
Legalism & Works vs. Faith & Obedience

God's Word repeatedly tells us that He expects us to work and discipline ourselves if we want to lead prosperous, successful lives. For some reason, many Christians believe that they can have anything that they ask for in Jesus' name and they don't have to work hard.

This is incorrect. God's laws definitely require us to be diligent in our work if we want to prosper. God's Word clearly tells us that we need to do the very best that we can with the abilities that God has given us and then we should stand solidly on our faith in God to take care of the rest.

- Having done all, to stand (Ephesians 6:13)
- If any would not work, neither should he eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10)
- Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might (Ecclesiastes 9:10)
- And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two (Matthew 5:41)
- And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men (Colossians 3:23)
- He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich (Proverbs 10:4)
- The lazy man will not plow because of winter; he will beg during harvest and have nothing (Proverbs 20:4)
- Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before unknown men (Proverbs 22:29)
- Work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing. (1 Thessalonians 4:11 – 12)

Wise Use of Time

With regard to disciplined study and meditation, some Christians believe that this is contrary to a life that is led by God's Holy Spirit. They say, "I'm not going to grind it out every day. I'm just going to wait on the Holy Spirit each day and do what He leads me to do."

This is fine, but God's Holy Spirit never leads us contrary to the teachings of God's Word and the Word tells us again and again about the absolute importance of disciplining ourselves to study and meditate constantly in His Word. Satan wants us to have sloppy day-to-day habits with no set pattern. Our Father wants us to realize how precious our time is.

Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should (Psalm 90:12)

Our Father doesn't want us to misuse the time that he has given us. He wants us to use it wisely.

Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully and worthily and accurately, not as the unwise and witless, but as wise, sensible intelligent people; making the very most of the time – buying up each opportunity – because the days are evil (Ephesians 5:15–16)

Legalism or Obedience

In order to have the knowledge of God imparted to your heart, a process of diligence is required. God doesn't just dump the wisdom and understanding of His higher ways on you. You have to seek them by spending time in His Word to renew our minds and prosper our souls. The Scripture says when we seek God, we will find Him (Matthew 7:7). The word seek implies an intense effort.

For instance, if you were seeking a job, you wouldn't just sit at home and watch television, waiting for someone to come to you. You'd go out into the marketplace, knocking on doors and making appointments for job interviews.

That's the kind of continual effort we need to employ when seeking God. We have to be diligent in the things of God, constant in our effort to learn of His ways and to walk in them. And as we diligently pursue God's wisdom and plant an abundance of His Word in our hearts, our minds will be renewed. We will become experts at dealing wisely in the affairs of life!

Be diligent in the things of God, constant in your effort to walk closer to Him.

Be Unreasonably Committed

If you really want to renew your mind and prosper your soul, you'll have to do more than casually read the Scriptures a few minutes a day. You'll have to feed on them day and night. You'll have to get rid of the rubbish you've been feeding into your consciousness by reprogramming your mind with the Word of God.

Oh, you may say, that's unreasonable!

Yes it is. But consider this: a music major in college practices four hours every day. Olympic skaters spend six to eight hours a day training for their routines. They do it because they're unreasonably committed to their goals.

The same is true for you. If you're going to achieve the kind of spiritual excellence you're hungry for, you're going to have to be unreasonably committed to the Word of God.

Deposit an abundance of God's Word in your heart every day. Find time to hear the Word, meditate on the Word and talk the Word. Guard your heart— and let the seed of God's Word overflow out of your spirit!

Read, study, meditate, listen to podcasts, watch videos of good, faith-filled teaching as much as possible until God's Word becomes living and active on the inside of you.

Do whatever it takes to totally saturate yourself with the Word of God. I would speak to you no differently if I were your commanding officer about to send you into combat against the best trained elite troops of a savage enemy.

You are God's frontline assault force. You have an enemy who is trying his dead level best to destroy you. In this crucial, all-out, no-holds-barred offensive, Satan will dispatch Hells choicest personnel to bring you down. If you're going to make it through in victory, you're going to have to put yourself in training.

Faith Doesn't Make God Do Anything

Faith is not something you do that makes God move. Studying the Bible, confessing the Word, acting on the Word, etc., are all involved in the faith process, but in themselves they aren't "faith."

One of the major reasons people aren't receiving more from the Lord is because they think "faith" is God responding to something they do. This puts the burden on you to perform and produce. You may be motivated for a period of time, thinking, "Oh, I'm going to be perfect and do all these things. Then God will bless me or deliver me."

Ultimately, nobody can measure up to that. No one's good enough to move God. Faith doesn't move God; He's not stuck. He's not the one who needs to move. Faith is not something you do to make God do something.

The Bible calls such "faith" works and legalism. You're doing something to try to make God do something for you. That's flesh! You can take the Word, confess it, act on it, pray, get up, act healed, and throw your medicine away, but your actions will never make God heal you. In fact, works and legalism stop what God has already provided

from coming into physical manifestation. Why? God will not be coerced into anything.

Everything from God must come by grace through faith.

Faith is simply your positive response to what God has already provided by grace.

If what you're calling "faith" is not a response to what God has already done, then it's not true faith. Faith doesn't try to get God to positively respond to you. True faith only receives—reaches out and appropriates—what God has already done by grace. True faith is your positive response to what God has already done by grace.

Faith & Belief vs. Fear & Doubt

You need to study the word, you need to pray, you need to live holy and do all of those things so that you can be in faith instead of fear & unbelief, and then that faith will appropriate what God has already provided by grace.

Attending church, reading the Word, and listening to good Bible teaching doesn't cause God to move in your life; they help your faith!

If you think you have to perform all these things in order for God to move, that is what the Bible refers to as legalism, or works mentality, and that will not release the power of God. As a matter of fact, that is about the only sin that will stop the power of God.

Grace means it is independent of your performance but the one sin that will stop the power of God is the sin of self-righteousness, the sin of trusting in your works instead of trusting in your Savior. Instead of looking to what he has done for you, you are going to try and make it happen – I've paid my tithes now God has got to give to me. That's not faith, that's works. That's legalism. That will stop the power of God just as quick as adultery.

People say all the time that I have done all these things, (read my bible, confessed the Word, prayed, gave of my time and money, etc.) why hasn't God blessed me? Well, you just answered your own question, instead of pointing to what God has done by grace, you pointed to your works and what you have done. In so doing, you have the mentality that this is going to make God show me His favor by doing enough right things.

**Your "faith" is actually what the Bible calls legalism, performance, dead works.
Doing all of these things and expecting that this will cause God to move.**

Faith Responds to Grace

Flesh, works, and legalism all try to do things in order to solicit a positive response from God. But the Lord said He'd never share His glory with anyone. You didn't "make" God save, heal, or prosper you. He had already done it. All you did was respond positively in faith to reach out and appropriate what He had already provided.

**Don't ever think that your actions make God react. He never reacts to us.
God has already done everything by grace, and faith is our reaction to Him.**

Don't confuse trying to "make" God do something with your faith causing what He's already done to manifest. You can't force God to do anything. But—by faith—you can make what He's already provided to manifest. That's a big difference!

Faith is simply your positive response to what God has already done. You simply responded to His grace!

Be Doers of the Word

Jesus Christ placed great emphasis on the importance of doing what God's Word tells us to do:

Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and **does them**, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and

does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:
and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat
on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall (Matthew 7:24 – 27)

This is what “separates the men from the boys” spiritually. Strong faith demands action. If we really believe, then we’ll do exactly what our Father’s Word tells us to do.

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own self (James 1:22)

As we yield our lives to God's Holy Spirit within us and as we study and meditate continually in God's Word, we'll do much more than just memorize verses of Scripture. We'll do exactly what God's Word tells us to do and, as a result, our Father will bless us and show us His favor.

But he who looks carefully into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and faithfully abides by it, not having become a [careless] listener who forgets but an active doer [who obeys], he will be blessed and favored by God in what he does [in his life of obedience]. (James 1:25)

Final Thought

If we expect to be blessed and receive God’s favor, then we need to do what God's Word tell us to do.

- Keep the law of the Lord your God. Then you shall prosper, if you take heed to fulfill the statutes (1 Chronicles 22:12–13)
- If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land (Isaiah 1:19)
- If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures (Job 36:11)