

Fruit Of The Spirit — Faithfulness

Icebreaker: Divide your group into two. Set a timer for 1 minute and race to see how many synonyms and/or antonyms each group can provide for the word faithfulness/faithful/faith.

? What is Faithfulness? Conversely, what does it mean to be unfaithful?

Possible Answers: True to your word, to do something consistently, true to the essence of something.

Unfaithful - to cheat, to betray, duplicity, two faced, flip flop.

? How do words get their definition? When Merriam-Webster or Oxford add a name to the dictionary, what is it that gives a word its meaning? Can you think of any words whose definitions have changed?

Read Exodus 3:13-15. Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?” ¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵ God, furthermore, said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.

Read aloud to the group: When the Israelites ask what God’s name is, they are asking... who are we putting our faith in? Who is this God that is coming to us?

? At that point in their history, the Israelites may well have not called God their God. In fact, the way they ask for his name, seems to indicate that they don’t even know him anymore. How does God respond to that in his answer?

Possible Answer: God says to them, I am your God. You may have let your hearts and minds wander from me, but I have not forgotten you. You are still mine, and I will rescue you.

? When God defines himself based on himself, what more is He telling the Israelites?

Possible Answer: I have not changed, I will not change, I do not change.

? What does this passage make clear about faithfulness?

Possible Answer: God's name, and thereby his character traits is/are based on Himself. He is unchanging and forever. He Himself is the definition for everything.

? If God is unchanging, and his name and character traits are based on himself, what does that tell you about his faithfulness?

Possible Answer: It is intrinsic to him. It cannot change. He will never be duplicitous. His faithfulness is not based on us, but on Him.

Read Aloud: 2 Timothy 2:11-13

The saying is trustworthy, for:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

if we endure, we will also reign with him;

if we deny him, he also will deny us;

if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.

? Discuss how this passage pertains to the section on Exodus.

Be sure to discuss:

1. What would it mean for God to deny himself?
2. How does God defining himself as himself give you confidence in his character traits?
3. Which do you consider God's faithfulness to be:
 - a. He is consistent to His own character - aka He is not duplicitous, or,
 - b. He never leaves or forsakes His children (His commitment to you?).
 - Do you think you can have one without the other?
4. Can we use God's faithfulness to mean that He will automatically do what we want or need? Will God ever do anything outside his character?
5. Is God faithful to those who are not aligned with Him?

Old Faithful is a cone geyser located in Wyoming, in Yellowstone National Park in the United States. Old Faithful was named in 1870 during the Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition and was the first geyser in the park to receive a name. It is also called the most predictable geographical feature on Earth, erupting almost every 91 minutes. The geyser, as well as the nearby Old Faithful Inn, is part of the Old Faithful Historic District.

? Predictability here is a synonym of faithfulness.

- Is God predictable?
See Isaiah 55:8, 2 Tim 2:13, Numbers 23:19, Romans 5:6, Hebrews 13:8
- How can God be defined as predictable?
- How is God unpredictable?
- How has he been predictable or unpredictable in your life?

Leader's Note: When reflecting and sharing about small group members' experiences with God's predictability or unpredictability the idea is that God is true to Himself and not to put external presumptions on Him. So we can have confidence that He will do what He says, and be who He is: loving, merciful, just, forgiving, will sanctify us, etc, but we can't hijack his faithfulness for our own purposes, and 'His ways are not our ways.'

For example, someone may have never expected God to have lead them to/away from foreign mission fields but it does lie within God's predictability/faithfulness to His desire to have all people know Him.

Read to the Group: We're not the only ones who incorrectly predict what God's going to do...

Read Luke 24:13-27

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

¹⁹ "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And

beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Here is a clear Biblical example where even what Jesus' disciples expected to happen proved counter to their expectations. They expected Jesus to be the redeemer (truth), but the very way they saw that to fail was how God did redeem his people (v21 Jesus death for his people).

Read Psalm 86

Psalm 86:11 "Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name."

? How does knowing God, and understanding him, allow you to rely on his faithfulness?

Possible answer: This is the only thing. If He is the only constant, then the only thing that we can have confidence in is Him. And when we see this, we trust/rely on him.

? Can you have your faith in God + something else?

Possible answer: God calls us to , "undivided", faith. We can have this because of the completeness of his faithfulness. God is not 85% reliable, He is the only one who is reliable. We are, without a doubt, able and commanded to put all of our "eggs in one basket" because it is an unbreakable, sovereign, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent and loving basket.

? What does faith have to do with faithfulness? For example, how does saying "I have faith in you" relate to believing in someone's faithfulness?

Possible Answers: We usually try not to put our faith in things that do not prove to be faithful or have faithfulness. We expect follow through.

Leader's Note: Read this ahead of time and think about how to phrase this so that it hits home for your group.

Read Aloud [Praise] Praise the Lord that we are being called to have faith in the only One who has true and complete faithfulness/steadfastness. Praise God that we have not only a picture of faithfulness in our Father and our Savior and the Holy Spirit, but also the ability through Him to be faithful.

? God isn't just faithful for one day, month, decade, or millenium. God is eternally faithful, because He is eternal. This puts our transient attempts at being faithful in sharp relief. The hymn says: "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it." How are we as children of God faithful? *Possible answer: We as humans are fickle. We change, we lie, we don't act what we believe. We have seen that God's faithfulness comes from his unchanging nature. Therefore, human faithfulness exists in so far as we are following Him and mirroring his character. It is only directly by walking in the Spirit, that we are at all able to be faithful. It is fruit of the Spirit! With man, nothing is possible, but with God, all things are possible (Matthew 19:26)* Praise the Lord again that walking in the Spirit will produce exactly this fruit.

Community Application Question

How could walking with the Spirit lead to increased faithfulness in your life?