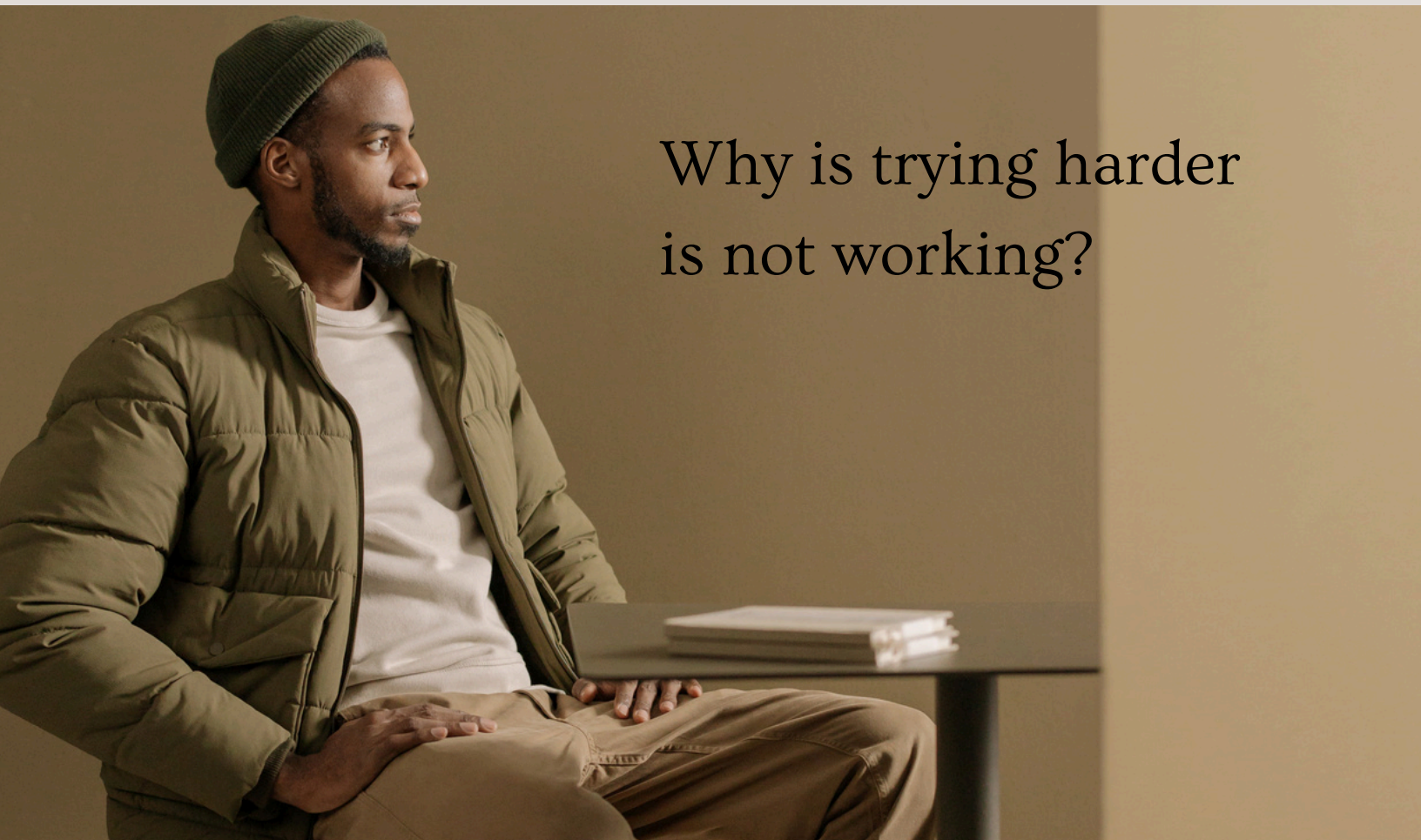


CHECKLIST CHRISTIANITY



Why is trying harder
is not working?



*Is there a better way to
live the Christian life?*

Write out a list of what God expects from you.

*Write out all the
good things you
are to do:*



*Write out all the
wrong you are
to avoid:*

Often, people will equate expectations of God's blessings in their lives in areas of job promotions, church growth, obedient children, etc., with the number of spiritual activities they perform. Then the reality of weariness sets in, and they become tired and feel more and more like a failure. This will often lead to spiritual burnout. When experienced, many will not recognize it as spiritual burnout or are unwilling to admit it. This is a feeling of being mentally, physically, and emotionally tired, and most of all tired of Christianity.

Any effort made to gain self-worth and self-acceptance by living like a super-Christian is not from God. This is Satan's perversion of Christianity and what can be referred to as "Checklist Christianity." Checklist Christianity entails the false belief that our focus should be on doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong.

We believe God has a long checklist of everything He expects us to accomplish every day. We know God wants to bless us, and so we mentally check off our list of what we have done. If most of the list is completed, then we feel good and believe that God will give us blessings that we have deemed acceptable for our performance. If the list is left mostly undone, or the bad checklist is more checked off, we have a bad day and believe God will be disappointed. This leads us to believe that we will either experience a lack of blessing or worse punishment. No wonder we end up with so many Christians in burnout. If the motive of our relationship with God is obligation, fear, and guilt, you will eventually hit a wall.



Two Trees

Read Genesis 2:9

What are the two trees listed in this verse?

The trees represent how Adam and Eve were going to choose to live. Which tree represented how God wanted every human to live?

The Tree of Life required constant dependence upon God and His resources—dependent upon the life of Christ within them. What does the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil represent?

When Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, their mentality changed from a relationship mentality to that of a checklist mentality. They swung back and forth on that tree, going from their good checklist to their evil checklist. As long as they avoided the wrong things and did the right, they could consider themselves godly. Read 2 Timothy 3:5. What does this form of godliness entail?

This was fake godliness. It essentially replaced true holy godliness with human good and evil, human right and wrong. Before eating this fruit, they were motivated by the belief that God loved them and blessed them. Now what was their belief?

What are some problems associated with making a checklist?



Before they ate the fruit, it had never occurred to Adam or Eve to be afraid of God. They only felt His meaningful love and unconditional acceptance. But sin, by its very nature and function, perverts the thinking of every person, especially with regard to thoughts about God, ourselves, and others. Read Isaiah 55:8-9. How do God's thoughts differ from ours?

Once saved, those patterns of sin we relied on become fleshly patterns of living that we resort to, to function and operate. Many of those fleshly living patterns are taught in the form of checklists. Much of our teachings and discipleship fosters this checklist Christianity mentality. The Bible is used to focus on doing right instead of wrong, but all that results in is swinging back and forth on the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Instead, God invites us to go to the Tree of Life of Christ in us. Read Galatians 3:13 and 1 Peter 2:24. What is the cross called in each of these verses?

We will either swing back and forth, up and down, on the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, or we will find stable ground at the foot of the Cross of Christ, choosing to draw from the resources that God provided through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. If we choose to live according to the first tree, we are living in the power of our flesh. If we are able to accomplish anything good, then we deserve the glory. However, God has called us to bring glory to Him. Read 1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Timothy 1:17, and Colossians 3:23. What is the purpose of our life?

Write out Galatians 6:14.

Read Philippians 3:17-21. The flesh is the part of us that wants to live independent of God and His resources. When we do this, we fulfill the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) and we become enemies of the cross of Christ.

Read Galatians 2:20. What is our identity to be?

Read Colossians 3:1-4. Who is to our life?



We all have a choice whether to live in the power of the flesh, which means we are in control, or to live in the power of Christ. We will live swinging back and forth on a tree with little to no stability, or we will live in the power of Christ, drawing from His Tree of Life, the cross.

One of the key characteristics of living as a Checklist Christian is that success is directly tied to how hard you try—this is called “Try Harder Christianity” (THC). The idea is that if you have the right checklist and you just try hard enough, you will finally live in victory. However, if you find yourself failing, it is because you are not trying hard enough, so you will need to have more commitment, possibly rededicate your life to God, and in doing so, you will put yourself in a position to be blessed by God. The alternative for THC is to “Trust Him Christianity”.

Jesus’ work on the cross, his burial, and resurrection are done for you and to you. This has given you several benefits that you could not do for yourself:

- Because God has completely forgiven you, you do not have to try harder to get forgiveness. You already have all you will ever need. He forgave your past, present, and future sins at the point you accepted His salvation.
- Because He has given you a new identity, you can stop trying hard to create one. He has the best you could ever wish for.
- Because Christ has come to live in you to love and live through you, you can stop trying to make yourself live a better Christian life. He has begun a good work in you and will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

How would your life be different if you got rid of your checklist for Christian living?

The answers you gave to your original checklist are probably important, but if doing them as a checklist is your main focus, they will produce unwanted problems that include:

- Emotional struggles that include discouragement, anger, and depression.
- Physical problems such as fatigue and fitful sleep.
- Relationship problems that include conflict.
- Spiritual problems such as disillusionment, self-condemnation, and even rebellion against God.

Take the time to read the first three chapters of Ephesians. As you do, note how God views you and the spiritual blessings He provides for you. Write down ten or more:



Now read Ephesians 4:1-3. In response to God's meaningful love and unconditional acceptance, what is your response to be?



Take the 7-Day No Checklist Challenge

God wants our behavior to be based on the overflow of the dependent, loving relationship we have with Christ and Him in us. He does not want us to try harder to perform a list of tasks. Activity is the result of love; activity to gain favor will fail to produce an intimate relationship with Christ. It will not bring calm and peace. Instead, you will feel far from God and even harbor anger and resentment towards others.

You know someone is wanting to live by a checklist when they say in frustration, “Just tell me what to do!” Too often we believe that if we just had a checklist, we would be able to take it home and know what to work on. There are two major issues with this kind of thinking: 1. If you could change yourself this way, all you have done is strengthen the flesh. 2. Change done in our own power is only temporary and partial. Jesus wants to change you from the inside out – the inside part where Christ resides. The secret is allowing God to live His life through you and make you the best Christian God wants you to be!

Take the 7-Day No-Checklist Challenge

If you are ready to stop feeling exhausted by trying to live the Christian life, why not try the 7-Day No-Checklist Challenge! Take your list and dispose of it. You may still desire to do some of the things on your checklist, and that is great, but do not have a checklist for these spiritual activities. How will you know when your life is no longer governed by a checklist? When you no longer feel guilty for not doing specific activities.

Over the next seven days, ask Jesus to live in you each day instead of relying on your checklist. You may have some questions regarding receiving Christ’s life and allowing Him to live His life through you:

- How will you know that Jesus is living through you? Believe by faith that He is and do not base this on feelings. However, if God convicts you of sin, repent of it.
- What if life seems to get harder when I ask God to live His life through you? This may be spiritual resistance from your flesh or from Satan trying to get you to give up.
- What will be the results of Christ living His life through you? In time you those around you will not feel hostility as much or even at all; instead, they will begin to experience the Fruit of the Spirit. Remember that fruit is not for the tree producing it but for the benefit of others. You will also have the power of the Spirit enabling you to obey Him more and serve with greater fruitfulness.

Remember: No exhausting checklist of right and wrong exists in the Christian’s life! You have Jesus Christ living within you instead!