

“Dabbling in the Lord”
By Chris Ulrich
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Deuteronomy 6:4-6 ...thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart...

Living for God isn't an inconvenience; it's supposed to be our life. This certainly isn't a message to try and brush off conviction on anybody else. It's a message for the believers and for those on the verge of belief as well; that God wants us to be serious about the Gospel, serious about our life in Him, and pleased with us when we live the kind of life that's holy and acceptable. Living for God isn't an inconvenience, it's the best life there is.

Question: Who here has heard the expression about dabbling in witchcraft sometime in their life? I'm not here to get into that this morning, or to talk about it at length, but what I want to ask is, what is it about people that just want to dabble in the Lord? You've heard about people that dabble in witchcraft; they go to tarot card readers or fortune tellers, and there are also people who—and I'm not here to be the judge, God is ultimately the judge—but I do make observations, and also God deals with us in our lives about what kind of example we have to be, what kind of anything that we need to be... We get back to, do we love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength? I'm looking out at a room full of people that do, so, it's not a matter of what is everybody else going to do? What is everybody else's life going to be? One thing that this message is about is that we have to be examples. We have to be able to teach others; we need to be able to teach those that come after us.

I want to thank God that when I first got saved, when I first got trained in God, heard Bible studies, I want to thank God for our bishop, Pastor Paine. I also want to say that I thank Brother Kenneth for his leadership. I'm looking forward to Andy and Parrish leading us; I'm sure that it's led of God—it's not a knee-jerk reaction, like, “Oh, let me see if a can come up with something”—God doesn't work like that. A lot of times when we hear something there's an emotional reaction, whether it's anger or whether it's ecstasy. A lot of times, because God speaks to us in a small, still voice, it's a matter of, “Let me think on this; let me understand what it is that I have to do (or that we have to do).”

But, getting back into the message, why would people just want to dabble in the Lord? “They don't want to make the commitment.” “They don't want to jump in all the way.” “They may have had an experience with a dire need, or a desperate situation in their life, and they called on God at that time, but then, after the situation has been resolved, or there has been a sound answer, then they forget to give God the praise, or they forget to give their life to Him.” “They were lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of the Lord.” “Some people treat God as if He was a hobby.” “They want God's benefits, but they don't want the dedication.” “Maybe they were part of a ministry and they were hurt, and they attach that to God.” “They just want to check this out, like it's the Lotto or something.”

These are all valid points. I'm speaking more hypothetically, now, and I don't want to point any fingers and say, this is your reason, but, generally, these are people's reasons: They don't want to jump in too deep, they don't want to get too religious, they don't want to take this thing too seriously, they don't want to overcommit and get burned by some cult—these things are real, we're going to have to acknowledge that. The Bible says that we're not ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). We have to be able to identify these things in order to

know where we're at and what is it that God wants us to do. They don't want to get bossed around. How many of you have heard the expression, "I want to be used of God?" Have you ever heard, "That person used me," or "The Company used me," or "The team used me, and then they cut me out." God's not here to use us to abuse us; God's going to use us, and God called us to be examples, but He's also blessed us, so that we've got something to show for it, that we've got something to look forward to. I'm going to say something that I've told to a few people over the course of time, because sometimes it may seem like, Christianity is about as far from being selfish as anything imaginable. But, I will say this, ultimately, because every man shall bear his own burden (Galatians 6:5)—I know, in the same chapter it says, Bear ye one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)—I have to stand before God, and I have to be ready myself. We can't force what we believe on other people. We can be influential, we can be compelling, we can be convincing, but, it's not a question of, okay, Andy, you've got to this or else. I know we've heard this kind of thing all the time. God isn't asking us to be a bunch of eccentrics, although the Bible does say in the book of Peter that we are a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9), but, in the same verse, says that we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation. I'll take those qualities every day of the week. We learn those things over time; it's not like, instantly we're going to be all that trusting. I know before I got into the Christian faith—and I've told you these stories before—I didn't know anything about Christian music, or different Bible versions, or about what the Catholics believe or what the Baptists believe... that just wasn't part of my upbringing. It's not any better or worse, it's just the way it was. One thing is for sure, when God spoke to me, it was undeniable and unforgettable, and it was tangible. We serve an invisible God, and there is a wave of atheists or non-believers out there... There are a lot of people that, as soon as something goes wrong, "Oh, it's God's fault." I don't ever believe in blaming God, but it's not like every day we say, "Oh, God this is such a great life that you've given me." When things go right, they're like, nothing; they don't praise God. So I would say that it's not like they have a case to blame God when things go wrong if they're blessing God when things go right, but, if we're blessing God when things go right, then we're still going to be seeking God when things don't go the way we want. We're going to be asking God question, but we're still going to be trusting God, not like, "Oh, I don't believe in You, God, all of the sudden," or, "You're a great God, doing all these evil things." God's not doing any evil! That is a fact.

In Parrish's message about prayer last week, he mentioned about how some in the world think that it's better to give God something, even if it isn't our best, than nothing at all. He went on to say that we can't pray half-heartedly, non-deliberately, and effortlessly, and then think that God is going to bless us. He alluded to this verse:

Malachi 1:6-8 ...if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?...

Have you ever talked to someone about Jesus and their response was simply, "I'll get around to it?" The Bible tells us in Titus 2 that the Grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men (Titus 2:11). If that's the case, how is it even possible that so many have chosen to take another path and never get around to it? It's possible, when we read and understand the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15) about the seed that falls among the thorns or stony ground, when Jesus says strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:14), or when Apostle Peter talks about people being entangled again in the cares of this life (2 Peter 2:20). So it's not a surprise when we see so many people looking in so many other places for so many answers. As a Christian, it's frustrating, it's

disappointing and it's discouraging to sometimes see such disinterest. We can't force anyone to seek God, but, thank God, that's not the end of the story.

Revelation 3:20-22 ...I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice...

If you haven't already gotten around to it, then I would suggest with all humility, to get around to it. If you've already gotten around to it, then stay around to it. That's not a point to try to convince someone against their will. Really, the world is enough of an example of what it means to not get answering that knock on the door. It's a point of conveying that we are all going to stand before the judgment seat of God, ready or not.

2 Corinthians 6:2 ...now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Anybody know the ad campaign that's been out for about six months or so from Mercedes and what their slogan is? "The Best or Nothing." I would say it's got a little bit of a ring to it, although I've heard catchier mottos. The company that I work for has a slogan, "For the Ones Who Get it Done." It's good, and it serves its time and purpose until something better comes along. Serving God is a lot more than a slogan, that's for sure.

Proverbs 3:5-10 ...Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all...

Part of Satan's deception is to make us believe that something better will come along, and then we can direct our energy elsewhere. Are we convinced that living for God is the best it's going to get? I'm not talking about our current job situation, or marital status, or where we live; I'm talking about knowing God's truth for real, and that He's given us a way of life and direction. Are we giving God our best?

Revelation 3:14-19 ...because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee...

This isn't a fun passage to think about when it all boils down to it. Pretty scary judgment stuff, if you ask me. But not much of the Bible is a lot of fun when you really consider it. It's a lot like reading a tech manual, which Kenneth Ray made mention of about a year ago, and I agree with that statement. Knowing that, does that mean I'm not going to read it? Just because it doesn't have a lot of flash, like a comic book, am I going to set it aside and just figure I'll get around to it? Jesus challenged the disciple Peter after He gave a hard saying and asked him, "Will you also go away?" Peter replied, "To whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life?" (John 6:67-68)

Matthew 22:36-40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Dabbling in the Lord won't save our souls. If anything it will only give us the appearance of being a Christian, but it won't fool God. Eventually we'll be found out (Numbers 32:23). So, it's better to be straight up with God be either cold or hot, because lukewarm isn't going to cut it. The best or nothing? God wants the best.