

7 Faithfulness: The Fruit of Belief

Faithfulness is the quality of being full of faith. Faith is the great theme of the Bible. It appears first in Genesis 4, when Cain and Abel took their offerings to God. God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's. The reason is not given there, but in Hebrews 11 we learn that it was Abel's faith which made the difference (11:4).

We cannot disassociate God from faith. For example, God is the author of our salvation, His grace is its source, and our faith is the channel for receiving it. Our relationship with Jesus Christ is based on faith: "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Romans 1:17). "We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). Faith is the foundation of our relationship to God through His Son. "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

In this lesson you will learn that there are different aspects of faith, and one of these is faithfulness as the fruit of the Spirit. Your faith is proved by your faithfulness. It is based on belief in God and a deep, abiding trust that will sustain you in every circumstance. It is demonstrated by your trustworthiness and consistent Christian life. Is the fruit of faithfulness evident in your life? This lesson will help you to examine your faithfulness to the kingdom of God and will encourage you to allow the Holy Spirit to produce this fruit more in you.

lesson outline

Faithfulness Identified

Faithfulness Described

Faithfulness Illustrated

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

1. Identify the six expressions of faith with a definition of each.
2. State the significance of the words *faith* and *faithful* in the Bible.
3. Examine Scripture verses that give aspects of God's faithfulness.
4. State principles of faithfulness.
5. Identify biblical examples of faithfulness.
6. Indicate ways we can show faithfulness to God and to others.

learning activity

Study the lesson in the same manner as you have studied previous lessons. Be sure to read all Scripture texts, and learn the definitions for key words you are not familiar with. Answer all study questions and check your answers.

key words

| | | |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| consistency | intellectual | stewardship |
| conviction | loyalty | supernatural |
| expenditures | persuasion | trustworthiness |
| fidelity | <i>pistis</i> | unwavering |
| insincere | vows | |
| integrity | sincerity | |

lesson development

FAITHFULNESS IDENTIFIED

Six Kinds of Faith

Objective 1. *Identify the six expressions of faith with a definition of each.*

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness” (Galatians 5:22). Some Bible translations list faith rather than faithfulness as the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, but as we shall see, the word *faithfulness* is a more precise translation. In its broadest sense, faith is our unshakable belief in God and the gospel, and therefore it is the trunk rather than the fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is given as qualities or attributes; faithfulness is the attribute of one who has faith.

Before we can study the significance of faithfulness as the fruit of the Spirit, we first need to understand the meaning of the word *faith*. To do this, we will look at six aspects of faith. Faith expresses itself in several ways:

1. *Natural faith.* Everyone is born with natural faith, which is related simply to human reasoning. This is the faith that you have when you board an airplane. You must believe that the plane is in good mechanical condition and has everything necessary to make it capable of flying. You must also believe that the pilot has the necessary training and ability to take the plane into the air and bring it down again at its proper destination. Every day we must exercise our natural faith in many ways—when we eat food prepared by others, when we cross a street at a busy intersection, when we turn on a light switch, and in all of our relationships we depend upon certain beliefs that we have found in the past to be reliable. In this sense a person can have an intellectual belief or faith that God exists without having a personal relationship with Him.

2. *Saving faith.* This faith is imparted to the heart by the Word of God anointed by the Holy Spirit: “For it is by

grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). This is the faith God quickens in our hearts when we hear the gospel message. Our part is to act upon that faith, confess our sins, and accept God’s gift of salvation. When the jailer asked the apostle Paul, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul’s reply was, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:30–31).

3. *Living faith.* After we accept Christ, we have a faith that is a firm, unwavering trust in God, an abiding faith. This faith keeps us trusting God no matter what happens, because we are secure in Him. Living faith keeps us from being overcome by our trials. This is the faith expressed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:13, “It is written: ‘I believed; therefore I have spoken.’ With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.”

4. *Gift of faith.* This faith is a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit, given to the church as He wills: “to another [is given] faith by the same Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:9). This faith is exercised in the church through miracles, healings, and other manifestations of the Spirit of God. This is the faith of God operating through man.

5. *Fruit of faith (faithfulness).* Unlike the gift of faith, faith as the fruit of the Spirit within us grows (see 2 Corinthians 10:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:3). Jesus mentioned this faith in Mark 11:22: “Have faith in God.” Literally this means “Have faith being in God” or “Have the faith that God has.” This faith is revealed by a quality or attitude of trustworthiness.

6. *Faith as beliefs.* That which is believed, or the contents of belief, is called one’s faith, as in Acts 6:7: “The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.” In other words, these priests accepted the doctrine of the gospel; they were won over by the power of the truths of Christ. This doctrine, these truths, became their faith.

Application

1 Match the six expressions of faith (right) to the definition of each (left).

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|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| ... a | Gift of the Holy Spirit to the church, which results in super natural manifestations | 1) Natural faith |
| ... b | Faith which is exercised when you sit down on a chair | 2) Saving faith |
| ... c | The contents of that which I believe | 3) Living faith |
| ... d | A growing faith produced by the Holy Spirit and resulting in faithfulness | 4) Gift of faith |
| ... e | Constant trust in God in every circumstance | 5) Fruit of faith |
| ... f | Faith which results in confession of sin and acceptance of Christ | 6) Faith as beliefs |



Faithfulness Defined

Objective 2. *State the significance of the words faith and faithful in the Bible.*

It is enlightening to study the word “faithful” as it is used in the Old Testament. The root word is *aman*, as in Numbers 12:7, and it can mean “to build, support, make firm, to be permanently founded, to trust, to be true, to be certain of something.”

Application

2 Read Numbers 12:7. Which of these definitions do you think fit the description of Moses as faithful here?

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From *aman* comes the word *emun* (faith) which is used in Deuteronomy 32:20 in a negative sense, speaking of the unfaithful Israelites; and the word *omenah* (trust), as in Exodus 18:21 which speaks of appointing trustworthy men. Our word “amen” also comes from *aman*, as in Numbers 5:22. (“So be it.”) So from these examples we can see that the main idea of faithfulness in the Old Testament is related to trust, firmness, and certainty.

In the New Testament the word *pistis* is translated as faith, and its central idea is that of a full persuasion or conviction based upon hearing, as in Romans 10:17, “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” In Matthew 23:23 *pistis* is related to trust, or faithfulness.

It is interesting that Jesus emphasized that He is truth and is to be trusted by uttering the double expression “amen, amen” 25 times in the Gospel of John. In the King James Version this is translated as “verily, verily,” and in the New International Version it is translated as “I tell you the truth.” The first of these expressions occurs in John 1:51.

The word *faith* is mentioned very little in the Old Testament, but it was present in the lives of Old Testament saints. Hebrews 11:2 says that faith “is what the ancients were commended for.” The chapter is devoted to recounting the faith of Old Testament saints. They were saved through faith as we are today, but they were saved by faith in the coming Lamb of God while we are saved by the same Lamb that was slain. They lived in the shadow of His coming; we live in the reality (see Colossians 2:17). The only difference is that with a shadow the reality is not always seen, but it is there!

For example, the book of Esther is an amazing story of supernatural deliverance by God’s hand, although His name is not once mentioned. His “shadow” is there, even though He is not seen. This is a comforting truth—even when we do not see Him present in a particular course of events, He is there and ready to deliver us. Psalm 121:5 promises, “The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand.” Faith is mentioned only twice in the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 32:20 and Habakkuk 2:4. But its shadow is seen and felt throughout all of the books of the Old

Testament. This is confirmed by Hebrews 11. This chapter also clearly indicates that faithfulness is the true sense of faith as the fruit of the spirit.

We have said that the word *pistis* has been translated as both faith and faithfulness in different versions of the Bible. The reason is that in our relationship with Christ there are two aspects to be considered. Faith is the close relationship of our spirit with our Master, Jesus Christ. First of all it is our trust in Him to save us completely (see John 1:12; Hebrews 7:25). Second, faith in Christ results in full commitment of the saved person to his Savior. The first aspect of faith binds us to Jesus as our Savior; the second binds us to Him in complete loyalty. “Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6). So the two main uses of the word *pistis* refer to believing and faithfulness.

In secular Greek the word *pistis* is commonly used to mean “trustworthiness,” a characteristic of a reliable man (William Barclay 1976, 51). Trustworthiness simply means “worthy of trust,” and speaks of one who can be completely trusted. This trustworthiness has the sense of fidelity to standards of truth and of reliability in dealings with others (Guthrie 1973, 140). The reliable person is one who can always be counted on to do what is right and to keep his promises. Thus, faithfulness as the fruit of the Spirit comprises the basic ideas of integrity, fidelity, loyalty, honesty, and sincerity.

Application

3 Based on the examples given, write the meaning of each of these words:

- a) *pistis*:
- b) *omenah*:
- c) *emun*:
- d) amen:
- e) trustworthiness:
- f) reliability:

- 4** Which of these statements reflect the significance of the words *faith* and *faithful* in the Bible? Circle the letter preceding TRUE statements.
- a)** Trustworthiness and reliability are similar in meaning and are characteristics of a loyal or dependable person.
 - b)** The words *aman*, *omenah*, and *amen* in the Old Testament speak of trust, firmness, or certainty.
 - c)** When we relate the word *faith* to a shadow in the Old Testament, we mean that it is mentioned over and over again.
 - d)** When Jesus used the term “amen, amen” numerous times in the Gospel of John, He was emphasizing His trustworthiness and truthfulness.
 - e)** The term *pistis* is used only in reference to saving faith in the New Testament.
 - f)** Faithfulness as the fruit of the Spirit includes fidelity to standards of truth and reliability in relationships with others.
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FAITHFULNESS DESCRIBED

God’s Faithfulness

Objective 3. *Examine Scripture verses that give aspects of God’s faithfulness.*

Faithfulness is an attribute of the Holy Trinity. God the Father is faithful: “Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands” (Deuteronomy 7:9; see also 1 Corinthians 10:13). Our blessed Lord Jesus is called “Faithful and True” (Revelation 19: 11). He is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Faithfulness is an attribute of the Holy Spirit: “The fruit of the Spirit is . . . faithfulness” (Galatians 5:22).

Many times the Bible bears testimony of God’s faithfulness. Let’s consider some of these:

1. He is clothed with faithfulness. “Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist” (Isaiah 11:5). This is our reminder that faithfulness is part of His very being.

2. He is faithful to exceed His promises. “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:23). The Word of God is filled with promises, and these promises are ours. Peter says that by His glory and goodness “he has given us his very great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4). If God has promised you something, you can claim His promise by faith and prayer, for He is faithful.

3. God is faithful to forgive. We have this assurance in 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” His forgiveness is not based on what we feel, but on our faith that He will do what He has promised.

4. God is faithful in calling us. His first call to us is for salvation, and then He calls us to serve Him, as He called Peter by the Sea of Galilee. He calls the backslider to return to Him (see Jeremiah 3:12, 22). He calls us to reveal His plan and will for us, as He did to Samuel (1 Samuel 3:10–11). He calls us to be sanctified and holy (1 Corinthians 1:2). And one day He will call us to meet Him in the air, according to His promise (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17). We have this promise in 1 Thessalonians 5:24: “The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.” Has He called you to do a special work for Him? You can trust in His faithfulness to do what He has promised. We may well say with the prophet, “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22–23).

Application

5 Which Scripture verse mentioned reveals to us that faithfulness is an important characteristic of God’s nature?

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6 Two aspects of God’s faithfulness to keep His promises are revealed in Galatians 6:7–8. What are they?

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7 What are the two requirements for receiving God’s forgiveness?

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8 What assurance do we have that God will help us to do whatever He has called us to do?

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9 Complete this statement to summarize the aspects of God’s faithfulness mentioned in this lesson:

God is faithful to

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Principles of Faithfulness

Objective 4. *State principles of faithfulness.*

Romans 5:1 tells us that “since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” Thus faith is the foundation for faithfulness and the other virtues which make up the fruit of the Spirit. The new life in Christ is to be one of faithfulness and sincerity, in contrast with the old sinful life. There are some important principles related to faithfulness which we need to consider at this time. These principles should shape the lifestyle of the Christian and affect all of his relationships.

1. *Faithfulness and love.* Galatians 5:6 says, “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” Faith as the foundation requires love for its expression and operation. Just as a husband and wife prove their love for each other by their faithfulness to one another, we prove our love for God by faithfulness to His Word and His will.

2. *Faithfulness suffering.* Faithfulness includes suffering for Christ and with Christ. In this respect faithfulness is closely associated with endurance, which we have discussed in a previous lesson. The epistle to the Hebrews was written against a background of fierce persecution. It is in such environment that faith is really tested. In Hebrews 6:12 the elements of faithfulness and endurance in suffering are found: “We do not want to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.” Faithfulness as the fruit of the Spirit endures in every circumstance.

3. *Faithfulness and vows.* Faithfulness as the fruit of the Spirit has much to do with moral and Christian ethics. This blessed fruit makes the Christian standard one of responsibility in word and deed. There was a time when a man’s word had great value, and a handshake was as good as a written contract. This does not seem to be true in our present age. But the man who walks with God must be different, because the fruit which is loyalty, honesty, and sincerity is in him. The Holy Spirit imparts the power for the Christian always to be one who keeps his vows. Ecclesiastes 5:5 says, “It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it.” No one is obliged to make vows or promises, but if you make a vow and fail to keep it you are failing in manifesting the fruit of the Spirit. The man of God in Psalm 15:4 pays his debts, keeps his word, and maintains his honor. A Christian like this is worth more than 20 others who talk a lot and whose word nobody trusts. These do not have the fruit of the Spirit.

4. *Faithfulness and loyalty.* Faithfulness as the fruit of the Spirit makes us loyal to God, loyal to our companions, friends, co-workers, employees, and employers. The loyal man will support what is right even when it is easier to remain silent.

He is loyal whether he is being watched or not. This principle is illustrated in Matthew 25:14–30. The servants who were faithful and did as they were instructed even in the absence of their master were commended and rewarded. The unfaithful servant was punished.

5. *Faithfulness and consistency.* Many people are guilty of starting a project and never finishing it. How many things have you started but never finished? Do you start Christian habits such as family devotions, private devotions, Bible study, or paying tithes, but fail to carry through on them? The making of so many resolutions but failing to keep them is a sort of unfaithfulness. It is a lack of consistency. A faithful Christian is a consistent Christian. He is faithful in church attendance, in keeping his promises, and in doing that which he has set out to do. Paul exhorted Timothy to “Be prepared in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2). This implies consistency in carrying out the duties assigned to him by God.

6. *Faithfulness in stewardship.* A steward is someone who manages the affairs or property of another. We are God’s stewards, and He has entrusted us to do His work according to His will. This is our ministry for Him. Faithfulness as the fruit of the Spirit is of top importance in the gospel ministry. This is seen in Paul’s words to the young minister Timothy: “Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (2 Timothy 1:14). What is this “good deposit” entrusted to God’s stewards? First, it is our responsibility to share God’s treasure, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus asked, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?” (Luke 12:42). We are to be faithful in endeavoring to give sound Bible teaching. The apostle Paul said, “Do not go beyond what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6). Paul was so sure that his teaching was according to God’s Word that he said, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2). In 1 Corinthians 4:2 Paul wrote, “Now it is

required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”

We are called to be watchmen to warn the world of the coming destruction which awaits every unrepentant sinner. Ezekiel 3:18 warns us, “When I say to a wicked man, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood.” We are living in an age when people seek pleasure and selfish, personal gain. The Christian steward is faithful to put his Master’s interests ahead of his own, working to reap a spiritual harvest of souls for the kingdom of God.

Faithfulness in stewardship includes giving our time, our talents, and our possessions to the Lord, remembering that it is all His, and we are His managers. We must be faithful with our Master’s goods, for it is written, “And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?” (Luke 16:12).

Matthew 25 contains two very important parables of Jesus relating to His stewards. They emphasize two things the Lord wants to find in His people when He returns: a perfect relationship with Him, and faithfulness to Him.

Application

10 Read Matthew 25:14–28. Which of the following statements gives the spiritual lesson to be learned from this parable?

- a) It is better to hold on to what God has given us than to take a chance on losing it by sharing it with others.
- b) The kingdom of God is prepared for those who have many talents to invest for God.
- c) God will hold us accountable for the way we invest what He has given to us, whether it be small or great.

11 Match each term (right) with the principles of faithfulness related to it (left).

- ... **a** Because we are His managers, we give our time, talent, and possessions to the Lord.
 - ... **b** We will keep our promises and be trustworthy.
 - ... **c** Calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints.
 - ... **d** Involves sharing God's treasure, the gospel of Christ, with others.
 - ... **e** Required for the expression and operation of faithfulness.
 - ... **f** If I start a work for the Lord, I will carry through with it.
 - ... **g** I will not fail to keep up good habits such as family devotions.
 - ... **h** With God as my standard, I will support others in what is right.
- 1) Love
 - 2) Suffering
 - 3) Vows
 - 4) Loyalty
 - 5) Consistency
 - 6) Stewardship

FAITHFULNESS ILLUSTRATED

Biblical Examples

Objective 5. *Identify biblical examples of faithfulness.*

Joseph was an outstanding leader and faithful servant of God. He preferred to go to jail rather than be unfaithful to his master. The record of his great faithfulness is found in Genesis 37 through 48.

Joshua was chosen to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land because he was a faithful and trustworthy man. One

example of his faithfulness is found in Joshua 9, when he kept his word and refused to kill the Gibeonites.

Moses performed wonders in the presence of Pharaoh, yet God was willing to kill him because he failed to be obedient in what seemed to be a small thing: he failed to circumcise his son (Exodus 4:24). He learned that faithfulness includes total obedience. Moses from then on certainly was obedient, because in Hebrews 3:5 we are told that “Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house.” Moses’ obedience involved three things: 1) He refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter (Hebrews 11:24). In other words, he chose to go God’s way rather than enjoy the privileges of royalty. 2) He chose to be mistreated along with God’s people. Faithfulness in obedience is tested when you have to make decisions that humanly speaking are harmful to you. 3) He left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger. Obedience sometimes requires one to leave something behind. Moses did all of these things because he was a faithful servant of God.

David was a man of great faith. It is inspiring to consider the way David took God at His Word, trusting in His faithfulness to keep His promises. When David was crowned king over all Israel, God promised him that his house and his kingdom would endure forever. Right away David “went in and sat before the Lord” (2 Samuel 7:18). Certainly this was a time of great spiritual refreshing for David, for soon after he left that sacred place he won a great victory over the Philistines.

God’s promise to David came true, and the throne belongs forever to David’s house. When the angel Gabriel foretold Jesus’ birth, he said, “The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:32–33). The birth of Jesus fulfilled the faithful promise of God to David.

David’s mighty men. David was helped greatly in his battles by 30 loyal and mighty men who supported him and fought with him (see 2 Samuel 23:8–39). David did not forget them when he was crowned king over all of Israel. Likewise, the

Lord Jesus—the greater son of David—will not forget His own in the world who have faithfully fought the good fight of faith as a witness for Him.

Daniel was faithful to God even at the risk of his life. He continued his time of daily prayers and obeyed God in everything he did, even in the face of strong opposition. His enemies tried to find fault with him but found nothing they could accuse him of. He was faithful to God and to his country even when he was taken captive into a foreign land. God honored his faithfulness by bringing deliverance and honor to him. His story is told in the book of Daniel.

King Joash had treasurers who were so honest that they were not required to give an accounting for their expenditures (see 2 Kings 12:15). In another instance, King Josiah's foremen were not required to give an account of their payments to the workers, because they were so trustworthy (2 Kings 22:7). Here are two tremendous examples of faithfulness for employees at all levels who are responsible for the careful handling of public funds.

New Testament apostles. Before he was filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter denied his Lord before a maidservant (Luke 22:54–60). But after he was empowered by the Holy Spirit, he confessed his faith with boldness everywhere he went—even before the chief authorities in Jerusalem (Acts 4:18–20).

The book of Acts or any of the Epistles has many examples of faithfulness of the apostles to preach the gospel without fear even when they were persecuted. The writer to the Hebrews makes a strong declaration of their faith. He reminded the Jewish Christians of the great faithfulness of the saints of old, many of whom were severely persecuted and even martyred for their faith. He sums it all up with this exhortation:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1)

Application

12 State one lesson we can learn from each of these faithful saints:

- a) Joseph
- b) Joshua
- c) Moses
- d) David.....
- e) David's mighty men
- f) Daniel
- g) King Joash's and King Josiah's employees
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- h) New Testament apostles
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Personal Applications

Objective 6. *Indicate ways we can show faithfulness to God and to others.*

Faithfulness as the blessed fruit of the Spirit is of vital importance for the Christian in his relationship to God, to others, and to himself. As faith is the basis of our belief and our total communion with Jesus Christ, faithfulness is the virtue of reliability and trustworthiness which makes the Christian someone who can be relied upon. God is looking for faithful people to walk with Him and serve Him. "My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me" (Psalm 101:6).

Faithfulness to God. In Deuteronomy 32, Moses in his last words before his death warned Israel concerning the several tragic downward steps they had taken against the Lord. The

last one is unfaithfulness (v. 20). This is the Lord's word to the prophet Jeremiah some time later:

“Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, look around and consider, search through her squares. If you can find but one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city. . . . The house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly unfaithful to me,” declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 5:1, 11)

Because of their sin of unfaithfulness, the Israelites were finally taken into captivity. But we are assured in Proverbs 28:20 that “a faithful man will be richly blessed.” Total faith in God, which includes respect, obedience, and submission, is our first line of defense against unfaithfulness. We must be faithful to God first before we can show ourselves faithful in our other relationships.

We might ask ourselves, “Is my faithfulness to God as reliable as His faithfulness to me? Am I clothed with faithfulness? Do I keep my promises to God? Am I faithful in expressing my love for Him and in keeping my vows? Do I suffer patiently and willingly for the sake of the gospel? Am I a loyal and consistent steward? Can I be trusted with the treasure that He has placed in my hands?” These are important questions that should motivate us to greater faithfulness.

Faithfulness to other people. The fruit of faithfulness produced in us by the Holy Spirit should affect our relationships with everyone around us. We should be seen as completely trustworthy: acting, speaking, and behaving in a way that inspires trust. The faithful Christian will keep his word, be consistent in his Christian life, and develop habits that are pleasing to God. He will prove himself faithful in his home, loving his family and working for their good. He will be consistent in the training of his children. He will be a good and honorable neighbor, employer, or employee. He will be faithful in attendance at worship services and supportive of his pastor. He will minister to the needs of others, following the

example of Jesus. The body of Christ will be strengthened and encouraged because of his faithfulness in all that he does.

Faithfulness to oneself. A friend was going as a missionary to South America. In a radio interview, she was asked what she would do there. Her reply was, "I'm going to be what I say I am." A person who is faithful to himself is not double-minded. In Psalm 119:113 David said, "I hate double-minded men, but I love your law." James 1:8 says that a double-minded man is "unstable in all he does." Paul said that deacons must be sincere (1 Timothy 3:8). The Greek word for *insincere* means "double-tongued." God wants us to be what we say we are, and not be double-minded about our devotion to Him.

Rewards of faithfulness. The story is told of an engineer who hired a foreman for his construction business. The engineer had a reputation for building homes of the finest quality, using only the best materials always. For a number of years the engineer and the foreman worked closely together, producing many homes of top quality.

Finally the engineer decided it was time to give his foreman full responsibility, so he assigned the foreman to build a house for a certain amount of money. The house was to be built, as usual, of the finest quality materials available. This time the foreman would work without supervision. The foreman reasoned to himself that if he would use lower quality materials, the house would still look the same, and no one would ever know the difference. By doing this, he would have a large sum of money left over which he could keep.

When the home was completed, the foreman proudly invited the engineer to inspect it. It was a beautiful home, and only the foreman knew that it was not soundly built. Imagine his shock when the employer told him that the house was a gift to him for his many years of service. He thought, "If I had known the house would be mine, I would have put the very best materials into it. Now it is too late, and I must live in what I have built."

Remember that "a faithful man will be richly blessed" (Proverbs 28:20). The one who has the fruit of faithfulness in

his life will hear the Lord say to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Matthew 25:21). But the unfaithful servant will be thrown “into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 25:30).

Near the end of his discussion of life in the Spirit, the apostle Paul gave this advice to the Galatians: “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:7–8). The rewards of faithfulness are the approval of the Master and eternal life!

Application

13 In your notebook, state some ways you can show faithfulness to God, to other people, and to yourself. Review this part of the lesson, and write down ways that you need to be more faithful. Ask the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of faithfulness in you in plentiful supply.

14 What are some of the rewards of faithfulness?

.....

.....

15 What are some of the rewards of unfaithfulness?

.....

.....



self-test

MULTIPLE CHOICE. Choose the best answer to each question.

- 1** A principle concerning faithfulness and love is that
 - a)** love is more important than faithfulness.
 - b)** love is proved by faithfulness.
 - c)** faithfulness is more important than love.
 - d)** either one can operate without the other.

- 2** One example of natural faith is
 - a)** accepting Christ as Savior.
 - b)** praying for someone to be healed.
 - c)** riding a bus.
 - d)** having certain religious beliefs.

- 3** The test for faithfulness in suffering is
 - a)** endurance.
 - b)** fear.
 - c)** resistance.
 - d)** feeling no pain.

- 4** Which of these should be avoided?
 - a)** Making a vow
 - b)** Making a vow and keeping it
 - c)** Making a vow and not keeping it

- 5** The firm, unwavering trust in God that we experience after salvation is called
 - a)** gift of faith.
 - b)** living faith.
 - c)** fruit of faith.

- 6** Consistency means
 - a)** being loyal.
 - b)** giving your tithe to God.
 - c)** being truthful.
 - d)** continuing with what you have started.

7 Which of these words has been used in the New Testament to mean both “belief” and “faithfulness”?

- a) *Omenah*
- b) *Amen*
- c) *Emun*
- d) *Pistis*

8 A steward is someone who

- a) exercises the gift of faith.
- b) manages someone else’s property.
- c) endures persecution without complaining.
- d) makes a contract certain by a handshake.

9 We will be held accountable according to

- a) how we invest what God has given to us.
- b) how much we give to God.
- c) how much we give to God in comparison with what others have given.

10 What is the reward for unfaithfulness?

- a) Fewer blessings
- b) Persecution by unbelievers
- c) Being cast into darkness (hell)
- d) Eternal life

11 Which of these is the best example of consistent faithfulness?

- a) Moses
- b) Daniel
- c) Peter

12 Faithfulness to yourself means

- a) putting your own needs before the needs of others.
- b) pretending to be faithful as an example to others.
- c) being double-tongued when necessary to protect yourself.
- d) being what you say you are.

13 Which of these involves sharing God's treasure, the gospel of Christ, with others?

- a)** Repentance
- b)** Sincerity
- c)** Stewardship
- d)** Saving faith

14 Which of these grows in your life as it is produced by the Holy Spirit?

- a)** Saving faith
- b)** Fruit of faith
- c)** Natural faith
- d)** Gift of faith

answers to study questions

- 8** His promise in 1 Thessalonians 5:24, “The one who calls us is faithful and he will do it.”
- 1 a** 4) Gift of faith
b 1) Natural faith
c 6) Faith as beliefs
d 5) Fruit of faith
e 3) Living faith
f 2) Saving faith
- 9** (In any order) keep His promises, forgive, and call us.
- 2** Your answer. Possibly it means he was permanently founded, true, certain of his trust in God.
- 10 c)** God will hold us accountable for the way we invest what He has given to us.
- 3 a)** Faith, faithfulness, believing, trustworthiness
b) Trust
c) Faith; faithful
d) Truthfully; it is so
e) Worthy to be trusted
f) Can be relied on or counted on to do what is right
- 11 a** 6) Stewardship
b 3) Vows
c 2) Suffering
d 6) Stewardship
e 1) Love
f 5) Consistency
g 5) Consistency
h 4) Loyalty
- 4** All but **c)** and **e)** are true.

- 12** Your answers. Here is the way I would answer:
- a)** A faithful Christian will be trustworthy in every circumstance.
 - b)** A faithful Christian will always keep his word.
 - c)** A faithful Christian will be obedient to God.
 - d)** A faithful Christian will keep his promises.
 - e)** A faithful Christian will always be loyal to his Master.
 - f)** A faithful Christian will stand firm for what he believes no matter what men may do to him.
 - g)** Faithful servants will be honest in handling public funds (or anyone else's possessions).
 - h)** A faithful servant of God will confess his faith with boldness even if it means persecution.
- 5** Isaiah 11:5.
- 13** Your answer. This is an important self-evaluation. Take time to consider it carefully.
- 6** The person who lives to please himself will be destroyed. The person who lives to please God will receive eternal life.
- 14** Any of these: The approval of God; eternal life; to be known as trustworthy, reliable, and sincere; rich blessings.
- 7** Confession and faith (belief).
- 15** God will cast the unfaithful person into darkness (hell); he will not have the trust of other people; he will be a disappointment to himself.

