve were commanded not to eat from a certain tree which God knew would expose them to knowledge of evil. Tragically for us all, Eve listened to the devil and then rationalized, casting aside trust that God knew best, to give way to the temptation to indulge her independence and self-will: ***"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it"*** (Genesis 3:6; see also James 1:13-15). Like Eve, people who draw conclusions through rationalization entrap others into their sin. So guard yourself when you're dealing with people who entice you to eat the fruit of disobedience to God's Word. (See 2 Peter 3:17; 1 Corinthians 16:13,14.)

What, then, is the biblical alternative to rationalizing? TRUST. The Hebrew word for "faith" reflects not mere belief that God exists, but rather **trust in God**. This is an emotional and responsive term emanating from your heart, pregnant with *steadfast reliance on your sovereign Lord. It's a trust in God that produces obedient action.*

[For more on the importance of faith resulting in action, see Lifebyte 26. *Will Jesus Find Faith Within You?*]

To live a life of **trust in God** which is evidenced by **responsive action** means this:

1. You intentionally and prayerfully search the Word of God for His commands with the loving willingness to put them into practice no matter what the cost.
2. Through various giftings such as prophecy, words of knowledge or wisdom [see 1Thessalonians 5:19-21] the Holy Spirit gives you *rhema*, that is, His *specific guidance* for you. Your response is then to readily take action, no matter what the cost.

**Just a note:** I (Mike) have shared some of this testimony in previous writings and it fleshes out what we're saying here.

I became a follower of Jesus by reading the Bible all the way through from front to back twice. In my heart I felt like the woman who washed Jesus' feet, so deeply did I appreciate what He had done for me. At the time I was stationed aboard a Navy ship that was about to embark on a 10-month cruise. Having been raised a Roman Catholic, I wasn't interested in becoming a Protestant or any other label. Which one of the thousands of competing denominations had the truth anyway? No, I just wanted to follow Jesus as my Lord and grow with others who also yearned to love and serve Him wholeheartedly according to His Word. The chaplains onboard did ask me to be both the Catholic and Protestant lay leader, but they really didn't know what to do with a *follower of Jesus*.

As the ship left port that cruise, I prayed that the Lord would have me find others who loved Jesus as I did among the crew of six hundred Navy servicemen and two thousand Marines. Within days I found 4 other men who were absolutely courageous in their obedience to search out God's commands in the Bible and put them into practice. If we saw it in His Word, that was good enough for us — we expected to live in the relational power of His Spirit as the earliest followers of Jesus had. Soon, realizing that we were called to be our Father's ambassadors for Christ, we grew to over 25 who were following Jesus. The neat part was that there was NEVER any tension among us as we searched the Bible for guidance. Because we saw it in His Word, we relied heavily on the gifts of the Spirit operating in our midst as we were one body in Jesus.

Where we did encounter problems, though, was with the series of chaplains that came aboard the ship: Lutheran, Baptist, Assembly of God, and Roman Catholic. They were always trying to divide us up by having us put our faith in their particular creed! But the Spirit was at work in and around and through us brothers. Almost all of the miracles we saw in the Bible (except a raising from the dead) were manifested only among the fellowship of us followers of Jesus. As far as we were aware of, nothing like that was happening among the chaplains. Every time we Jesus followers gathered together, testimonies to our Father's glory abounded, all because we trusted our Lord and the importance of applying His Word.

One day the brothers met to discuss the divisive nature the chaplains kept introducing through their teachings. The men asked me to be their spokesman and go to the

chaplains. These followers of Jesus wanted nothing to do with the self-serving religious spirit that came with being under the chaplains' teachings. Praise to our glorious Lord for His mighty work! In a few months we had over 125 authentic followers of Jesus in our fellowship family, all because of our unhesitant willingness to trust in our Lord and in His Word. That kind of trust kept complacency and division far from any of us in the fellowship.

Think about it. Are you in any way refusing to trust the God Who not only made the entire universe but loves you enough to leave His glory in heaven to become man and take the punishment you deserve? Just as senseless is failing to earnestly seek out His commands in His Word and put them into practice, as they reveal what *loving Him* and *loving one another* looks like!

A vivid example of the depth of trust our Lord calls for in His followers is captured in an ageless story. A man falls off a cliff and catches himself by one thin vine in the rocks. He's hanging off the cliff now, with no way to get back up. "Help!" he yells desperately. "Is there anybody up there?" He hears a voice, the voice of God beside him, saying "I'm here. Let go." The man pauses then yells again...."Is there anybody ELSE up there?"

*Everyone* who follows Jesus as the Lord of their life has had to go through experiences such as this — or soon will! Trust enables you to let go of your rationale. And to the delight of our Father, your trust is genuine evidence that you are His child.

This is our prayer for you as you press on in TRUST toward a Heavenly welcome: ***"That your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God"*** (Philippians 1:9-11).

**Mike & Sue**