

# Consistency

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[0:00] 1 Corinthians 4 verse 2! Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

! Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. I want to talk about consistency. Consistency. I know I was thinking of what would I speak on today and through the week and I was scratching for thoughts and I just wrote down the one word consistency on a piece of paper and I didn't get much more inspiration. I thought, is this the Lord? And then I went and visited a brother in Christ, Joseph Stephen at his house. He's the preacher in the upcoming camp. Totally blind man. What a testimony that he is to me of what God is doing.

He was a man and a man despite severe disability. And he prayed with me as we prayed together and he prayed very much about this word consistency. And it's something that's really critical for us as Christians to have. Consistency. Faithfulness. The word of God says much about conversation conversation. In the King James, the word conversation, it means way of life, the way we conduct ourselves, our conduct of life, our behaviour and the conduct that we have. It should be a consistent thing. And friends today, we know it's so true. In the world we live, people struggle with commitment in the world. There's a lack of commitment in these days. And that goes in all kinds of spheres of life, in employment, in education. There's a lack of commitment in the family. In families, there's a lack of commitment. In society in general, a lack of commitment. A lack of consistency, you could say. It's evident throughout the world today and it's evident too amongst believers. I would put it, a lack of consistency. It means the absence of contradictions. Consistency. The absence of contradictions. You know, I know for myself and it's been true of me that you go to a church and you find something that, ah, didn't like that. And they just hop from one church to another. No consistency. They're not putting their roots down. They're not firmly grounded and planted. Instead of being loyal to one church body, a local fellowship of believers and working through the difficulties and the differences that we might have, they just up and walk out. Something doesn't take their fancy and they just get their nose out of joint, whatever it be. And some petty thing, sometimes it's the cause for people flitting and changing. Not to say it can't happen for godly reasons, but friends, sometimes there's a lack of consistency. And in our spiritual walk too, as we go through struggles at times, we struggle to maintain that consistent prayer life, that consistent word life, that consistent walking with him. The demands of the day, the pressures of the time, the stresses and strains, sometimes we lack that consistency and we're a bit stop and start. One step forward, two steps back.

It's a commonplace, isn't it? And the Laodiceans, they were inconsistent, weren't they? They were inconsistent, lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. But think of it, friends, today, God is faithful. I know some dear friends lent some ministry material to us and that the preachers saying God is faithful always. Always. Julie and I made it a bit of a joke when we say, Isn't God good? And we say, always. It's a good thing to think of, isn't it? God is good.

Always. Always. He's always good. He's always long-suffering. He's always gracious. He's always faithful. God is faithful, it says. He is 100% consistent. Our God, your friend, your eternal friend, your eternal father, is everlastingly consistent. He is always faithful. Now, the preacher said, He was, you know, in tongue-in-cheek prophesying about this year, as much as we're in February already, but top 10 facts for 2011. He said, these are absolutely guaranteed to happen in 2011.

[4:29] You know, thus saith the Lord. You could just about say it, as it were, without really being contradictory to Scripture. And he said this, he said, today I'll share with you 10 predictions that are true for 2011. These are guaranteed to happen. The Bible will still have the answers.

Amen. Prayer will still be the most powerful force on earth. The Holy Spirit will still move. God will still honour the praises of his people. There will still be God-anointed preaching.

There will still be the singing of praises unto our God. God will still pour out his blessings upon his people. There's still room at the cross. And Jesus will still love you. And Jesus will still save the lost when they come to him. God is always faithful. God is faithful.

Always. Well, you're getting the hang of it now. God is faithful. People value consistency, don't they? You value consistency. When you go down to KFC and they give you just that, it's always consistent, isn't it? What they dish up to you. It may not be good for you, but it's always consistent, isn't it? You know, they've got to have the brand loyalty right across the nation, right across the planet. They are consistent with what they dish up to you.

And we need to be consistent people for God, don't we? Consistent Christians. How much more it ought to be that we should be those kind of people. And that's not to say we're perfect, as it were. We've still got some distance to go. And thank God he deals with imperfect people.

[6:11] He deals with inconsistent people. With all of my inconsistency, God is faithful. Thank God for that. 2 Peter 3.11, it says, the context is of the end of the age of everything being wiped out at Christ's coming of the destruction of the end times. And 2 Peter 3.11, Peter writes, seeing then all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of people ought you to be? What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness? What manner of people ought we to be? What manner of persons ought we to be? What manner of persons ought we to be? How are we to conduct ourselves in holiness, in godliness? Is my lifestyle so consistent that someone could look at me whatever time of day it be, whether I be down at the workplace, in a home place, in a workplace, in my recreational life? Am I consistent? Am I a consistent Christian?

If you were to come up to one of my workmates that I work with, would you be able to interrogate them and find some flaw in my character? Find something that is inconsistent with that which I profess to be, a Christian? Am I living a lifestyle that is pleasing to God? Always.

Always. Always. Always. Always. 1 Thessalonians 2.12, it says that you would walk worthy of God who hath called you into his kingdom and glory. Walk worthy. We're exhorted. Walk worthy.

Now, for instance, I've got something. It's a point for prayer this morning. There's a brother in the church and he's had a glaring character fault. Last night, it was getting very late and we were all very, very tired, packing up everything and putting everything away and we're just trying to get it just so. And this dear brother, Brother Greg, pray for Greg, he said, let's just be slack tonight. He said, let's be slack tonight. And so we pray for Greg that he won't have that spirit of slackness today. But seriously, I know that's very much out of character for Brother Greg. I esteem Greg because I know he's one that I do count to have a consistent Christian life. And it's a testimony. He and his family are a testament of what it means to be a consistent Christian. A consistent Christian. And friends tonight, but seriously today, we really can at times have times of inconsistency, can't we? Times when we do mess up and slip up. Is my lifestyle pleasing to God? Am I walking worthy? Our conduct should be worthy, honourable, becoming of him. But we should have that different spirit, that Christ-like spirit, that generosity of spirit. And be like the man Daniel. Look at Daniel, the life of Daniel. Here he was.

They were saying, look, it's not the dumb thing now to be seen praying and just, you know, maybe shut the curtains or change what you're doing so you don't get into trouble. That could have been easy for Daniel to do. But Daniel was unwavering with his prayer life, with his consistency, with his faith. He was a man of steadfast loyalty, even though he knew that he could be killed by praying as he did, as his practice was, to pray three times a day.

[9:37] His devotion to the Lord did not waver. He was consistent, even though the enemies of Daniel used his consistency to trap him. And then he suffered for it. The king believed that Daniel's loyalty would be the key to his deliverance as he was cast into that den of lions in Daniel 6. From verse 16 it says, then the king commanded and they brought Daniel and they cast him into the den of lions. What a disaster. What a terrible state that Daniel was in. What great danger that he faced. But God is always faithful. God is always there.

Even if you're in a den of lions. Maybe you're in a den of lions or you feel like you've been. You're about to be shredded by these voracious beasts. But then the king spake and said unto Daniel in Daniel 6 verse 16, he says, Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. Daniel always served God. Daniel always served him and the king recognised that. And of course, God delivered Daniel from the danger. And there's many areas of our lifestyle we need to consider. Am I consistent? Am I living that life that is consistent? Am I being that kind of person that I ought to be? Am I a man that is going to be found faithful as steward?

Friends, there's some passages just to touch on that talk about this conversation. This conversation in the King James, the word conversation, it means the conduct of our lives. It means the way that we live. It means our behaviour. There's many scriptural references to this word, the conversation, that way of life that we ought to live. And number one, Philippians 1.27.

Philippians 1.27. It tells us there of the conversation that we ought to have. Paul writes in part in Philippians 1.27, only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ. Let your conversation be as it's becoming to the gospel of Christ. And he writes on further that you stand fast in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. The way of life, the conduct, the conversation of our life should be very much in tune with the gospel, the good news, the message of salvation, of his saving grace to us. Is my life consistent with the gospel message? Is my life consistent with that? You know, we've got in here, we've got the gospel according to Matthew, the gospel according to Mark, according to Luke, according to John. What is the gospel according to you? You are the gospel that others see. When you're out there walking about, you're day by day, you're every day. You are the gospel to people.

You are the gospel. You are the good news. You're telling the good news. You're the message of the gospel. Am I living it? Am I living it? What is the gospel according to you? Is your conduct becoming? You know, there's that phrase, a conduct becoming of an officer, as it were, in the armed forces. There's a conduct that is required of an officer of the regiment, as it were. There's a conduct that is required. There's even conduct that is required of footy players. There's a certain conduct that is expected. What are the conduct of your life as one who claims the gospel? Is our conduct, our conversation measuring up? Another word, another text that this occurs is in Philippians 3 verse 20. Philippians 3 verse 20. Our conversation, our conduct, our way of life. It says there in Philippians 3 verse 20, and some put it, our citizenship. Our conversation is in heaven. Our conversation, our way of living is in heaven from whence also you look for the saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our lifestyle is in heaven.

[13:45] We're not there yet, but we're on the road there. Amen? If you know the saviour, if Christ is your saviour today, you're on the way. You're guaranteed. It's reserved in heaven for you. It's an inheritance that's going to be reserved, incorruptible, that can't fade away. It's guaranteed 100% by the blood of Christ, paid in full stamp as your sins have been completely erased, purely by his grace.

Guaranteed for you is heaven. Are you living like it? Are you living like you belong to heaven? Is your lifestyle such that you are living a heavenly way of life? That is that by which you conduct yourselves. Are we living out heaven on the earth? Our lives are meant to reflect his glory. Our lives are meant to reflect that one day we will see his face. Are we living by that higher purpose? Is our conduct our conversation in heaven? Is my lifestyle pleasing to God? If it were broadcast on the wide screen in heaven for all to see, would we be ashamed? Is our conversation in heaven?

Friends today, let your life be consistent with your testimony, your confession of faith in Christ.

Thank God the word does say, if the righteous man fall, numbers of times that God picks him up again. Amen? Because God is always faithful. Even though we are not faithful, I am not faithful. I say to my shame, I am not faithful. As faithful as I ought to be.

Friends, I can do better. We all can do better. Let's seek to aspire, to live up to the gospel, to live up to heaven. Here's a question. Are we living on earth with the reality that heaven is just, could be moments away? For some of you, it could be the blink of an eye you could be there. Are you ready that one day you'll be living in that place, in that presence of him, our saviour? Here's a question. Answer this question honestly. I've got this quote.

I've referred to it some long time back. Something to consider. It's talking in the context of a funeral. A funeral of a man, a woman. And the tombstone is there from the beginning to the end.

You know, the observer sees the tombstone there. He noted that first came the date of birth and spoke of the following date with tears. The date of death. Friends, for all of us, there's one and the other. Yet to come. Unless the Lord comes meantime. But, and this man, he spoke of what mattered most of all was not the date of the birth or the date of the death, but the dash in between. The dash in the middle. The dash in between those years. For the dash represents all the time that we spend alive on earth.

[16:39] And now those who loved her, this woman who died, know what that little line is worth. The dash. The dash. It matters not how much we own, the cars, the house, the cash. No matter how we live. What matters, rather, is how we live and love and how we spend our dash. So think about this long and hard. Are there things you would like to change? For you never know how much time is left that still can be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough to consider what's true and real and always try to understand the way other people feel and be less quick to anger and show appreciation more and more and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before. If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile, remembering that this special dash might only last a while. So when your eulogy is being read, with your life's actions to rehash, would you be proud of the things they say about how you spent your dash?

It's a question for all of us, isn't it? Will our lives be consistent? There are so many things, here's a quote, There are so many things that we wish we had done yesterday.

Isn't that true? So many things we wish we'd done yesterday. So few that we feel like doing today. Today. Today.

Friends, let's make today count. Decide to use your now. It's the only time you have every day, moment by moment, for His glory. As we read in 1 Corinthians 10, 31, Whether therefore you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.

[18:38] Do all to the glory of God. Live like heaven is in the present day. Another verse that speaks of your conversation. In Hebrews 13, 5, it speaks of, Let your conversation be without covetousness, without greediness, without that graspingness, and be content with such things as ye had.

Let your conversation be without covetousness. It's what drives the world often, isn't it? What drives the world, that hankering after the world's treasures, where that's just the obsession that people have, that everything has got to be making a buck and not losing a buck.

But friends, what matters is heaven. It matters about preparing for heaven's best, for longing for God's best, and to be found in Him. There's numbers of scriptures that say, Be found in Him.

For example, Philippians 3, verse 9. Be found in Him. Be found in Him. Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.

The righteousness which is by God, by faith. And another one, 2 Peter 3, 14. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him, in peace, without spot, and blameless.

[19:51] Will you be found in Him? Contentment. Let's learn to be content. Paul writes there. And another scripture is James 3, 13. Of your conversation, it says, The wise man, who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you, let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

Meekness is something lacking, isn't it, in our day? You know, the world would say, Assert yourself! Assert yourself! Just tell them what you want, and just stick it in their face.

You know, just stand up for yourself. Have that self-esteem, where you can just stomp all over everybody. You know, I guess that's more aggression than assertiveness, but it's kind of the mindset of the world, isn't it?

Look out for number one. You know, just step on whoever you want to step on to climb up the ladder, as it were. And yet, what does God value? Meekness. Meekness. Who was Moses in Numbers 12, 3?

He was the meekest man on all the earth. The man, Moses, was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth. You know, sometimes we can get in the most trouble when we don't have meekness.

[20:58] We have pride. We have pride. Who's guilty of pride? Well, there's lots of humble people here. He's guilty of pride. We all can be.

We all can be. Always. You know, friends, it's true. There is nothing that the enemy likes more than wearing down the saints, than tripping up the saints. How does he trip us up?

It's when we're thinking that we're standing that we're going to fall. You know, look out. If you think you're standing, if you think you've got it all together, that's when you're going to mess up.

And take pride, lest you fall. And let's be consistent in that meekness and realise I'm utterly dependent upon him. It's only his grace that can help me get through.

It's only his grace that can help me not mess up. And when I do, he still puts up with me. And friends, let's have that good conversation, that meekness of wisdom.

[21:53] And friends, think of it, of your lives now. Of my life, of your life, am I consistent? Are we consistent? Are you consistent in your giving, in your praying, in your fellowshiping, in your soul-winning activities, in your obedience to him, in your serving of him?

And sometimes we can look sideways at people. Who's ever done that? Look sideways at people and think, oh, that brother, that sister, they've got some issues.

They've got something wrong with them. But you probably say that about me. Julie says it about me all the time. We can look sideways at people and think, oh, they're less of a Christian than me.

Or, you know, I'm better than them, as the Pharisee did. And yet, we should have meekness of wisdom. Meekness of wisdom. And of course, in the context of restoration, of people that need some caution and address, the context is, take heed to yourself.

When you're trying to restore a brother, look out for yourself, because we all can need some correction. And think of it, sometimes we can all be guilty of this too, and I referred to it briefly last time, blasphemy.

[23:09] Blasphemy. And we can think of the word blasphemy as, you know, as we know, using the Lord's name in vain. That's blasphemy. It's speaking ill of our Lord. It's using his name carelessly and without thought.

And using his name in an unworthy way. But I was reading lately that it can also refer to slanderous speech.

Slanderous speech. We've all got to watch what we say about a brother, about a sister, because it's called gossip. Gossip. Slanderous speech. And I was given this as a guide as to what...

Bear with me. I'm trying to find a pen here. I'll just write it down because it helps to show this. This little acronym of what we should do about gossip.

Gossip. It's a useful little prompt when you think... When you're tempted to engage in gossip. When you're tempted to engage in gossip. Think. Think.

[24:14] Before you say something. Is it true? That's a good thing to ask, isn't it? Is that definitely true? What is being alleged about this person? Is it helpful?

Is my talking about it going to do some good? Or harm? Is it helpful for me to talk about this matter? Is it inspiring? Is it going to help a brother to grow?

A sister to grow? Is it going to do good for the kingdom? Is it inspiring? Is it necessary? Is it even necessary for me to bring it up? Is it important that I say something about this matter?

And lastly, is it kind? Is it kind? Friends, think of gossip. Watch out. Take heed lest you fall. Let's not engage in gossip because it's blasphemy.

It's evil speaking. And it's not something that should be part of the conversation of the conduct of the believer. Friends, another verse is 1 Peter 1, verse 15.

[25:11] It says, Be holy in all manner of conversation. Be holy for I am holy, the Lord says to us. Friends, think of it today. Is my life holy?

Is it consistent? Is it consistent? So that when I'm about my day by day, my walk will measure up with my talk. To close, let's examine our lives for inconsistencies.

It says, examine yourself whether you be in the faith. Sometimes I fear, as it were, that I haven't been clear enough.

And woe be to me if I'm presuming that everyone here is a Christian, that you're a believer in Christ as your saviour. I urge you today to seek counsel if you've got any uncertainty about that matter.

So certainly, if you're trusting in yourself, you're not a Christian today. If you're trusting in any working of your own, if you're trusting in any religiosity of your own, if you're trusting in any good works of your own, then you will fall short.

[26:18] We all do. The ladder's not tall enough for you to get to glory by any working or doing of your own. It's only by his hand extended down in the cross, in his coming, in his dying, in his rising again, on your part, in bearing your sin.

That's your only hope today. And friends, I urge you, it's my great fear that you would leave this place with some false assurance that you're a Christian, with some assumption that you're a Christian.

Please, I urge you, make peace with God. And it's only by the blood of Christ that you can. And a pastor's fear, a pastor wrote this, J.C. Ryle, a famous old-time preacher, he said this about preaching.

What is it that I fear for you? I fear everything. I fear lest you should persist in rejecting Christ till you have sinned away your own soul.

I fear lest you be given over to a reprobate mind and awake no more. I fear lest you come to a deadness and a hardness of heart, that nothing but the voice of the archangel and the trump of God will break your sleep.

[27:25] I fear lest you cling to this vain world so closely that nothing but death will part you from it. I fear lest you live without Christ, die without pardon, rise without hope, receive judgment without mercy and sink into hell without remedy.

We should tremble at his word. I've been talking about consistency. You know, and it's not about good works. Don't get me wrong. We're not saying that any of your good working can merit anything.

Not one iota of his grace, not one skerrick of his mercy is deserved by any of us here today. It's only by his mercy that he saves us because God is always, always long-suffering.

God is always reaching out in Calvary. God has always got that blood payment ready to avail of.

God is always reaching out his hand that is not shortened, that it cannot save.

God has always got his ear open for your prayer. And God is always faithful even when you think things are falling apart. Do you love him supremely? Not indeed as he deserves to be loved.

[28:39] Not as you wish to love him, but still far better than the most valuable earthly possession or the dearest earthly friend. Do you love him? If you love him, you'll be consistent.

You'll obey his voice. You'll be his sheep. You'll follow him. Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. I love to tell the story of haunting things above.

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