

Being Faithful

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

A former pastor of ours had several sayings that he used during teaching moments. One of them was, “As Christians, we are not called to be *successful*—only to be *faithful*.” In other words, if we obey God, He will achieve the results He desires—which may or may not be what we wanted and expected to achieve.

One of the important themes of the whole Bible is faithfulness. God tells his people, over and over, to remain faithful to His covenant with them. He rewards them when they are, and punishes them when they are not.



There are about 170 passages in the Bible containing the word “faithful” or one of its forms, such as “faithfully” or “faithfulness.” Throughout, the message is clear: God is faithful, and He

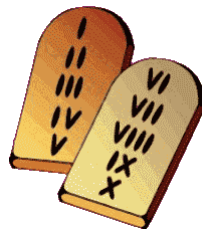
commands His people to be faithful, too.

What does it mean to “be faithful”? The Merriam-Webster dictionary gives these five definitions:

1. (obsolete) : full of faith
2. steadfast in affection or allegiance : **loyal**
3. firm in adherence to promises or in observance of duty : **conscientious**
4. given with strong assurance : **binding** (a faithful promise)
5. **true** to the facts, **to a standard**, or to an original (a faithful copy)

Let’s skip the first definition for now — we’ll come back to it.

Definition 2 reminds me of the first two of the Ten Commandments:



And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a

jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:1-6)

Again and again God reminded Israel that He was their God, and they must not worship the gods of the neighboring peoples. Again and again they went astray and did exactly that. “I am faithful to keep my covenant promises to you,” said God. “You be faithful to me also.” But most of God’s people were not faithful.

How does this apply to us today as Christians? We have God’s word to guide us:



Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. (1 Samuel 12:24)

And Jesus answered [Satan], “It is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.” (Luke 4:8)

[Jesus] answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)

Being faithful is putting God at the top of our priority list. Serving God, obeying Him, pleasing Him, has to be “job one” for the Christian. Can you and I do this perfectly? Of course not. But should we try? Absolutely! **We will never get better at being faithful unless we try.**

Definition 3 is about consistently doing what is right, even when it is hard or painful. When we sin, at first our conscience tells us we did wrong. If we keep doing it, our conscience soon gets “seared” and we can ignore it. Eventually we may come to think of our wrong actions as normal and morally right. We see this in many places in our society today—casual sex, homosexuality, irresponsibility, cheating, and other forms of dishonesty are now socially acceptable, sometimes even applauded

and celebrated, and speaking against such sins is not tolerated because it is “politically incorrect.”

Part of our human nature is to rebel against God, to do wrong things simply because they are wrong.

[Jesus] said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” (Mark 7:20-23)

But the Bible also tells us how to do right:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Jesus said this to His disciples, and it is for us as well:

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” (John 14:15-17):

Being faithful is trying to do what is right and not do what is wrong.

The fourth definition deals with commitment. A faithful Christian stands firm against the attacks of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Today many Christians in some countries are being given this choice: “If you deny Jesus Christ now we will let you live; otherwise you will die.” I do not expect ever to be in that situation, but if I were, I’m confident that, even though I am weak, God would give me the strength in that moment to shout, “Jesus is Lord, and He is my Lord!”

Lesser temptations are more common for most of us. The most common one is to want to “blend in” with friends and neighbors. Most of us would not enjoy being a “cross-wearing, Bible-toting Jesus freak,” and most of us, I think, are not being asked to go that far. But when our faith in Christ is challenged in any way, how do we respond? I hope that, with the Holy Spirit’s guidance, we will speak the truth about Jesus in a loving, inviting way. As my former pastor has said, we can tell a starving world where to find bread—Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life.

Being faithful is using our actions and our words to proclaim the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The fifth definition is a very appropriate one for this message. Martin Luther once wrote, “As our

heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor ... each one should become as it were a Christ to the other, that we may be Christs to one another” C.S. Lewis took it a step farther when he wrote that the church “exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs.”

Being faithful in this sense is to be so much like Jesus that people look at us and see Him. Indeed, a primary work of the Holy Spirit is to bring forth in every believer the fruit of the Spirit— “... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Galatians 5:22)—which is essentially the character of Jesus:

How, then, does a Christian remain faithful? It’s mainly a question of attitude, of really “wanting to,” but here are a few practical guidelines:

1. Put God in charge of your mind and your body, as Paul did when he said, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)
2. Let go of anything and anyone who tempts you to sin. Friends who try to lead you astray are not your friends, they are your enemies.
3. Pray, and when you pray, remind God (and yourself) of His faithful promises, which you are counting on, and ask Him to help you be faithful to Him.
4. “What would Jesus do?” was over-exposed at one time, but it’s still a good question anyway. If you can be a little more like Jesus every day, you are well on the way to being faithful.

Now, about that first dictionary definition: It may be obsolete in terms of the way people use the word “faithful” today, but it still applies to faithful Christians. As your thoughts and your actions are controlled by a will to serve and obey God, and guided by the helpful ministrations of the Holy Spirit, your faith in God—your confidence that He is real and true and His love for you is secure, in spite of any trials or temptations that come against you—that faith will fill you up and overflow onto those around you, and you will be, like Abraham, a blessing to many.

May the Peace of the LORD be with you always.
He is faithful.

Brother Roland

When God Whispers Your Name

By Max Lucado

IT'S QUIET. It's early. My coffee is hot. The sky is still black. The world is still asleep. The day is coming.

In a few moments the day will arrive. It will roar down the track with the rising of the sun. The stillness of the dawn will be exchanged for the noise of the day. The calm of solitude will be replaced by the pounding pace of the human race. The refuge of the early morning will be invaded by decisions to be made and deadlines to be met.

For the next twelve hours I will be exposed to the day's demands. It is now that I must make a choice. Because of Calvary, I'm free to choose. And so I choose.

I choose love . . .

No occasion justifies hatred; no injustice warrants bitterness. I choose love. Today I will love God and what God loves.

I choose joy . . .

I will invite my God to be the God of circumstance. I will refuse the temptation to be cynical . . . the tool of the lazy thinker. I will refuse to see people as anything less than human beings, created by God. I will refuse to see any problem as anything less than an opportunity to see God.

I choose peace . . .

I will live forgiven. I will forgive so that I may live.

I choose patience . . .

I will overlook the inconveniences of the world. Instead of cursing the one who takes my place, I'll invite him to do so. Rather than complain that the wait is too long, I will thank God for a moment to pray. Instead of clinching my fist at new assignments, I will face them with joy and courage.

I choose kindness . . .

I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid. And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me.

I choose goodness . . .

I will go without a dollar before I take a dishonest one. I will be overlooked before I will boast. I will confess before I will accuse. I choose goodness.

I choose faithfulness . . .

Today I will keep my promises. My debtors will not regret their trust. My associates will not question my word. My wife will not question my love. And my children will never fear that their father will not come home.

I choose gentleness . . .

Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice may it be only in praise. If I clench my fist, may it be only in prayer. If I make a demand, may it be only of myself.

I choose self-control . . .

I am a spiritual being. After this body is dead, my spirit will soar. I refuse to let what will rot, rule the eternal. I choose self-control. I will be drunk only by joy. I will be impassioned only by my faith. I will be influenced only by God. I will be taught only by Christ. I choose self-control.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. To these I commit my day. If I succeed, I will give thanks. If I fail, I will seek his grace. And then, when this day is done, I will place my head on my pillow and rest.

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Do you have questions about the Bible or Christian life? I'll try to give you good biblical answers

Brother Roland, P O Box 14, Fayetteville, PA 17222

Faithful People of the Bible

Not every person listed here was faithful in everything he or she did, but the many things that were done well can serve as examples to all of us today. Enjoy the puzzle.

Puzzle:

T I B X Y I D T S B P E N N P Q S W K Q K T F J K Z A C H B Q
B F L S Q F B A S Q A Y T T O U M Z E E U L L R O D P R A N K
G W B U I J M O U Y D M R F T S I Y S J C M W R Y D S Z N I H
Y L R M D O I B C D B U Z J H X M C I L W K U W A R P H S A F
M A I E A U L X M A Z U Y K T L K A S H B T C C T U C O O N Z
N H X D T U V Y K L J W B M J L C E S C O B E F C O L N V W E
T Y K O N E J O S H U A P A E W M F Y A T H H B N L D R W K G
K J G C F S P T C S H C S H C A T C F H L P A E O U Q L U T W
X M K I H H A T T A Z Q V A J S A D C S I N R P M S S L R P K
S A H N L A M B R S H A D R A C H A R E H F A E M L J E Y F O
V T Y D E C J H A N N A H B D Q A Z M M L Y S L D K H N E Q K
P T W Y Y P R I G N A F I A K L H W I P L S D I S D U O M H O
C H D G E E K P L C R S P M N A T H A N I E L S R K K M W G L
D E X E U D F X E E A A G U E M H B I B V Q R H Q E N O D I L
R W X N B M K N N I Z R B P H H P N J V S B E A Q L G L A D J
Y J I A O O T Q A Y H T O M I T E E Q A I Z L W I E A O J E Y
H C E S A U R H P U J S T A P X J N M D D R C A N T M S K O H
E P E R R S X A O O E P P C I K V U A H H H G D M I J A V N S
Y S N I E T Y I H Y S A B E L G E N F Y R I E I A P R O R Y T
W F O D H M H L J F U D H N I L I T Q R B B H N N T A U H K K
O N S O X P I N D B S Y J T A E U Y T A A V D I E M L U T N C
E D M L K U U A J U A O W D L T M X C M E R X M I Z A T L H A
T A A Q Y H V P H U S R N H X B H X R A E O Y C V S R R T P K
S K R H N I Y B B E A Q A V I T D A X W L U H O P Y A A Y B M
K Y X B D I E O P D A X B K M Z W R N E J E P X D M K A O Q Z
K N H I D I A H Y E O K W Z G R E N I I L O B J F G K R C E T
F V N I Z Z O O X B X B G W J P O Q M L G U Z O V F T O F V C

Words:

A CENTURION
ABEDNEGO
ABEL
ABIGAIL
ABRAHAM
ANDREW
APOLLOS
BARAK
BARNABAS
BOAZ
CALEB
DANIEL
DAVID
DEBORAH

ELIJAH
ELISHA
ENOCH
EUNICE
EZRA
GIDEON
HANNAH
ISAAC
ISAIAH
JACOB
JAMES
JEPHTHAH
JEREMIAH
JESUS

JOHN
JOSEPH
JOSHUA
LOIS
LUKE
MARK
MATTHEW
MESHACH
MOSES
NATHAN
NATHANIEL
NEHEMIAH
NICODEMUS
NOAH

PAUL
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RAHAB
RUTH
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SARAH
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THOMAS
TIMOTHY
VIRGIN MARY