Warning Signs Of Drifting





Bible Study Series

Warning Signs Of Drifting

Learn eight warning signs that you are slowly drifting away from God so that you can correct your life before it's too late

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Warning Signs Of Drifting

Are you drifting away from God? One of the most effective ways Satan gets people to stop serving the Lord faithfully is by "inching" them away from God. Satan often recognizes that it will be easier to get people to stop following God inch-by-inch rather than convincing them to stop attending church services altogether, stop studying the Bible completely, stop calling themselves Christians, etc.

So, he works gradually over as long a time as is needed to separate people from God. Rather than their faith being completely extinguished all at once, he will work to keep someone busy and distracted so that they do not work to rekindle their faith and let it slowly die out due to neglect. By doing this, those whose faiths are burning out often do not recognize it until it is too late. Not that it is too late for them to return to the Lord, but they have often become so desensitized to the sin they are living in that they no longer have the desire to return to God and serve Him faithfully.

But, as Christians, we are not ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). Therefore, we should recognize that Satan is trying to use the things and situations around us to lure us further and further away from God. We must not allow him to catch us unprepared and allow ourselves to drift away from God.

We should be constantly evaluating ourselves. 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified." Since Satan is trying to lure us away little-by-little, every single day, we must be diligent in making *honest* self-evaluations every single day in order to see whether we have moved away from God even the least little bit!

In this lesson, we want to honestly evaluate some warning signs we should observe that we are drifting away from God. Although I am sure that more could be added to this list, these are common warning signs that many Christians have ignored on their path to unfaithfulness. Like a fever is a warning sign that there is something wrong with our physical bodies (i.e. disease, infection, etc.), these should serve as warning signs that there is something wrong with our spiritual health. Therefore, if we can quickly identify that we are drifting, we can get our lives right with the Lord before we fall too far away from Him and before it really is too late!

Willfully Missing Assemblies

One of the first warning signs that an individual is drifting from God that often appears is a change in his/her attendance to the assemblies of the local church. It is common for folks to gradually decline in attending these assemblies. Perhaps it begins by neglecting an assembly for a one-time "special" occasion. Then, perhaps the Bible studies offered by the church are not viewed as being very important and an individual chooses to sleep in a little extra on Sunday mornings. Maybe Wednesday night is next. Then, perhaps these are missed with a little greater frequency. Then comes Sunday evening services and Gospel Meetings. Finally, once these are missed with increasing frequency comes Sunday morning. Maybe there is a commitment to attend all of these at first. But, even this starts to waver over time. And, before you know it, this individual has gone from always present at the services of the local church to rarely (if ever) present. So, let's give some much-needed consideration to this warning sign, lest we drift away.

God commands you to be faithful in attendance

Hebrews 10:24-25 is a very simple to understand passage. It says, "And let us consider one

another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

God expects everyone who has joined themselves to a local church to be faithful in assembling with the local church. But, the question is often asked, "How often can a Christian willfully neglect to assemble with the brethren before he/she is guilty of sin?" Let me answer this question by stating that if you are asking this question in order to justify your decisions or desire to willfully forsake any assembly, you are drifting!

Although that may seem like a harsh statement, the reality of the matter is that those who are Christians ought to have a burning desire to worship God anytime there is an opportunity to do so. John 4:23-24 teaches us that God is seeking true worshipers who will worship the Father in spirit and in truth – and we should be seeking to worship Him! Psalm 122:1 describes the Psalmist's attitude toward worship: "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord." Remember, this statement was made by a man after God's own heart! So, your interest should *not* be to see how many assemblies you can *get by* with missing before you are guilty of sin, but to be present *every time* there is an opportunity to assemble!

Then, the fact of the matter is that if you willfully neglect *any* assembly, you have willfully neglected that assembly! Just consider: How many nights could your spouse not come home because he/she chose to be with someone else before you would consider your spouse to have forsaken you and your family? Would it take 5, 10, 15, or 20 times? Or, would it be the very first time? You see, just as we demand complete faithfulness (trustworthiness) from our spouses, Jesus Christ demands complete faithfulness from us. He demands that we *always* choose to put Him first!

Are you drifting?

Are you drifting by willfully choosing other things above attending the assemblies of the local church? Although there are things that happen that are outside of your ability to control, do you ever *choose* your job, your family, your entertainment, your recreation, your vacation, your friends, your secular education or extracurricular activities, your children's secular education or extracurricular activities, etc. above God? If you do, please heed the warning sign that you are drifting!

Ceasing To Pray

Prayer should be an integral part of the Christian's life every single day. But, unlike with neglecting to assemble with the saints, this is a very private matter. As a result, perhaps there are only two who know whether you are drifting in this area: You and God. Still, it is common for those who are Christians to get so busy and distracted by life that they may only pray at routine times (i.e. bedtime and meal time). Although they may have been very committed to prayer in the past, perhaps they fail to pray and praise God throughout the day. Perhaps they fail to thank God for the blessings He has provided. Perhaps they fail to ask God for help in remaining faithful to Him throughout the day. Perhaps they even fail to lean on God in prayer whenever concerns of life arise. And, perhaps their prayers that are offered are primarily "scripted" and memorized prayers that require little sincerity. So, let's give some much-needed consideration to this warning sign, lest we drift away.

God teaches you to pray without ceasing

1 Thessalonians 5:17 simply instructs, "pray without ceasing." Now, this obviously *cannot* mean that God expects you to begin a prayer and spend every moment of your life in prayer. For, if this was commanded, you would not be able to sleep, to work a job and provide for your family, teach people the gospel, do good to others, etc. Instead, God is simply instructing you to maintain a constant, prayerful attitude.

So, whenever you have the opportunity to pray to God, you will desire to communicate to the Almighty God who created and sustains life! No matter what situation you encounter in your life, prayer is right by your side as a tool to confront the challenges. You must live your life in such a way that you recognize the prayers of the righteous are very powerful. For, James 5:16 says that the "effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Thus, when you face obstacles in your life, you do so prayerfully. You recognize that, through Jesus Christ, you can approach the throne of God with boldness (Hebrews 4:14-16). And, whenever you have cares and concerns in your life, you should cast them all upon the God who cares for you and experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:6-7).

But, you should not just be committed to praying to God whenever there are difficulties in your life. Instead, you should be committed to using prayer as one avenue through which you can offer worship to God! For instance, Hebrews 13:15 says, "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." Continually praise God for who He is and continually thank God for all that He has done for you and for others!

Are you drifting?

Are you drifting by failing to utilize the avenue of prayer that God has provided you with? Do you only offer God "scripted" and memorized prayers? Do you fail to think about prayer throughout the course of your day? Do you fail to think about prayer as a primary solution whenever you are facing an obstacle in life? Do you fail to praise and thank God through prayer? Do you pray less frequently and passionately than you once did? If so, please heed the warning sign that you are drifting!

Becoming Comfortable Around Sin

Sin should be viewed as the Christian's greatest enemy. Christians must recognize that sin is what causes them to be separated from God and will cause people to spend eternity in Hell. And, sin is the reason that Jesus Christ died on the cross for each one of us. Therefore, sin is why every Christian became a Christian – to have his/her sins forgiven. Unfortunately, there are many who become

Christians and then (after a time of living for the Lord) lose sight of the deadly nature of sin. But, rather than diving into a pool of sin all at once, it is common for Christians to wade in gradually. They stick their toes in the water of sin to see how they might like it. Then, they become a little more involved in and desensitized to sin. And, before you know it, someone who once detested sin is comfortable living for sin again. So, let's give some much-needed consideration to this warning sign, lest we drift away.

God expects you to be holy

God is perfectly holy (separated from everything that is evil). Therefore, He has instructed those who are Christians to be holy. 1 Peter 1:15-16 says, "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.""

Notice that every area of the Christian's life is to be characterized by holiness. There is nothing exempt from this standard of holiness in your life. Your thoughts must be holy. Your words must be holy. And, all of your actions must be holy. God does not permit any area of sin and wickedness to be present in your life!

So, He has told you, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good" (Romans 12:9). Rather than becoming comfortable around sin and dabbling in it, you should completely detest and have a horror of everything that is contrary to God's will. For, you must recognize that it results in spiritual death. Then, you must cling only to that which is good and right in the sight of God. Only those things should have any part in your life.

In fact, this is necessary in order to practice "pure and undefiled religion before God." James 1:27 says, "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Notice that pure and undefiled religion in the sight of God does *not* involve any amount of unrighteousness! Instead, God wants you to be hungering and thirsting for righteousness (Matthew 5:6). It is simply impossible for you to claim God as your Father and expect to have Him claim you as one of His children if you have gone back into sin after becoming a Christian (read 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). And, it does not matter how "big" or how "little" you might consider the sin to be. You must never become so desensitized to sin that you try to qualify sins as "significant" or "insignificant." If you do, you are already drifting! You must recognize that all sin is serious and deadly!

Are you drifting?

Are you drifting by becoming comfortable around sin? Do you make excuses for your sin? Are you comfortable participating in entertainment or recreation that is not entirely pure? Are you comfortable watching television programs that use profanity, take God's name in vain, display people who are immodestly dressed, etc.? Are you comfortable listening to music that involves profanity, blasphemy against God, or that talks about things that fail to please God? Are you comfortable wearing clothing that reveals parts of your body that God wants covered? Are you comfortable speaking words that do not glorify God always? Are you comfortable being around your friends or family members while they are engaged in sin? If so, please heed the warning sign that you are drifting!

Neglecting To Study The Bible

Bible study is one of the most fundamental aspects of living for Jesus Christ. In fact, the Bible provides you with everything you need to know about your spiritual wellbeing. So, if you fail to study the Bible, you fail to gain the spiritual nourishment that is essential for your survival. Sadly, it is common for Christians to allow Satan to distract them by the things of this world so that they do not give the needed attention to Bible study in their lives like they should. Although they may start out their Christian lives being devoted to studying the Bible every single day, perhaps they are convinced that they need more time for relaxing, for upkeep around the house, or for some other physical thing that they begin to scale back the time they spend in meaningful Bible study. Then, perhaps they even allow a day to slip by without studying. And, before long, Bible study is something of the past and they are starving themselves spiritually by not studying the Bible in between the assemblies of the church. So, let's give some much-needed consideration to this warning sign, lest we drift away.

God wants you to grow in knowledge of His word

God has always wanted His people to understand the correlation between their spiritual wellbeing and knowing His word. For instance, Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Like those in the days of the judges did what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25), you will do the things that you believe to be right according to your own man-made ideas if you do not have the proper knowledge of God's word.

This, however, results in spiritual death. Although you may feel comfortable with the choices that you make, you will be making them without the knowledge of whether they please God. You see, the only way that you will know whether you are living to please God or not is if you are diligently studying the Scriptures every single day.

That is exactly what the Bereans did. Acts 17:11 says, "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." They did not want to be misled by anyone so as to believe something that is not completely true. So, rather than just accepting what they were being told, they searched the Scriptures to see if it really was the truth. And, their desire to know the truth and be right with God caused them to do this every single day!

Since it is only the truth that God has revealed that will set you free from your sin (John 8:32), you must be diligent to study and rightly interpret the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). Fortunately, the apostle Paul taught that you can "understand what the will of the Lord is" whenever you read what has been written in the pages of the Bible (see Ephesians 3:3-5 and Ephesians 5:17). But, it is not just about spending time *reading* the Bible. Instead, you must really *study* the Scriptures. You must be "diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15)! You must study and meditate on the Scriptures so that you can hide God's word in your heart and not sin against God (Psalm 119:11).

Are you drifting?

Are you drifting by neglecting to study the Bible as you should? Do you leave your Bible at the church building because you will not be using it throughout the week? Do you leave your Bible on the shelf at home? Do you allow days to pass without opening its pages and reading from it? Do you fail to truly study the Bible rather than just read from it? Do you choose to watch television, play video games, spend time with friends, etc. rather than read the Bible? Do you spend just a few minutes in Bible study each day compared to the hours that you spend in your own entertainment or recreation? If so, please heed the warning sign that you are drifting!

Losing Your Zeal

God is not just interested in people calling themselves "Christians." Instead, He wants people to be on fire (fervent) for serving Him and accomplishing His works. And, it is common for folks to begin their Christian lives with such fervor (zeal). After becoming Christians, they may want to tell the whole world about Christ and do as much as they can for their Savior. But, it is often true that over the years, this zeal begins to wane. Perhaps following Jesus is not so much a joy as it is a chore. And, perhaps the good works that are done begin to become less and less. So, let's give some muchneeded consideration to this warning sign, lest we drift away.

God expects you to be zealous for good works

Ephesians 2:8-10 teaches that you have been saved by the grace of God through faith. Therefore,

you have *not* earned your own salvation. Instead, you were saved by God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. So, you are "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." But, I want you to appreciate that this passage does *not* end there. Instead, the passage says that you are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus "for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

God's plan of salvation requires you to be involved in good works. He intends that those who come to Him for salvation will also be devoted to serving Him and accomplishing His works while they live on this earth rather than living for selfish purposes! This can be seen even further in Titus 2:14. Concerning Jesus Christ, the verse states, "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

Consider just how much Jesus Christ has done for you so that you can be saved from the consequences of your sins. He left Heaven, came to earth, suffered at the hands of wicked men, was beaten, was blasphemed, was spat on, and was nailed to the cross to die – all for you! Now, you must recognize that He *did not* go through all of this so that you could continue living for yourself and for your sin! Instead, He did this so that He could cleanse you from your sins and so that you would be zealous (on fire) for the good works He wants you to do on this earth!

Romans 12:11 instructs, "not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." God simply does not want you to be lazy in His service. He did not die for that. In fact, you do not really love God if you find His commandments to be burdensome to you. 1 John 5:3 says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."

Are you drifting?

Are you drifting by losing your zeal? Do you no longer have the desire to do as much as you possibly can do in the Lord's service? Do you fail to be actively involved in teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to others? Do you fail to do good to others whenever you have the opportunity to do so? Do you fail to visit and show hospitality? Do you fail to be an encouragement to your brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ? Do you allow the commandments of God to be burdensome to you? If so, please heed the warning sign that you are drifting!

Failing To Fulfill Your Responsibilities

You have a role in serving the Lord. In fact, you may have multiple roles in serving the Lord. If you have a family, you have family responsibilities. As a member of the church, you have responsibilities in the body of Christ. And, perhaps you have other roles as well. However, there are many Christians today who do not live to fulfill their roles and responsibilities to the best of their abilities. Rather than doing all that they can do to fulfill their roles, they neglect their responsibilities or seek to change their roles. Although they may have embraced their roles in the past, perhaps they have allowed other things in their lives to cause them to do less and less. So, instead of trying to do everything they can do to fulfill their roles, they try to do as little as they can get by with doing or fail to do anything at all. So, let's give some much-needed consideration to this warning sign, lest we drift away.

God has given you a role to fulfill

You are a unique asset to God in His service. Your abilities are not exactly the same as the abilities that other people have. Your opportunities are different from the opportunities that other people have. So, God wants to use your individual abilities and opportunities to the best of your ability to serve Him. For, He knows that when every member of His body does whatever each one is capable of doing, the result is growth in the body (Ephesians 4:16).

This includes your role in the home. As a husband, wife, father, mother, or child, God has given you a specific role to fulfill. And, He expects that you do the very best that you can to fulfill that role. This role cannot be rightly neglected or delegated. Instead, God requires you to do your very best in fulfilling your role.

Then, consider your role in the body of Jesus Christ. As a Christian, you have something that God expects you to contribute to His body. Romans 12:6 simply states, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them...." So, no matter what your abilities are, you must simply determine to use them to accomplish the most that you possibly can in the service of Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:12-13 teaches that you should view every member of your physical body as an instrument (or, tool) to accomplish God's purposes. So, you should consider all of God's instructions and seriously evaluate how you can use the members of your body, your abilities, and your opportunities to serve Jesus Christ.

Are you drifting?

Are you drifting by failing to fulfill your God-given roles and responsibilities? Do you fail to be the husband or wife God wants you to be? Do you fail to be the father or mother God wants you to be? Do you fail to be the child God wants you to be? Do you fail to do your part in the work, worship, and organization of the local church? Do you fail to use your life to do as much as you possibly can to glorify God and accomplish His works? Do you make other people pick up the slack because you are not doing your part (whether in the family or in the church)? Does your failure to fulfill your roles cause God's work to be left undone? If so, please heed the warning sign that you are drifting!

Misplacing Priorities

Whenever people learn the gospel of Jesus Christ and become Christians, they recognize that God must come absolutely first in their lives. And, they are prepared to make that kind of commitment to serve Him. However, it is common for Satan to attack the priorities of those who are Christians. Little-by-little, Satan works to convince people to put things ahead of serving God. Maybe it seems insignificant at first. Maybe it is one overtime opportunity. Maybe it is one practice. Maybe it is one family reunion. But, once he opens this door, he will not stop. So, he continues to lure people away from God and convinces them that there are other things that they need to do rather than serve God. So, let's give some much-needed consideration to this warning sign, lest we drift away.

God must come first in your life

You are at war, whether you recognize it or not. This is a war for your soul, to determine whether you will be saved or lost. And, the battlefield of this war is your mind. God is wanting you to be completely focused on serving Him and putting Him first in all things. Satan is wanting you to be focused on the physical things of life that appeal to your fleshly desires and choose to put them before serving God.

So, Romans 8:5-8 says, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

For this reason, you must determine that serving God is your primary focus in living life on this earth – and never waver from that commitment. For, Jesus said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). In context, this passage even teaches that you must put your focus on serving God before you focus on your physical necessities (i.e. food and clothing)! You must focus on being part of the kingdom of God and submit to Him *before* you focus on living on this earth and doing the things that please yourself!

In fact, Jesus teaches that if you want to be His disciple, you must love Him more than your own family, more than your own physical life, and be willing to bear whatever burdens are necessary in order to follow Him (see Luke 14:25-33). If you do not, Jesus says that you cannot be His disciple! So, this all means that serving God must come absolutely first in every single decision you make, in every word that you say, and in everything that you do! If He comes in any other place besides first in your life, you fail to please Him!

Are you drifting?

Are you drifting by misplacing priorities in your life? Do you choose family, entertainment, recreation, work, or other activities instead of attending faithfully with the local church? Do you choose to use your wealth on your own desires first rather than giving to support the work of the local church, helping those who are in need, or spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do you choose to spend your "free time" on your own interests, hobbies, friends, etc. before you choose to do good works in God's service? If so, please heed the warning sign that you are drifting!

Losing Your Trust In God

God is the great Creator of all things. He is perfect. And, His word is perfect. Therefore, we can completely trust in Him and in all of the things He says. Unfortunately, some who have become Christians in the past waver in their trust whenever circumstances become difficult. Although they may have had an unwavering faith in the past, they now rely more and more on their own ideas and the judgments of other men and women for guidance in life. Perhaps it starts with just a single instance of believing the teachings of men rather than the word of God. But, Satan will try to convince us more and more that God cannot be trusted. So, let's give some much-needed consideration to this warning sign, lest we drift away.

You must trust in God with all your heart

Trust in God is fundamental to every other responsibility that you have in serving the Lord. For, if you do not trust the Lord completely, you will not do the things He says. If you do not believe the Bible to be the absolutely true and perfect word of God, you will rely on your own ideas, feelings, traditions, etc. to determine what is right and wrong in life. If you do not believe that God's promise of everlasting life in Heaven is a sure thing, you will not be willing to endure the sufferings and hardships of life in order to obtain it.

So, you must examine all the evidence for God and His word and determine that you will place your full confidence in God. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths."

Although the circumstances of life may look uncertain at times, your unwavering trust must remain in the Lord. Don't allow yourself to believe that you know better than God so that you walk in your own paths rather than in the ways of the Lord. Instead, acknowledge that God always knows what is best and, whether you understand fully or not, choose to walk by faith rather than by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7)!

If you desire to please God, you must have this kind of unwavering faith in God. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." You must be extremely careful to evaluate every step that you take in life and make sure that each step is a step of faith in God, not a step that is based in the things of man!

Are you drifting?

Are you drifting by failing to trust in God? Do you try to solve all your problems by yourself before you ever take your concern to God in prayer? Do you decide what is right and what is wrong based on your own ideas, feelings, secular education, tradition, etc.? Are you afraid to completely commit yourself to living for the Lord and enduring all of the difficulties of life because you are not sure whether Heaven will be your eternal home? If so, please heed the warning sign that you are drifting!

Conclusion

Are you drifting? These are just a few of the warning signs that you need to heed. But, you will only be able to heed these if you are honestly evaluating your life to see whether you are living up to the standard that God has given in the pages of His word! For, there are many people who had once become Christians who are adrift in the sea of sin and do not even realize it. They do not realize it because they are unwilling to honestly evaluate themselves according to God's standard. Please, take your soul's salvation very seriously and constantly evaluate yourself to see whether you are in the faith or not! For, if you have drifted away from God, your soul is in danger of spending eternity in Hell!

Study Questions

How does Satan try to lure you gradually away from God?

1. Willfully Missing Assemblies

Does God command you to be faithful in attendance?

Are you drifting by willfully choosing other things above attending the assemblies of the local church?

2. Ceasing To Pray

Does God teach you pray without ceasing?

Are you drifting by failing to utilize the avenue of prayer that God has provided you with?

3. Becoming Comfortable Around Sin

Does God expect you to be holy?

Are you drifting by becoming comfortable around sin?

4. Neglecting To Study The Bible

Does God want you to grow in the knowledge of His word?

Are you drifting by neglecting to study the Bible as you should?

5. Losing Your Zeal

Does God expect you to be zealous for good works?

Are you drifting by losing your zeal?

6. Failing To Fulfill Your Responsibilities

Does God expect you to fulfill your role(s)?

Are you drifting by failing to fulfill your God-given roles and responsibilities?

11

7. Misplacing Priorities

Does God demand to come first in your life?

Are you drifting by misplacing priorities in your life?

8. Losing Your Trust In God

Does God expect you to trust in God with all your heart?

Are you drifting by failing to trust in God?