What makes one approved of God? Good looks did not help Absalom (see 2 Samuel 14:25). Being the first born did not help Esau (Genesis 25:25). Having wealth did not help the rich young man of Matthew 19:16-22. Personal convictions that have nothing to do with salvation will not help one be approved of God (Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 7:19). The factious Corinthian's opinions did not help them get closer to God (2 Corinthians 10:12). How is man approved of God?

Isaiah, speaking for God, said, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word" (Isaiah 66:2b). Again, the prophet of God writes, "For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isaiah 57:15). Moses writes, "And now, Israel, what doth Jehovah thy God require of thee, but to fear Jehovah thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and with all they soul, to keep the commandments of Jehovah, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). Solomon writes "This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Micah writes, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). When Jesus was asked by a lawyer what the greatest commandment in the law was the Lord said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy god with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all
thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:37-40).

Is there any doubt that the approved of God are those who read God's commands and follow those commands? While there is nothing wrong with having a personal conscience and conviction, opinions, wealth, and good looks none of these things will get one close to God. Man's greatest battle against Satan is in the area of making a proper distinction between these adiaphorous issues and the doctrine of Jesus Christ (see 2 Corinthians 2:11). When one blends these nonessential elements in their lives with the word of God they cause confusion and strife with their selves and all those they teach.

The factious brethren in Corinth stand as a prime example of those who placed their opinions, convictions, and personal prejudices on par with God's divine standard. Paul said that all who do such things are "without understanding" (2 Corinthians 10:12). To be truly approved of God I must measure up to God's standards and no one else's (2 Corinthians 10:18). Let us all learn to put aside human opinion and conviction and put our total trust and confidence strictly in the word of God. The apostle Paul writes about the power of God's word saying that it, "Cast down imaginations (human reason) and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Not everyone will have such an approach to spirituality. Most are bent on doing things their own ways. Jesus said, "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leads unto life, and few are they that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). Few find and keep the way of Christ in obedience. Why? Solomon writes, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; But Jehovah weighs the spirits" (Proverbs 16:2 see also Proverbs 16:9, 25; 21:2). The eternally successful man or woman will be the one who is able to give the right reverence and fear toward God's divine revelation.

John C. Robertson
Greater Faith and Dedication to God

Introduction:

To lose sight of reality in this life is to forever loose your soul. The reality of life is that we will stand before the Lord and give an account as to how our lives measured up to God's divine standard (see Hebrews 9:27). God is Lord of all humanity and history (see Jeremiah 32:27). All the earth is subject to his divine will (see Isaiah 24:1-6). Why have men and women of past history lost sight of the Lord and his divine will (Isaiah 17:10; Jeremiah 13:25)? Why do people today forget God? Why do people fall from grace (Galatians 5:1ff)? Why are people neglecting their salvation today (Hebrews 2:3). Many of the Lord's people are not being faithful today, they are loosing their interest in God, and they are giving up on the Lord. Church buildings are a mess, building lawns are neglected, no one wants to teach Bible classes, many choose not to come to worship at all, the lost are not being taught, and the saved are not being edified. Why is this happening? The objective of this lesson is to light a fire under all of us. To regain a spirit of fervent love for the Lord and his church. Jeremiah said, "Then I said, 'I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name.' But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not" (Jeremiah 20:9 / NKJVB).

I. What is Causing the Apostasy among the People of God?
   A. Have we closed our eyes to creation (see Isaiah 51:13).
   B. Have we began to put our trust and interest in other things (Jeremiah 13:25; Ezekiel 22:12; 1 Timothy 6:6ff)
   C. A loss of interest due to a careless approach to God's divine standard (Hosea 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:15).
   D. A loss of interest due to a change in priorities (Hobbies, activities, promotions at work, grass is greener in the other yard mentality) (see Matthew 13:10-16).
   E. A loss of interest due to a weary heart (Hebrews 12:1-6).

II. How can I Regain my Faith and Conviction?
   A. Take a fresh look at God's love and providence in your life (Exodus 19:3-6; 20:1-2; John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9).
   B. Honestly assess your priorities.
   C. Recall the consequences of forgetting God (Romans 1:18; 2:1-10).
   D. Get back to being interested in God's word (prodigy) - Ezra 7:6, 10.

III. Will the Lord forgive me for my Lack of Love shown toward Him?
   A. Be willing to admit you have not served the Lord as you should have (Isaiah 57:15).
   B. Remember your original forgiveness and purpose not to backslide (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
   C. The only sin God will not forgive is the one you refuse to ask him about (see 1 John 5:14-17).

Conclusion:

Have you forgotten God? Have you put God on a shelf and procrastinated your service to him? Please remember your initial love for God and happiness at conversion. Don't lose sight of this most important part of your life.