

## 2021 Men's Training Camp – Sermon II – Mr. Strain

Campers! North West Virginians were called "hillbillies," but the southern ones were called "Ridge Runners," because one leg was shorter than the other from the mountains.

We hear a lot about disloyalty. President Trump is accused of disloyalty by inciting the January 16, 2021 riot at the Capitol. There's a lot of conflict in our government, because they believe things aren't as they should be and want to make major changes. Yet in making these changes, they go in conflict to their oath to be a "public servant" for the people. Sadly, it seems like such a term is really a myth, and people have lost sight of those noble traits.

Loyalty has a lot of synonyms: Devotion and faithfulness to a nation, cause, religion or group. Fidelity to a nation, one's declared home nation by oath.

We are expected to be faithful. How? There are several points to consider. Faith-ful means being "full of faith". It means reliability and dependability. Will we be there on time? Will we put in a full day's work? Will we show up or call in sick when we're really not? This is something that's fundamental to why we're at this Men's Training Camp.

1. God expects and demands us to be faithful to the vow we made at baptism

We only make two vows in life: baptism and marriage. We're faithful to God and to our wife. Our calling is a matter of life and death. It's either eternal life or eternal death based on whether we're faithful or not. Our vow has ZERO exit clauses. Even in our Festival hotel and conference center contracts, there are Acts of God clauses that allow us a way out. But baptism has none. There's no handle to re-open the door. We've made the decision to serve God faithfully for the rest of our lives.

Luke 14:26 - If we come to Jesus Christ and don't love our families nor ourselves less than Him, we cannot be His disciple. Period. Over the years, we're learning more and more what this truly means. God cannot be preempted by anything or anyone. 14:27 - And whoever doesn't bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. Many of us didn't know that we'd be around this long. Who knew we'd be "bearing this cross" for over twenty, thirty, forty, fifty-plus years? This means *EVERY DAY* we live up to the challenge of walking with God in the face of this evil world. Did we understand in 1960 or 1970 what "the times of Noah" or Sodom and Gomorrah would really be like?

Just like checking the EULA without reading the agreement, God did this to us when we were baptized. We didn't know what we were getting ourselves into. Giving our life may sound horrible, but it might be easier than bearing the cross for decade after decade. Revelation 2:10 - "Don't fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days

[years]. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." This is rare in our age today but was the reality back then.

Hebrews 10:23 - Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, shifting of hope or compromise, for He who promised is faithful. But we're to hold fast this confession and continue to honor the commitment we made at baptism. John 14:15 - If we love Jesus Christ, we will keep His commandments. We ought to be doing better at keeping God's laws.

I John 2:15 - Don't love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father isn't in him. It's tempting to love those things around us! But our priority has to be the spiritual matters. What do I, personally, love? Do I love God more than my wife? Than my kids? Than bourbon? Than volleyball? None of things should take priority over our dedication to God. He won't be in us if our physical desires take away our time from Him. Can I save time? Not really? Can I spend time? Absolutely. I can get benefit from allocating time for certain purposes. What occupies my life? What's my priority? Are those dictated by what I did the prior evening? Do I spend enough time with God prior to walking out the door and facing the world?

2. We are obligated and required to be faithful to the Work that God is using this Church to do

Christ is our example and He instructed His disciples of following Him in the same. John 4:34 - "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." He had a job to do while here on this earth and He finished that phase of it. That was His will, so what's ours? Mark 16:15 - Preach the gospel to every creature, to the best of our ability. We're to go into ALL the world. This is our top priority. As Christian men, we ought to have our heart in the Work. "Your job is to pay and pray. Give your money, then pray about it." Well, is that *all* I get to do? It also includes building the Church and exemplifying God's light and gospel in our lives daily.

Romans 15:20 - "I've made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where other men have preached lest I build on another man's foundation." He asked God where HE wanted Him to preach. We've barely even scratched the surface of preaching to the billions that are out there! What open avenues are there? Where is God working through us? Which TV stations should we use? When the congregation prayed about more responses on a local station, more came in! It requires all our participation.

II Thessalonians 3:1-2 - "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you..." Run here means "running a race" or pursuing this with energy. This should be a matter of earnestly beseeching God to open the doors to preach. "And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith." Pray that God will allow us on certain stations or in certain countries because they're openly hostile to our teachings. This would perfectly define "unreasonable". But there are doors out there that "no man can shut".

Revelation 14:1 - There, standing before Jesus Christ, were 144,000 who weren't defiled with women, for they're virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue and people. We're going to be preaching the gospel in the Millennium! This scripture has to be fulfilled! There are going to be a lot of people who won't know "what just hit them". We'll be a huge part of finishing the preaching of this gospel to those who lived over into the age of the Millennium. Our hearts are in that Work now, and we'll continue to expand our power when Christ is here to amplify it.

We must be loyal and faithful to the Work and God's Church—the spiritual and physical organism—that was called to preach this gospel. We each have our reasons why we're here in the Living Church of God and can defend why we do what we do. Make sure we know it! Doing the Work and being faithful and loyal to our Creator God.

### 3. Strive to be faithful to our personal family and to our Church family

The fact that we're here this week professes that we want to do these very things! We have a chance, as men, to have a better understanding about what our obligations are. What do we want to achieve? If a minister has to talk from the pulpit about modesty and appropriate dress, it's hard enough to talk to a woman individually. "If you're married, ladies, it's not my problem how you dress. But I will talk to your husbands." Such discussions must be had in the home, and they're not easy, but it's part of being faithful to our families to do such things.

Our world, inspired by Satan, is under attack. The family structure is under attack. And there are those from the political arena, and there are groups out there with agendas to promulgate. They attack biblical ideas and concepts. Being a Christian is now a negative. Yet we're here to become better husbands, fathers and followers in the Church of God. We need to make these a part of our very being. I Timothy 4:1-2 - Now the spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron. The world around us is inspired by demons! Critical Race Theory is an academic niche theory that was born in a high-ranking school—Harvard Law. These aren't natural thoughts of human beings, but they are brought about by Satan to cause division and riots. When we have peaceful protests and they turn violent, how is this justified? These are the product of the spirit world. They're after the whole world, but particularly, they're after God's people.

These things are a constant temptation to those who MIGHT fall from the faith. It's not the best of times these days to be a Christian. There are challenges that weren't there forty-sixty years ago. "Happy Days" was called that because we thought they were the good ol' days. And now we're watching a train wreck unfolding slowly. We're on the wrong track and it's Satan's world. II Timothy 3:1 - In the last days, perilous times will come. We live in a dangerous age—certainly spiritually, but soon to be physically. Men will be lovers of themselves, of money, boasters, proud... People aren't willing to find common ground. They're unloving and unforgiving. They're

slanderers of those they see as enemies (not fellow men and women), and they're brutal, despisers of good, traitors, stubborn, haughty, etc.

Ephesians 5:23 - For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the Savior of the body. We ought to love our wives as Christ loved us and gave His life for us, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word so He might present her to Himself a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle. We do these things as servants of our wives. When counseling for marriage, the ultimate job for a new family is to submit to one another so they both can enter the Kingdom. We're serving our families and our wives. What's the best way to serve? To be an example. When my wife prays, it's motivational to me! And when I'm praying, it motivates her. It is a positive example to our children and it's how they learn. If our wives want to follow us into God's Kingdom, it's how we're following the teachings of the ministry. This is how we're faithful to our family by showing how convicted we are to stick to the vow we made at baptism. We love them, we give to them, and we lead by example. Our wives and children SEE when we fall short. But if our example is consistent and faithful, then it will build our family into a stronghold.

Ephesians 6:1 - Children are expected to obey their parents, but us fathers are NOT to provoke our children to wrath. We're to set the example about what's right and wrong and our children see that. Philippians 3:17 - We need to be faithful followers. "Brethren, join in following my example, and not those who so walk. Use us as a pattern." We are to be examples to each other of what we're commanded to be doing. If you want to be a leader, it's not some position, but someone to follow. My wife has someone to follow into the Kingdom. Same with our children. As we look to our fellow brethren, take note of what we ought to be doing based on the positive examples of the men around us.

Philippians 4:9 - The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. Let us be faithful to God, to our families, and to our fellow brethren simply by how we live in the example we set. Then we will be pleasing to God.