

Week 4 | Faithfulness

July 17 – July 23

Monday, July 17 | With All Faithfulness

Read Joshua 24:1–15

Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his family went down to Egypt.

“ ‘Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out. When I brought your people out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea. But they cried to the Lord for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the wilderness for a long time.

“ ‘I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land. When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you. But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.

“ ‘Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands. I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow. So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.’

“Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

Reflect

Near the end of his life, after taking over the leadership of Israel from Moses and leading the Israelites into the land God had promised Abraham generations earlier, faithfulness to God was on Joshua’s mind. He had seen God’s faithfulness—which he catalogued for the gathered tribes of

Israel—and he had had many opportunities to remain loyal to God or choose to worship other gods along the way. Undoubtedly, Joshua was pressured by circumstances and the pagan cultures around him to shift his loyalty away from God and toward other gods whom the locals would have believed controlled weather, crops, and fertility. In our day, the “gods” or idols we are pressured to worship instead of God are different, but no less tempting: money, power, security, superstitions, or personal pleasure. We know that we cannot give our full loyalty to God if we are also worshipping the things and values our culture worships. We often find ourselves doing just that, though. God will not force us to worship Him. As Joshua pointed out to the Israelites, we get to decide. But we must decide.

- Take a couple of minutes to chronicle some of the most significant ways God has been faithful to you. As you look over whatever you compiled, why do you think it is that other things still compete with God for your loyalty?
- What practices or disciplines help you remain faithful in your worship and loyalty to God? What relationships or activities tend to undermine your faithfulness? What might you need to turn away from in order to give your full loyalty to God?

Respond

God, my deepest desire is to be faithful to You—fully devoted, completely loyal, totally obedient. And yet, other things pull at me, pull me away from You. Help me to be faithful. Show me where my loyalty is divided. Bring to mind the things I need to turn away from and give me the strength and courage to actually say and live the words of Joshua: “as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Amen.

Tuesday, July 18 | A Faithful Steward

Read 1 Peter 4:7–11

The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Reflect

“Steward” isn’t a word we hear too often outside of the airline or shipping industries. In general, though, it means to manage another person’s property or affairs. In today’s passage, Peter tells us that God has given us something of His own to manage. The spiritual gifts we have received—hospitality or mercy or faith or something else—are actually expressions of God’s grace that He has given us to distribute on His behalf. People experience God’s grace through those who distribute and demonstrate it as they use the gifts God has given them. So, when we use our gifts to build up another person in their faith, or demonstrate compassion and love, or help someone understand the truth and life found in Jesus Christ, we are faithfully stewarding God’s grace. But when we don’t use

our gifts for whatever reason—we are too busy, afraid, or just plain lazy or uninterested—we are being unfaithful with the grace God has given us to manage. In this sense, being faithful means using the gifts God has given.

- Peter describes the spiritual gifts we have as ways to distribute God’s grace. Reflect on the spiritual gifts God has given you. How is each of these gifts a way to distribute God’s grace?
- As you reflect on the spiritual gifts God has given you, how would you rate your level of faithfulness for each one? (To learn more about spiritual gifts, read through [Romans 12:6–8](#) and [1 Corinthians 12:8–10](#)) What do you need from God and what steps do you need to take to increase your faithfulness in this area?

Respond

God, thank You for inviting me to be a dispenser of Your grace. Who am I that You would allow me this privilege? Thank You for the gifts You have given me. Please give me insight into how You want me to steward these gifts so that You are glorified and the people I serve or encounter come to know You more fully. Show me what more I can do to develop my gifts and continue to grow in all You’re calling me to be and to do. Help me to be faithful. Amen.

Wednesday, July 19 | Faithfulness to the Truth

Read 3 John 1:1–6

To my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God.

Reflect

In his letter, John praises his friend Gaius for being faithful to the truth by walking in the truth he professes. It’s one thing to know the truth or to say we believe the truth. But what does it mean to be faithful to the truth? John’s words in this passage make clear that being faithful to the truth means that our actions demonstrate what we know to be true and what we say we believe. So, if we say we believe that Jesus is Lord, but we continue to live like those who believe otherwise, are we being faithful to the truth? Or if we say we have placed our trust in Jesus Christ, but our lives demonstrate that, really, our trust rests in money or government or a particular relationship, are we being faithful to the truth? Of course, growing in faithfulness, like all the fruit of the Spirit, is a process, and we are all flawed. But as we act to align our actions with our beliefs, our faithfulness to the truth grows.

- Consider whether, upon examination, an objective person could praise you for your faithfulness to the truth, as John did for his friend Gaius. Where do you see that your beliefs do not line up with your actions? In what areas do you say one thing but do something different?
- Take a couple of minutes to reflect on the words of [Psalm 15](#). What do you sense God inviting you to change?

Respond

God, I long to walk in the truth—to be faithful to what I know and believe. I want what I know and believe to align with my actions. I need Your help. Grow my ability to act out the truth that Jesus is Lord, that He has set me free, and that Your Holy Spirit is alive and active within me, empowering me to act with strength, truth, and hope. Shine a light on those areas of my life where I'm still hiding from the truth, still leaning into darkness. May it be said of me that I walk in the truth. Amen.

Thursday, July 20 | The Way of Faithfulness

Read Psalm 119:25–32

I am laid low in the dust;
preserve my life according to your word.

I gave an account of my ways and you answered me;
teach me your decrees.

Cause me to understand the way of your precepts,
that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds.

My soul is weary with sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word.

Keep me from deceitful ways;
be gracious to me and teach me your law.

I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I have set my heart on your laws.

I hold fast to your statutes, Lord;
do not let me be put to shame.

I run in the path of your commands,
for you have broadened my understanding.

Reflect

One can almost imagine the psalmist with his palms open to the sky as he recites the words in this part of Psalm 119. He is saying both “I have chosen the way of faithfulness,” and “Lord, help me to be faithful!” The way of faithfulness appears not to be perfect obedience (though that might be the goal), but rather, a combination of a decision to be faithful and a surrender to God’s help in keeping His decrees and commands. In other words, perhaps the first step on the way of faithfulness is an acknowledgement that we cannot actually be faithful without God’s help. It is not entirely up to us—we can’t just grit our teeth, clench our fists, and be faithful. Rather—and seemingly paradoxically—we must admit to our inability to be faithful on our own and only then begin to walk in faithfulness.

- Jesus said that all the law and the teachings of the prophets are summed up in two commands: (1) love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind; and (2) love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37–40). As you reflect on just the last couple of days, how have you needed God’s help to be faithful to these commands? Take a moment or two and acknowledge—remembering God’s immense and unbending love for you—your need for God’s help in whatever areas you identified.
- In what area of your life do you need to make the choice of faithfulness? Who could you invite into that choice so that you can stay on course and continuously surrender to God’s help?

Respond

God, here I am. As best as I know how, I open myself to You now and ask You to lead me in the way of faithfulness. I acknowledge that I cannot be faithful to You or Your commands by my own power or strength. I need Yours. Grant me Your grace to be faithful and grant me Your mercy when I fail. May my heart be set on love for You and for my neighbor. Amen.

Friday, July 21 | Let Faithfulness Never Leave You

Read Proverbs 3:3–6

Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Reflect

There are all kinds of things we seem to carry around with us everywhere we go—some good, some not so good. We carry hope and joy. We carry encouragement and faith. But we also carry shame for things we've done or things done to us. We carry anger and pain. We carry cynicism and skepticism. We carry fear and insecurity. What if, everywhere we went, we carried love and faithfulness? What if we never allowed them to leave us? What if love replaced our anger and shame and cynicism? What if faithfulness replaced our fear and lack of trust? Is this even possible? Yes and no. If, as Solomon, the writer of today's passage, says, we trust God with all our heart, submitting our ways to Him, it is possible. If we try to act independently of God, trusting in our own goodness and strength and discipline, it's not possible. Our ability to be faithful and to love comes in our continual and increasing trust in God.

- Reflect on the burdens you are carrying with you today. However recent or longstanding these burdens might be, what might be one way you could express your trust in God in healing and resolving those burdens?

Respond

God, though You have said to cast my worries on You and to give You my burdens, I still hold on to them—sometimes more tightly than others. Help me to release any negative emotions I carry around with me to You. Fill me with Your love and faithfulness. Help me to let go of old hurts, and forgive freely. Heal what's broken in me and transform what's misshapen so I can freely love and trust You with all my heart. Amen.

Saturday, July 22 | What Faithfulness Looks Like

Read Matthew 25:14–30

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

“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 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.’

“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!’

“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.’

“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!’

“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. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

“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? 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.’

“So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. 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. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Reflect & Respond

- Read through today’s passage two or three times, slowly, noticing what stands out. Remembering you are in God’s loving presence, pray that He would show you how the particular words or phrases that stood out apply to your life right now. Pray that God would give you insight, wisdom, and courage, along with the power of the Holy Spirit, to act as He’s calling you.

Sunday, July 23 | A Promise to the Faithful

Read today’s psalm as your prayer.

Psalm 85

You, Lord, showed favor to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

You forgave the iniquity of your people
and covered all their sins.

You set aside all your wrath
and turned from your fierce anger.

Restore us again, God our Savior,
and put away your displeasure toward us.

Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger through all generations?

Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?

Show us your unfailing love, Lord,
and grant us your salvation.

I will listen to what God the Lord says;
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—
but let them not turn to folly.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven.

The Lord will indeed give what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.

Righteousness goes before him
and prepares the way for his steps.

A Way to Cultivate Faithfulness This Week

Fixed-hour prayer is a way of keeping our whole selves and all our activity oriented toward the constant presence of God. In this practice, we pause multiple times a day to rest in God's presence and direct our hearts and activity toward Him. Try setting aside 10 minutes three times a day once this week for fixed-hour prayer.

- In the morning, before you begin your day, sit for a moment in the presence of God. Look forward to the day. Where do you desire to be most aware of God's presence today? Close your morning prayer with the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13).
- At noon, pause your daily work and remember you are in the loving presence of your Creator. God has been with you in everything you have done today, and all you have yet to do. How can your activity this afternoon be directed toward God? Finish your noonday prayer with the Lord's Prayer.
- In the evening, when your work is complete, sit in silence. Let the activity of the day settle and rest in the gracious presence of God. What are you thankful for today? End your evening prayer with the Lord's Prayer.