

# "Can We Count on You?"

By Allan Pole



Theme: A productive person is a dependable person.

Text: 2 Timothy 2:1-7

Here's a thought: The Lord will try you with a little to see what you would do with a lot.

A strong but mentally challenged farm hand named Lem lived in a valley in the state of Vermont. His mother resented him from the day he was born. She often ridiculed him with harsh and demeaning words. Even so, the boy served her till she died. Lem was the target of village jokes. But then one night he came upon a huge dog killing some farmer's sheep. Using his bare hands as his only weapon, he strangled the dog to death. When morning came, the villagers discovered the dog was really a giant timber wolf. Lem quickly earned the villagers' silent admiration.

Later, an unwed village girl falsely accused Lem of being the father of her baby. Even though he was innocent he married the girl so the baby would have a father. Unfortunately, the mother died within a year, so Lem raised the little girl. After she was grown and married, her own baby became desperately ill and Lem sold all his sheep to pay for the baby's medical care.

Confronted with meanness, misunderstanding and loneliness all his life, Lem had some choices to make. He could have chosen a life of bitterness and vengeance. Instead, he chose to serve others faithfully.

In 2 Timothy 2:1-7 the Apostle Paul exhorts his apprentice Timothy to search for such people:

1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable [trustworthy, faithful] men who will also be qualified to teach others. 3 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs - he wants to please his commanding officer. 5 Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes

according to the rules. 6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. 7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. NIV

A faithful person is like a good:

**Soldier** (2 Timothy 2:3-4)



A good soldier is focused on pleasing his commanding officer. You cannot please everyone. In fact, there might be times when you cannot please *anyone*. There is One, however, you should aim to please at all times.

Some people's favourite hymn should be "Onward, Christian Teddy Bears!" Life as a follower of Jesus is more than a frolic; it is a fight. It is not a playground; it is a battlefield. The follower of Jesus is more than a son or daughter, a saint, a servant and a steward. He or she is also a soldier, and he or she has been given orders to "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ".

The Apostle Paul elaborates in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5:

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. NIV

Let your yes be yes and your no be no. A good soldier is known to be a man of his word. When you make a commitment, you must do everything within your power to keep that commitment. This should be true if you are getting paid for your work or not. This should be true in relationships with your family, friends, church, work, school and neighbourhood.

Faithfulness or dependability is described in Psalm 15:1 & 4:

1 Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? 4 [He] who despises a vile man but honours those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts ... NIV

Doing what's right because it's right can push you through and enable you to persevere in any circumstance. God asks that you humbly proceed through life

doing what is right at every juncture.

Faithfulness, or reliability, is listed in the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. Like the other fruit of the Spirit it grows in our lives as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit day in and day out. Like good fruit in any orchard such results do not come instantly but as the gardener and the elements all work together over time.

A soldier in a good mood entered the barracks and called out, "I'll give 20 dollars to the laziest man here!"

Everyone scrambled to his feet and rushed forward to tell how lazy he was except one tall Texan. He simply drawled, "Just roll me over and slip it in my pocket."

As a spiritual soldier you must post guard in seven strategic areas. In your:

1. Thoughts. Master them by knowing the Word of God, by refusing time for vain imaginations and by choosing to think on the proper things.
2. Feelings. Allow God to use your emotions by practicing forgiveness and being filled with the Holy Spirit.
3. Speech. Be slow to speak and quick to listen. Don't repeat rumours. Be honest and positive. Ask yourself, "Would Jesus be pleased with what I'm saying?"
4. Relationships. Those who lack commitment can hold you back, but a Christ-centred relationship can be used of God.
5. Time. Use every hour wisely. Never again will you have the same opportunity to show and tell what God is like.
6. Energy. Leave time to think, pray and rest, lest you open yourself to Satan's attacks.
7. Life's details. Great ministries have fallen because of inattention to details. Remember that "the safest place in the world is in the centre of God's will." The Lord will try you with a little to see what you would do with a lot.

A faithful person is like a good:

Soldier

**Athlete** (2 Timothy 2:5)



A good athlete competes according to the rules. "Rules" have received bad

press these days. They are seen as inhibiting and oppressive. People often view rules as legalistic. Paul refers to rules here as strict conformity to what the particular contest demands, first in training then in actual performance.

Professional golfer Lee Trevino reveals:

There is no such thing as natural touch. Touch is something you create by hitting millions of golf balls.

The Olympic athlete is featured in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. NIV

2,000 years ago, the Olympic athlete disciplined himself and trained exceedingly hard not for a gold medal, but to have a wreath of simple, perishable leaves placed on his head.

Phil Jackson, basketball Hall of Fame player, coach and executive, explained, "My goal is to position our team to win in the last five minutes of the game." Position yourself to win through spiritual discipline and training now.

An interview years ago with Olympic gold medalist and synchronized swimmer Carolyn Waldo made an impact on me. When asked how her life would be different after the Olympics she remarked that she would enjoy a social life again. This comment helped me to catch a glimpse of the price she had paid to be a champion.

Do you want to be a winner in the long run, in the great marathon that Jesus is challenging you to run? The secret to persistence in sports is concentrating on mastery. Do not focus on competing with those around you in your spiritual training. You will always find lazy athletes that will make you feel proud. You will always find better athletes that will discourage you. Be the very best that *you* can be!

What are the rules you need to abide by if you are going to be a finely tuned spiritual athlete?

- Know your Bible
- Know your God
- Know yourself
- Know your world

Devote yourself to pursuing these disciplines and you will find your spiritual muscles begin to ripple.

A faithful person is like a good:

Soldier

Athlete

**Farmer** (2 Timothy 2:6)



A good farmer works hard. New Brunswick born artist, James Keirstead, known for his rural scenes, reveals his philosophy by observing, "Whatever I've done in life, I've done all-out."

Colossians 3:22-24 commands us to be hard workers:

22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. NIV

Rejected by the college of his choice, a banker's son angrily accosted his father. "If you really cared for me, you would have pulled some wires!"

"I know," replied the parent sadly. "The T.V., the router and the phone charger would have done for a start."

Work as if everything depended upon you; pray as if everything depended upon God.

Would your schoolmates, teachers, boss or fellow employees describe you as a hard worker? If no, that needs to change. Would Jesus describe you as a hard worker?

John Egglan had never preached a sermon in his life. Never. It wasn't that he didn't want to, he just never needed to. But then one morning he did. The snow left his town of Colchester, England, buried in white. When he awoke on that January Sunday in 1850, he thought of staying home. Who would go to a

church meeting in such weather? But he reconsidered. He was, after all, a deacon. And if the deacons didn't go, who would? So, he put on his boots, hat and coat and walked the six miles to the Methodist Church. He wasn't the only member who considered staying home. In fact, he was one of the few who came. Only 13 people were present - 12 members and one visitor. Even the minister was snowed in. Someone suggested they go home. Egglan would hear none of that. They'd come this far; they would have a service. Besides, they had a visitor - a 13-year-old boy.

But who would preach? Egglan was the only deacon there, so it fell to him. And so he did. His sermon lasted only ten minutes. It drifted and wandered and made no point in an effort to make several. But at the end, an uncharacteristic courage settled upon the man. He lifted his eyes and looked straight at the boy and challenged: "Young man, look to Jesus. Look! Look! Look!"

Did the challenge make a difference? This boy had become a man when he testified, "I did look, and then and there the cloud on my heart lifted, the darkness rolled away, and at that moment I saw the sun." The boy's name? Charles Haddon Spurgeon. England's prince of preachers.

Are you known as dependable? When you commit yourself to a task, can you be counted on to follow through?

A faithful person is like a good:

**Soldier**

**Athlete**

**Farmer**

A productive person is a dependable person.

