

Are These Optional?

by Bill Crews

It is difficult to get people to do something, even something essential that they do not want to do – that they regard as unappealing, distasteful, demanding or difficult. But it is even more difficult to get people to do something that they should do while they regard it as something not essential, something only optional.

It is difficult to get people to obey the gospel and become Christians because they do not want to obey the gospel and live the life that Christians must live. It is even more difficult to get people to obey specific commands of the gospel, such as being baptized, because they regard these commands as *non-essential*, as merely *optional*. But read **Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-38; 22:16; Galatians 3:26-27; Romans 6:3-4, 17-18.**

It is difficult to get brethren to really serve the Lord faithfully when they do not want to live the kind of lives that faithfulness requires. But it is even more difficult to get brethren to do what faithfulness requires as long as they think that such is not required of them because they view such things as merely *optional*.

The word “**optional**” is defined: “left to one’s option; open to choice; not compulsory; elective.” Did you know that one of the most disturbing and distressing things among Christians is the fact that many regard some of the very particulars that God **requires** of them as “**optional**”? And, coupled with the fact that they also do not really want to do these very particulars, it makes for disastrous results.

But it is true! In nearly every congregation of God’s people are those who do not really want to:

1. **Study the Bible diligently.** Read **2 Peter 3:18; Colossians 3:16.**
2. **Pray steadfastly.** Read **1 Thessalonians 5:17; Ephesians 6:18; 5:20; Philippians 4:6.**
3. **Keep themselves unspotted from the world.** Read **James 1:27; 1 Timothy 5:22; 1 Peter 2:11-12.**
4. **Assemble faithfully.** Read **Hebrews 10:19-25; Acts 2:42-47; 4:23ff; 11:26.**
5. **Sing fervently.** Read **Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; James 5:13.**
6. **Give as prospered.** Read **Acts 11:29; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:12; 9:7.**
7. **Worship reverently.** Read **John 4:24; Hebrews 13:15; 12:28.**
8. **Grow spiritually.** Read **1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:11–6:1; Ephesians 4:14-15.**
9. **Edify their brethren.** Read **1 Thessalonians 5:11; Romans 15:1-2; 1 Corinthians 14:26.**
10. **Minister to the needy.** Read **James 1:27; 1 John 3:17; Romans 12:13.**
11. **Work to save lost souls.** Read **1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 2:2; Daniel 12:2-3.**

And they regard most of these God-given duties as **optional**! Yes, they think that they can get to heaven without them. They think, for example, that it is good that some of the brethren invite people to church services and try to teach the truth to the lost, but **unnecessary** for them to do any of this. They think that it is good that some of the church members attend **all** of the services, but certainly **not necessary** for them to do so. **May God open the eyes of us all – before it is too late.**

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