

THE PROBLEM WITH PASSIVITY



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by

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THE PROBLEM WITH PASSIVITY

Passivity is sitting back mentally and just letting things happen. Someone can spend all their life being busy for God physically, but be completely passive in their attitude toward Him and toward their faith. We need to be proactive in how we think, we need to put our faith to work.

Psalm 46:10 says — *‘Be still, and know that I am God.’* We’re told to be still, but in that stillness, we are told to know who God is. That’s not being passive — that’s choosing what we think about and focusing on it. Psalm 116:7 says — *‘Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.’* I love this verse. It’s not telling us to be passive. It’s telling us to stop being anxious and rest in the truth of God and all He has done and won for us. That’s not being passive. It is making a decision to actively focus our thoughts on God’s goodness. As born-again Christians, we are called to be active in our faith, not passive. I remember hearing a Christian say, “Doing something imperfectly is better than doing nothing perfectly.” That really stuck with me. (To read about being born-again, go to the end of this booklet.)

Why Passivity is a Problem

A passive person thinks, ‘whatever will be will be’ or ‘I’ll just wait and see’. If we have that kind of attitude, we aren’t going to see the blessings of God in our life or the fulfilment of His promises. God has provided them all through His grace, but we need to take hold of them by faith. We won’t see them become reality by just hoping for the best, without any expectation. Passivity is a real problem. It achieves nothing and gets nowhere. In fact, it

gives Satan opportunity to impact us when we're neither standing for the truth or resisting him. James 4:7-8 tells us to — *'Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.'*

Beliefs that Lead to Passivity

Let's look at some ways of thinking that lead to passivity. I have heard Christians say all of these over the years, but none of them are in the Bible.

'God can do whatever He wants'

God has bound Himself by His Word. He says in Psalm 89:34 — *"I will not break my covenant, nor alter what my lips have uttered."* So He can't just do anything. He will only do what is true to His Word. For example, He has said in Psalm 94:14 — *'the LORD won't reject his people,'* so He will never reject us. Also, Jesus was anointed to heal the sick, so this was part of God's purpose for Him on earth. Yet when He went to His home town of Nazareth, Mark 6:5-6 tells us that — *'He could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶He marvelled because of their unbelief.'* The unbelief of the people He grew up with stopped Him from being able to heal many of them, despite that being His desire. God looks for faith, not passivity.

'You never know what God will do'

God is a good God. He has shown us His true nature of love through the Cross. His Word is full of teaching on who He is and what He has done. It tells us that He has revealed His mystery to us who believe. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 says — *'But as it is written, "Things which an eye didn't see, and an ear didn't hear, which didn't enter into the heart of man, these God has prepared for*

those who love him.”¹⁰But to us, God revealed them through the Spirit.’ The mystery of who God is and how He acts has been revealed to all who will receive Him. He doesn’t act randomly. He acts according to His Word.

‘God may or may not answer my prayer’

God always answers our prayers when we pray according to His will. 1 John 5:14-15 says — *‘This is the boldness which we have towards him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he listens to us.¹⁵And if we know that he listens to us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.’* We find His will in His Word. Pray according to the new covenant in the New Testament of the Bible and you can be certain that God hears you and answers. However, we do have a part to play in receiving answers to our prayers. We can’t just wait passively. In Mark 11:24 Jesus says — *“I tell you, all things whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you have received them, and you shall have them.”* We are called to ask in faith, believing we have the answer as we pray and then we will see it. Sometimes the devil will try to stop God’s answer coming through. This happened to Daniel. When an angel came in answer to his prayer, he told him in Daniel 10:12-13 — *“Don’t be afraid, Daniel; for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I have come for your words’ sake.¹³But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days.”* It had taken three weeks for Daniel to receive the answer to his prayer, but the angel told him that God had answered it from the first day he had prayed. God will always answer our prayers when we ask according to His will in faith. He doesn’t say no or wait. Any delay in the answer is caused by Satan, not by God. So don’t be passive – wait in expectation.

‘God can do it but I don’t know if He’ll do it for me’

Romans 2:11 says — *‘there is no partiality with God.’* God doesn’t have favourites. He wants all His children to live an abundant life. Jesus says in John 10:10 — *“I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.”* During His earthly ministry, Jesus healed everyone who asked and He would often heal every single person in a huge crowd. Matthew 9:35 says — *‘Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, ... healing every disease and every sickness amongst the people.’* He never refused anyone. He never told anyone that the time wasn’t right or that they had to put up with it because God was teaching them something through it. Be expectant, not passive.

‘God is in control’

Usually when I hear someone say this, it is when something bad has happened, implying that God had a purpose in making it happen. But Jesus says in John 10:10 — *“The thief only comes to steal, kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.”* He made it clear that bad things come from the devil, not from God, and only good things come from God. Of course God is in control ultimately, but He is not controlling everything that happens. If you think God is orchestrating everything that happens, then you will end up being passive and unwittingly accept whatever the devil is throwing at you. James 4:7 says — *‘Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.’* It is really important to know that good stuff comes from God so you know to submit to it and that bad stuff comes from the devil so you know to resist it and not be passive.

‘God allows bad things to happen’

God gave authority over the earth to Adam and Eve. In Genesis 1:28 He said — *“Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky,*

and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” When they sinned, they handed that authority to Satan. God will never break His Word, so He couldn’t just take it back. But Jesus came as a man and won it back on the Cross when He defeated Satan. He then shared that authority with us. If God just stepped in and automatically stopped bad things from happening, then He would be undermining His own Word about man having authority over the earth. So the word ‘allow’ isn’t relevant. He grieves over the tragedies of this life and the problems we face even more than we do. But He always has a way to lead us through them if we let Him. If we believe God allows bad things, then we won’t resist them — we will be passive.

‘Everything happens for a reason’

This is a true statement, but the reason isn’t always God’s will. It may be because Satan is at work or it may be simply as a result of the choices we or others make. If you don’t understand this you will just let things happen without resisting Satan or without proactively deciding how to let the things that happen affect you — you will be passive.

‘I’ll believe it when I see it’

We need to use our faith to believe God’s Word before we see it fulfilled or we won’t see Him at work in our lives or see His promises fulfilled and we will end up being passive. After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples. John 20:24-28 then tells us — *‘But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, wasn’t with them when Jesus came.’*²⁵*The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”*²⁶*After eight days, again his disciples were inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, the doors*

being locked, and stood in the middle, and said, "Peace be to you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see my hands. Reach here your hand, and put it into my side. Don't be unbelieving, but believing."²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Thomas refused to use faith and decided he'd only believe Jesus was alive if he could see it. When Jesus came again and Thomas saw Him, then he believed. But Jesus said to him in John 20:29 — *"Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."* That's us. If we will believe by faith, we are more blessed than Thomas who insisted on seeing first. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says we are to — *'walk by faith, not by sight.'*

Be Proactive

God never tells us to sit back mentally and just roll with the punches. He never tells us to resign ourselves to 'whatever will be will be'. Being proactive in faith and in the way we think isn't works. It isn't doing something in order to earn favour with God. It's knowing that God has already provided all that we need and positioning ourself in the right attitude to take hold of it. Colossians 2:6 says — *'As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him.'* We received Jesus by believing and receiving. We are to continue to live our Christian life in the same way. That is the opposite of passivity

Here are just a few of the many ways the Bible tells us to be proactive in our thoughts and in our attitude towards God.

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) — *'Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.'*

Romans 12:9 — *'Abhor that which is evil. Cling to that which is good.'*

2 Corinthians 10:5 — *‘throwing down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.’*

Ephesians 6:13 — *‘put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.’*

1 Timothy 6:12 — *‘Fight the good fight of faith.’*

James 4:7 — *‘Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.’*

Don't Be Passive

Are you too busy to focus on God and all Jesus has done and won for you? Or are you too lazy to bother? Or are you just getting on with life, believing in Jesus, but not taking hold of the truth in His Word for yourself personally? Be honest – how is that working out? Are you seeing God’s blessings in your life and the reality of His promises?

Let me encourage you to stop being passive and start putting your faith into action. James 1:22 says – *‘be doers of the word, and not only hearers, deluding your own selves.’* Don’t kid yourself that being passive is ok. It will get you nowhere — in fact it will drag you backwards. If you just float in a river, you won’t stay in the same place — you will drift downstream whether that’s where you want to go or not. That’s the direction the devil and the world is going. If you want to go in God’s direction, you’re going to have to turn around and swim upstream. Hebrews 6:11-12 says — *‘We desire ...¹²that you won’t be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and perseverance inherited the promises.’*

Be Transformed

Romans 12:2 says — *‘Don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.’* If we are floating downstream in the river, God will call to us to remind us of all the good things He has for us, but He won’t pick us up and turn us round and force us to swim upstream. He’s given us free will and He won’t violate that. It is our responsibility to renew our minds in God’s truth in His Word and when we do so, we will be transformed. We will discover what His true nature is what His will is and how He acts and how He wants us to respond in faith. Instead of being passive, be transformed by renewing your mind in God’s Word. It’s such a better way to live.

Being Born-Again

When you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour you become born-again. God becomes your Father and you His child, and you can start to enjoy your personal relationship with Him. Romans 10:9 says — *‘If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.’* Say this prayer out loud and believe it in your heart — “Jesus, I declare that You are Lord and that God raised You from the dead to live forevermore. Thank You for dying for me personally. I receive my forgiveness and my salvation now. Thank You Jesus, my Lord and Saviour.”

You are now born-again and Jesus has come to live in you. All your sins are forgiven, past, present and future, and you have a new perfect spirit. And after this life is over, you’ll live in love, peace and joy with your Father God for ever.

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Are you passive in your faith?
Do you tend to just wait and see what happens?
Or do you take hold of the truth in God's Word
and expect to see it become reality in your life?

There are many times in the Word
when God tells us to be proactive
and it's then that we will see things change.



Katherine Hilditch has been teaching in local churches for many years. In 2013 she wrote her first booklet and since then has written many more. She created her website to make all the booklets freely available to everyone. They can be read online or printed out. Katherine's threefold purpose is to help people understand more about Jesus and all He has done and won for them, to encourage them to go deeper in their relationship with God and to provide material to help them share their faith with others. To read her story and find all the booklets go to –

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