

Lesson Seven

Faithfulness

Introduction

She paced to the right and then to the left on the sidewalk in front of her apartment. He was late. He had promised to pick her up for the movie promptly at 6:45 so they could make it to the theater easily, order their popcorn and soft drinks, and be seated before the film started at 7:15. It was now 6:55 . . . 6:56 . . . 6:57.

Faithfulness demonstrates itself when we keep our promises. Like our faithful God keeps his promises. Moses says of God, “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).

The Spirit’s faithfulness not only assures us that he will never show up late for his appointments with us; his faithfulness assures us that he is empowering us to be just as faithful—faithful to him and the Savior he’s brought us in Jesus and faithful to the commitments we make to everyone else.

Studying God’s Word

We are about to study what the Spirit’s faithfulness is like so that we better understand how we may demonstrate faithfulness in our lives.

Ideal Faithfulness

Read Micah 7:1-7,18-20.

¹*What misery is mine! I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleanings of the vineyard; there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave.*

²*The faithful have been swept from the land; not one upright person remains. Everyone lies in wait to shed blood; they hunt each other with nets.*

³*Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire—they all conspire together.*

⁴*The best of them is like a brier, the most upright worse than a thorn hedge. The day God visits you has come, the day your watchmen sound the alarm. Now is the time of your confusion.*

⁵*Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend. Even with the woman who lies in your embrace guard the words of your lips.*

⁶*For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies are the members of his own household.*

⁷*But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.*

¹⁸*Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.*

¹⁹*You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.*

²⁰*You will be faithful to Jacob, and show love to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our ancestors in days long ago.*

1. In the first six verses of this chapter, Micah mourns the loss of faithfulness among his fellow Jews. How did their lack of faithfulness exhibit itself?

2. In verse 20, what does Micah say is the basis for believing that God will continue to be true to his faithless people?
3. According to verses 7, 18, and 19, how does Micah experience God's promise-keeping faithfulness?
4. The Bible offers us other ways God's faithfulness is a benefit to us. What do the following tell us?

Hebrews 3:1-2

¹Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. ²He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

1 Corinthians 10:13

¹³No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

²³May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

2 Thessalonians 3:3

³But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.

1 John 1:9

⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

His Word in My Life

God's faithfulness has been fully demonstrated in the promises he had made and kept to the human race, culminating in the unconditional forgiveness he provided the world in Jesus.

1. Explain how God demonstrated his promise-keeping faithfulness to Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, Paul, or some other believer mentioned in the Bible.
2. Evaluate: Of all God's attributes, his faithfulness—rather than his grace, mercy, or power—offers us unsurpassed comfort.

3. Agree or disagree: God is always faithful but we can't always depend on him to be faithful at the moment we need his faithfulness.

Studying God's Word

God's Faithfulness Reflected in Our Faithfulness

Faithfulness “describes the man on whose faithful service we may rely, on whose loyalty we may depend, whose word we can unreservedly accept. . . . It describes the man in whom there is the unswerving and inflexible fidelity of Jesus Christ, and the utter dependability of God” (William Barclay).

Read Matthew 25:14-30.

¹⁴ “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

²¹ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’

²² “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

²³ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’

²⁴ “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

²⁶ “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

²⁸ “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹ For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

1. Jesus' parable is about our faithful—or unfaithful—use of the gifts that God gives us. What barriers to faithfulness might the servants in Jesus' parable have encountered? What kept the true believers faithful in serving their master?

2. Faithfulness extends beyond directly serving God to serving in his creation. Discuss how our faithfulness will exhibit itself according to the following passages:

Romans 13:1

¹ Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Ephesians 5:33-6:4

³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. ¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—³ “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” ⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

1 Timothy 3:12-13

¹² A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. ¹³ Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 Peter 4:19

¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

His Word in My Life

Grateful for God’s faithfulness that brought us forgiveness, we Christians strive to be faithful to our commitments but especially to our Spirit-worked commitment to Jesus. Our faithful Savior urges us, “Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

1. Evaluate: In our culture fewer people are choosing to be faithful to their commitments.
2. Comment: Faithfulness is important because when a community can count on its citizens to keep their word, everyone benefits.
3. Explain why you would both agree and disagree with Pastor Smith who said in a sermon: “There is never an acceptable reason for a lack of faithfulness to any commitment.”
4. Assess: Faithfulness is a characteristic of the Spirit that is welded into our character by the heat of adversity.

Summary

There is never a time when God has faltered in faithfulness. Because the Spirit of God inhabits us, we Christians can live out that same failure-free faithfulness. In fact, the Spirit says that when we are tempted to be the least faithful, we have even more reason to be the most faithful. “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4). Be faithful!