

Faithfulness

Fruit of the Spirit--part 7

May 24, 2015

DAY 1: Secular man's versus God's view of faithfulness

Galatians 5:22 but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

1. No matter how much secular man claims to be faithful, all too often, secular man's *real* definition of faithfulness is the *intention* of faithfulness. "I'll be faithful *unless* (a) I don't feel like it, (2) a better deal comes along, or (3) it involves too much unhappiness and sacrifice." In other words, someone's "faithfulness" isn't rooted in character or even the person. It's rooted in someone else making him feel how he wants to feel. Once the feelings stop he's "off the hook."
2. In contrast is the faithfulness of God. In the Old Testament, God is seen as absolutely reliable and firmly constant. It is the opposite being fickle or arbitrary.

Lamentations 3:22 (RSV) The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.

3. How does Jeremiah depict God's faithfulness?

Psalms 36:5 (RSV) Thy steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, thy faithfulness to the clouds.

4. How does the psalmist depict the faithfulness of God?

Psalms 100:5 (RSV) For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures for ever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

5. How does the psalmist depict the faithfulness of God?

6. The Hebrew words used are "emet" and "emuna." Both are derived from the same root word. The image is one of a solid rock. That's the image Moses uses to depict the faithfulness of God.

Deuteronomy 32:4 (RSV) "The Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he."

7. What strikes you most about the faithfulness of God?

DAY 2: The faithfulness of God, a covenant keeping God.

1. God is not just true to His character and name. He is faithful to people who are in **covenant relationship** with Him.

2. Sometimes, God's "covenant love" (covenant-loyalty) and "steadfast love" (the Hebrew word, "hesed") are used together. In the following verses jot down how the two ideas are used together.

Deuteronomy 7:9 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.

Genesis 24:27 saying, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives."

Psalms 40:11 Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD; may your love (hesed) and your truth (covenant loyalty/faithfulness) always protect me.

3. The two ideas of God's character indicates that God has a determined steadfastness toward His people that is has a stubborn quality about it.

4. If you have become a Christian, God is tenaciously covenanted to you!

2 Timothy 2:13 ... if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

5. What is your biggest thought about God's faithfulness from today's verses?

DAY 3: Our faithful God...

1. It is the faithfulness of God that allows our hearts to rest even in the midst of trials. His faithfulness becomes an anchor, freeing us from trying to "control" the difficulties and difficult people in our lives!

2. Below are some examples of how the faithfulness of God accomplishes different things, or anchors us in difficulty. Underneath each verse, jot down how the faithfulness of God is important to us.

a. God fulfills his promises

Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Hebrews 11:11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered Him faithful who had made the promise.

b. Brings triumph to sufferers.

1 Peter 4:19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

c. Forgives confessed sins.

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.

d. Helps us with temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (RSV) No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

3. Which of these avenues of God's faithfulness is most important to you? Why?

DAY 4: A faithful man

1. Faithfulness doesn't just happen. Faithfulness is something you build. It's like muscles you exercise at the gym. Jesus gives us several looks at how faithfulness grows in us.

Luke 16:10-13 (RSV) He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.

2. Anyone can claim that he will be faithful in the big things of life, but Jesus teaches us that's not the way it works. If someone claims they will be a faithful spouse or a faithful friend or a faithful business partner but they are not faithful in small things, should you be surprised when someone who is NOT faithful with small assignments is unfaithful in a big assignment?

3. How are you doing with small acts of faithfulness? Is there something that needs your faithful attention?

Luke 16:11 If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, how will you entrust to you the true riches?

4. Jesus gives another window to see someone's likely faithfulness. Are they faithful in handling money? The point is, if someone is unfaithful to handle money, how in the world can you expect someone to be faithful in handling godly purposes?

5. How is your faithfulness with your finances?

Luke 16:12 And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, how will you give you that which is your own?

6. A third test of faithfulness: are you being faithful to someone else's interests? If you have trouble with being faithful to the interests of others, why would God entrust the spiritual lives of others into your care?

7. How are you doing being faithful to the interests of others?

Luke 16:13 No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

8. Lastly, it's impossible to be faithful to both serve the Lord AND serve money.

9. What gets your attention from this passage?

DAY 5: What causes us to question God's faithfulness?

1. I regularly hear people complain that they've done "their part," and are dismayed because God hasn't done "His part." Usually, people expect God to do "His part" in a short amount of time. The longer the "delay," the greater the questioning of God's faithfulness. We should know better, if we read our bible.

2. The central story of the Old Testament is God's covenant with Abraham.

*Genesis 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. ² "I will make you into **a great nation** and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

3. By the end of Abraham's life, that "nation" consisted of three people: Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac. If you had been "measuring" or "evaluating" the faithfulness of God, what would you have concluded at Abraham's death?

4. Fast forward through the lives of son Isaac, grandson Jacob, and the twelve sons of Jacob. When the extended family moved to Egypt during famine, the number of family members numbered seventy.

5. Fast forward 400 years of Hebrew slavery in Pharaoh's Egypt. When Moses led the people out of Egypt and across the Red Sea, the nation numbered two million!

6. Now, what conclusions do you draw about the faithfulness of God?

7. Reading Hebrews 11 tells you there are some people who received the rewards of their faith in "real time." The chapter also tells us many didn't.

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

¹⁵ If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

8. Our lifetime is a terrible deadline on which to weigh the faithfulness of God! What strikes you from today's devotional?