

Faithfulness In Life And Ministry

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The Potentials and Power of Faithfulness

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Despite the knowledge of the importance of faithfulness, this valuable quality is a rare commodity in many lives today, and that with terrible consequences. The objective of this article is to help humanity not only discover but also embrace the timeless principles listed below, as recently expounded by a man of God, and by that make a difference in the world.

1. The faithful man is he who is trustworthy, upon whom others trust that they may rely with confidence that their trust will not be betrayed
2. Faithful people keep the world from breaking down and perishing. Faith is the cement that hold the society together. When faith leaves the society, panic sets in.
3. Faithfulness is a principle that

handle the little things of daily life but those little things determine our life and destiny.

4. Faithfulness means sincerity. A person who is insincere is not trustworthy and may prove to be a traitor.

Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful - (1 Corinthians 4:2).

5. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much (Luke 16:10).
6. Faithfulness also means honour and requires that a promise made either to God or man must be kept whatever the cost.
7. A faithful person must never complain about how much is entrusted unto him.
8. Jesus is the guarantor of



The acorn through germination and years of faithful growth becomes a giant oak tree.

everything you need.

9. The faithful will keep his vow to God and his words to man or perish in the attempt.
10. We cannot trust the unknown. An inconsistent person is not only unknown but also unknowable.

We should not ask, "What is wrong with the world?" for that diagnosis has already been given. Rather, we should ask, "What has happened to the salt and light?"

John R. W. Stott

Points To Remember

- God is faithful
- Faithfulness is God's character manifested in God's children
- The Bible is not an open book, it must be opened lest it becomes a decoration.
- How do you get rid of the devil - by treating him as he treats God - i.e. do not do anything he says.
- We cannot trust the unknown. An inconsistent person is not only unknown but unknowable.

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What Is Faithfulness?

According to Colin's dictionary faith (noun) is a (1) feeling of confidence, trust or optimism about something (2) a particular religion. Faithful (adjective) is (1) loyal to someone or something and remaining firm in support of them. (2) Accurate and truthful for example, a faithful copy of an original.

Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faithfulness never makes you feel bad

In 2 Samuel 22:22-26 David declared "I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgements were before me; and as for his statutes, I did not depart from them, I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore the Lord hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye sight. With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright".

When we make a statement, promise or give an obligation we are to be faithful, we are to be steadfast in fulfilling them. When a faithful person enters into an agreement, s/he remains steadfast by honouring

and cherishing the content of the agreement.

When a person is loyal they are faithful. A loyal person is undeviating in allegiance to other people, their church and to their God.

Like Jonah, we sometimes seem to miss entirely the point of what God wants to do. Do we willingly witness, serve, and pray in the hope and expectation that people will change for the better? Or do we wish for judgment to come, for God to destroy those we identify as "the wicked"? We struggle to understand the depth of God's mercy. But the ultimate goal of doing and being is that we and all the world may walk in God's way and discover life abundant.

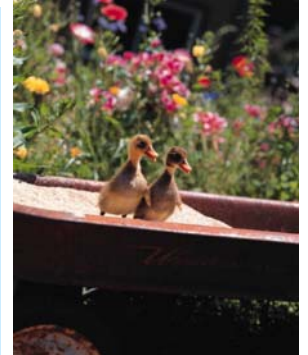
George J. Waggoner

Because we love God and He loves us our faithfulness to God causes us to be morally bound to support and defend our faith at all costs.

Faithfulness means keeping to a task when you want to quit. Many times in life you may want to turn away from God instead of turning towards him. However being faithful to God means staying focused on Him and not becoming distracted by the influences of Satan's attraction's and distractions in the world.

Faithfulness means you stay with God through every hardship and adversity. God is a faithful. He keeps to His term of agreement from generation to generation, if we are faithful

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour (Ecclesiastes 4:9).



to him. Psalm 119:90 says "Thy faithfulness is unto all generation; thou hast established the earth, and it abideth".

Lamentations 3:23 tells us that God's faithfulness is great and new every morning. Faithfulness is obedience to the word of God. Romans 1:5, By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:9). Faithfulness is believing the unbelievable, the unimaginable, the impossible, the unreasonable things and trusting in the Lord.



Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful (Proverbs 27:6).

Faithfulness in Ministry (Epaphras)

The name Epaphras means “Lovely”. It is possibly a contracted form of Epaphroditus derived from the Greek words **epi** translated “on” and **Aphrodite** the Greek goddess of love. Epaphroditus means “Lovely” or “charming”. If Epaphras is a contracted form from Epaphroditus (as we will assume in this study), then all references in the New Testament to these names refer to one and the same person – one of Paul’s co-workers. He was spoken of by Paul (Colossians 1:7; 4:12) as “our dear fellow-servant,” and **“a faithful minister of Christ”** – words that carry great honour and responsibility.

Epaphras was probably a citizen of Colosse (an ancient city in Asia Minor / Turkey). However his zeal in Gospel ministry was not only manifested towards the Colossians but also to others **“For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis”** (Colossians 4:13). This is a salient reminder that a faithful minister, although patriotic, must neither be parochial, tribalistic nor self-centered in ministerial vision.

From Colossians 1:7 we also read **“As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ”**. It appears that Epaphras was their minister, and probably

the founder of the Colossian Church. He was a distinguished disciple whom Paul had great love for – probably because of his commitment and labour to see the Colossians **“stand perfect and complete in all the will of God”** (Colossians 4:12). Philimon 1:23 **“There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus”** indicates that he was with Paul (and most likely a prisoner with him) at Rome when he wrote to the Colossians. The footnote at the end of Philippians shows that the epistle was written by Epaphroditus from Rome.

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Revelations 2:10)

Our Biographical study on him focuses on identifying the salient features that earned him the enigma **“A Faithful Minister of Christ”**; and thereby draw vital lessons for the benefit of ministers in contemporary times where faithfulness to Christ’s mission is often a missing ingredient in their lives and ministries. Colossians 4:12 captures the keynote of his life and ministry – **“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that**

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters (Psalms 23:1-2).



ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” This verse of scripture identifies three key characteristics of Epaphras’ service as being:

1. Faithfulness
2. Fulfillment
3. Fellowship

A FAITHFUL MINISTER ON MISSION

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul highlighted an essential ministerial quality - “Moreover it is required in stewards, that **a man be found faithful**” (1 Corinthians 4:2). The objectives and modus operandi of many ministers today falls far short of that demanded by Christ as exemplified in Epaphras’ life. Many are so motivated by ego, fame, power, money, success, un-



Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever (Psalms 23:6)

Faithfulness in Ministry (Epaphras) (continues)

healthy competition and many other things to the extent that they deny the very faith they profess to uphold.

Paul commended in Epaphras, the quality of faithfulness - "As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a **faithful minister of Christ**... Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Colossians 1:7; 4:12).

Certain key phrases in these verses highlight the characteristics of a faithful minister:

1. "our dear" – because as a good shepherd he gave his life for the sheep (John 10:11) in the service of others and of Christ. He was dear to Paul a **minister** as well as to the Colossians, the **members** to whom he ministered. Thus his dearness was balanced and not lopsided towards one sector that he felt favourably disposed to.

2. "fellow-servant" – Epaphras adopted the disposition of a servant rather than that of a lord. He not only recognized his and others' calling but also accepted and discharged his responsibilities to complement the services of other ministers; with the ultimate purpose of achieving divine objectives (Ephesians 4:7-15).

3. "faithful minister of Christ" – his agenda in ministry was centered on Christ's

objective rather than personal goals as brought out in the next verse "a servant of Christ". He served Christ, not man nor mammon.

4. "one of you" – he identified with the people he ministered to. The phrase "saluteth you" shows that he was not only expecting salutation from the members as some would do today.

5. "always labouring" – This describes his constancy in service. He is constant in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2). Like Gideon's army (Judges 8:4) we must pursue though weary. God rewards such faithfulness. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat

"...a faithful minister, although patriotic, must neither be parochial, tribalistic nor self-centered in ministerial vision."

in due season? **Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.** Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods" (Matthew 24:45-47).

6. "always labouring fervently for you in prayers" – this is the climax of sincerity in service that goes beyond 'eye-service'. It also describes the intensity of that service. He was not just a loafer or drifter 'passing time' but an active

Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever (Psalms



combatant serving the interests of the members.

7. "that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" – this describes his ultimate goal in service and illustrates compliance with the will of God. It also illustrates a godly conduct in effectively addressing problems in the local church. **Lack of faithfulness could have resulted in unkind criticisms of the "spiritual standard" of the members and ministers.** An unfaithful minister would rather wag the tongue, twist the mouths, wink their eyes and 'tear down' everybody that does not fall in line with their 'pharisaic patterns' than spend quality time to pray "that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God". Their attitude, disposition and language (e.g. backbiting)



And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me (Genesis 22:10-12).

Faithfulness in Ministry (Epaphras) (continues)

displays lack of respect for faithful ministers. Their criticisms only produce conflict, confusion and commotion rather than inspire godliness. The church today, with all its imperfections need Epaphrases who will pray down revival and renewal of souls. May God make us all the Epaphrases of today who will stand in the gap to secure the much needed divine transformations that will make our members lively stones for Christ's Kingdom. Only very few in Paul's ministry earned the enigma "faithful minister" (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7). It is only faithfulness that will result in a fulfilled and Christ-centred ministry that qualifies for reward after the final fire test (I Corinthians 3:13-15). May the Lord find you a faithful minister in these last days.

A FULFILLED MISSION IN MINISTRY

1. Companionship in Service (i.e. for complementary not competitive service) – "Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and **companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants**" (Philippians 2:25). Note also his remarkable feature of prayerfulness. Epaphras wrote nothing of his own; it is not said that he had any visions in that prison; but his work was *prayer*, 'labouring fervently.' And no-

time it is in the plural, 'in prayers,' and 'always.' He was not like Paul who wrote letters never-to-be-forgotten, but he had another talent - that of prayer, and he turned it to good account. He was just as useful, perhaps, in his own place as Paul. He 'laboured fervently' in prayers. If you can't work, if you can't speak, you can pray. But work hard at it like Epaphras, and you will be an immense benefactor to others.

2. Continuity in service - always labouring (Colossians 4:12). He did this 'always.' Every day he was to be found praying for his beloved people.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (I Corinthians 15:58)

There are potentially so many interruptions and excuses for not persevering. Many believers are more ready at work than at prayer. Satan has a special ill-will at praying people. Some one has said that Satan's orders are, 'fight not with small or great, but only with the praying people.' If we are to persevere in prayer, it must be prayer *in the Spirit*, with the atmosphere of the Spirit all around us. He was a prisoner in Rome. Many of God's saints have done their best work in prison. Epaphras would never say his prison

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit (James 5:17,18)



was a boring place, but rather that he had plenty of work to do there. Be like him, labouring for God in prayer. Lengthen your brief prayers. Take more time, and in this way bring down showers upon your own soul, and upon all around you.

3. Commitment in service – labouring fervently (Colossians 4:12). These words are like those used about Christ in Gethsemane: 'being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly.' He *agonized* in prayer. His were Gethsemane-type prayers. He made his prison-cell fragrant with the sweet incense of prayer. What an example worthy of emulation! Real prayer, earnest prayer, is hard work. If you are not 'always labouring fervently in prayers' you will be dwarfed Christians.



Men (includes women) ought always to pray, and not to faint (Luke 18:1)

Faithfulness in Ministry (Epaphras) (continues)

Would you not, for your own sake, be 'perfect and complete in all the will of God'? Seek to labour fervently in this work of prayer. There are many today who will give up time for prayer so as to devote it to other aspects of work but there are extremely very few who would want to give up some part of their work because they were going to take the time for prayer. If any one does this, the part of work he left would soon be filled up.

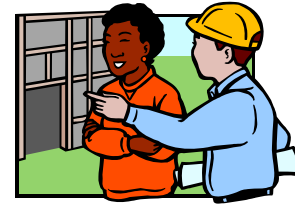
If a commission by an earthly king is considered a honour, how can a commission by a Heavenly King be considered a sacrifice?

4. Composition (Character & content of prayer) service – described as a faithful minister who faithfully used the 'gifts' at his disposition "labouring fervently for you *in prayers*". (Colossians 4:12). We would have thought that the main theme of Epaphras's prayer request would be for revival or the conversion of souls. No, it was for believers he prayed with most intense earnestness, and always, day after day. This was an indirect way of reaching the unsaved, for if believers get more of God's grace, they will go forth to others. It is more difficult to find Epaphrases than to find workers. The coldness and inconsistencies of believers

are an immense hindrance to the conversion of souls. On the other hand, if believers are full of the Spirit, full of love for souls, the world would see that they have something that earth cannot give, and when they show by their joy in Christ that they are satisfied, the world would like to get at their secret. There are far more people made to think by seeing the joy of believers, and their satisfaction in Christ, than by any word they speak. Epaphras therefore prayed for the Colossians, 'that they might be perfect and complete in all the will of God.

5. Completeness in service (i.e. his concentrated focus) - Epaphras was not satisfied in numbers only - he wanted them to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Colossians 4:12) i.e. in all that God wanted them to do, that the zeal of the Spirit might be very distinct and legible in them. He knew the fullness of Christ's heart as well as the abundance of the treasure laid up in Him, so he was not afraid to ask much, because he had great faith in prayer. He knew there was great danger of his people standing still, and not growing in grace.

When believers stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, it attracts divine presence, eradicates challenges and stimulates Church growth. There was once a great deal of murmuring among the Gen-



Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous (I Peter 3:8).

tile converts in Jerusalem. God showed the apostles how to remedy the evil, and the murmuring was stopped - through their dedication to prayers and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:1-7). And we read that 'the Word of God increased, the number of the disciples multiplied, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.' That was one result of doing the will of God. Besides it leads to glorifying God when believers are lively and vigorous.

6. Consecration to Serve – "Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on



And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper (Psalms 1:3).

Faithfulness in Ministry (Epaphras) (continues)

him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: **Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me**". (Philippians 2:25-30). This compares favourably to Gideon's 300 men who were faint yet still pursuing (Judges 8:4).

7. Compassion in Service – "For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him..." (Philippians 2:26,27). It was compassion for souls that birthed the prayer ministry in his life and kept him on the tracks of 'messengerial' role.

A FELLOWSHIPPER WITH MINISTERS AND MEMBERS

Often we find that people who have prayer ministry today, use that as excuse to be isolated from other believers under the auspices of praying. This was not the case with Epaphras. He maintained a lively fellowship **with Christ** through prayers as well as **with ministers** like Paul and **members** of the church – hence his being described as "our dear".

Note that:

ð Being a servant of Christ, he was one who was very much *with* Christ. He went to Him to get commissions, and then returned to tell Him how he had executed them.

A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent (Proverbs 28:20)

ð Being in fellowship with Paul, means that Paul could find him readily available to send on errands including writing the epistle to the Philippians under his dictation. His recognition of the significance of fellowship and the complementary role of prayer meant that he did not frown at new assignments, nor complain of being deprived of his precious time for praying or developing his 'prayer warrior' ministry. He did not rate prayer ministry more important than the 'secretarial role' of writing under the dictation of Paul or of running errands. He focused on the end results and recognized every activity as essential part of giant gig-saw puzzle required to form a full picture – that of the believers **"standing perfect and complete in all the will of God"** (Colossians 4:12). His cordial relationship with Paul made him to record in his epistle to Philemon (1:23) **"There salute thee**

Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus".



Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15)

ð Being in fellowship with members, he allowed the Philippians to send him on physical errands such as taking presents to Paul. **"But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God"** (Philippians 4:18). He did not despise such physical assignments as being inferior nor treat them as distractions from the fulfillment or development of his "prayer warrior" ministry. **The spirit of harmony and fellowship is of greater value in the sight of God that ministerial capabilities discharged with an attitude of contention and unhealthy competition.**

May the Lord help us to be the Epaphrases of today, in Jesus Name! Amen.



Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong (1 Corinthians 16:13)

Characteristics of a faithful man and woman

A. Salvation is the foundation for an enduring faithfulness (Ephesians 2:8-9).

God's word makes it clear that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The sinful nature robs one of the foundation for true and enduring faithfulness. Our good works at best are likened to filthy rags before God.

Salvation by faith is God's gift through grace. Grace gives us the good we did not deserve and transforms our nature to be capable of that which was previously not possible as brought out clearly in 2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

We must win rulers; political, economic, scientific, artistic personalities. They are the engineers of souls. They mold the souls of men. Winning them, you win the people they lead and influence.

Richard Wurmbbrand

B. A faithful man and woman receives the Bible as the Word of God (I Thessalonians 2:13)

Those who argue with the Bible or select what they believe are only manifesting unfaithfulness to the divine revelation - God's roadmap that leads from earth to heaven. Secular

knowledge and material attainments, no matter how good they are, cannot replace the "thus saith the Lord". The eternal / unchanging word of God must become the foundation block and chief corner stone of a life that is to become faithful to God and man.

C. A faithful man and woman studies the word of God (Acts 17:11).

Evidence of faithfulness in the study of God's word is revealed in:

1. Receive the Word with readiness of mind.
2. Daily searching the scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15).
3. Applying diligence in study so as to learn and rightly divide the word.
4. Being faithful in studying and applying the word in daily situations.

D. A faithful man and woman are stable.

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (I Corinthians 16:13). Spiritual stability is developed through:

1. Spiritual watchfulness (i.e. paying attention and taking care).
2. Standing fast in the faith (i.e. in the doctrines of the Bible, and not being moved by every wind of doctrine).
3. Developing spiritual courage.
4. Being strong in the Lord. Ephesians 6:10



Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD

gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly (Job 1:20-22).

admonishes "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

E. A faithful man and woman leads and provides for their family in the ways of God.

"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I Timothy 5:8).

This includes:

1. Material provisions
2. Emotional provisions (Love, care, fellowship).
3. Spiritual provisions (e.g. family devotion, church attendance, scriptural training, etc)
4. Raising children in the fear of God.
5. Good example.



The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing (Psalms 34:10)

Characteristics of a faithful man and woman (continued)

F. A faithful man and woman passes on what he or she has.

According Matthew 28:18-20, this will include (among others):

1. Reaching all nations with the Gospel of Christ.
2. Baptizing the believers and bringing them into the church where they can feed, grow, be disciplined and groomed for service.
3. Teaching them to observe all things He has commanded us including, Holiness, Faithfulness, etc).
4. Passing to them the assuring words of Christ "Lo, I am with you always ... unto the end of the world".

Conclusion:

It is getting more and more difficult to find faithful men in God's service. I praise God that we have some here, we need to give serious thought to faithfulness. Remember you set the example for your children and grandchildren. Faithful men lead to:

1. faithful women,
2. faithful children,
3. faithful families, and
4. faithful churches.

It starts with salvation, moves through growth in the knowledge and practice of the principles of God.

Faithfulness Of Job

Job was a faithful servant of God who was perfect, upright and had the fear of God. He did everything according to God's will and was abundantly blessed by God. He had seven children, three daughters, cattle, sheep, donkeys and oxen.

'And the lord said unto Satan, hast thou considered my servant job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man one that feared God' {Job 1 vs 7}. Satan claimed Job was only faithful because God had blessed him and if everything was taken from him he would curse God. God allowed Satan to test Job but must not take his life.

Test of Faith

In the morning Satan sent thieves to steal Jobs cattle. Sabeans were sent to kill his guards, steal his oxen and donkeys. Fire fell from heaven which burnt his sheep and his servants. Thieves (The Chaldeans) were sent to steal his camels and kill his servants. More tragedy befell Job, with the loss of his children, Job tore his clothes, and declared blessed be the name of the Lord *'in all this Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly'*{Job1vs 19}

Satan tormented Job further by striking him with diseases which covered his body with sores. At this trying time there were pressures from job's



God's faithfulness endures for ever more!

friends and the wife who urged him to curse God and die but he rebuked them and maintained his faithfulness to God. Even though Job thought his misfortunes were from God, he still praised the Lord.

Reward of his Faithfulness

In the end Job was blessed by God - by doubling his possessions. He was blessed with another seven sons and three daughters. He lived for another 140years after his trial.

Job 19 vs 25 *for I know my redeemer liveth and he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth*

The story of Job is a practical example of what can happen in the lives of believers today. Satan and evil people around tend to torment believers to make them unfaithful to God. The story of Job explains that even though we go through trying times, it could be a test of our faith and if we maintain our faithfulness we shall be rewarded beyond our expectations. It also teaches us that faithfulness is not predicated on divine blessings but on personal knowledge and relationship with God. A person can

Job (continued)

remain faithful irrespective of the circumstances around him or her.

Job withstood crucial circumstances by remaining faithful, what are you passing through? Be encouraged by James 5:10,11 "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy".

Eternal salvation is entirely predicated on faithfulness.

Faithfulness Of Sarah

As for Sarai, you shall call her Sarah, which means 'Princess' I will bless her and she shall be a mother of many nations. Many kings and countries shall come from her." (Genesis 17: 15-16)

Sarah was an intelligent woman who stayed faithful to God and her husband all her life. She was submissive yet strong. When she got married to Abraham she made a good decision to help her husband fulfil God's plans for him. That was not weakness. It was God's will for her life to be a

truly submissive wife.

Both of them worked for the Lord efficiently and took possession of the land of Canaan where God revealed to them they shall be mother and father of many nations.

Sarah hadn't bore a child yet but she believed and had faith in God to help her conceive. She ran out of patience and took matters into her hands by handing Hagar her slave to Abraham. Her action implied she believed God would keep His word and give Abraham a son. It was obviously motivated by her love for Abraham and her desire for him to have a son. Her plan soon backfired when Hagar became proud and uncontrollable after becoming pregnant. Sarah's handling of the situation revealed that she was not prepared to compromise the word of God just because of the prospect of having a child.

God heard Sarah laugh and said to Abraham, "**Why did Sarah laugh and say 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.**" (Genesis 18:13, 14)

Through Sarah having faith and being persistent on God's word, she conceived at the age of ninety. She received the promise and named her son Isaac meaning laughter. This goes on to show that nothing is too late for God to help us with, as long as we



For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would

have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age (Genesis 21:2,6-7).

are faithful and believe in his promises for our lives. Sarah received her miracle why won't you?

Mother Theresa of Calcutta

Mother Theresa of Calcutta is also known as Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu.

For over 45 years she ministered and helped the poor, the sick, the orphaned and the dying, she was an apostle of love devoted to the slums of Calcutta, after she became a loved and respected citizen of the world, and served her beloved God for the rest of her



God loves the little children, and so must we!

Mother Teresa (continued)

life.

She dedicated her life to the cause of humanity; people have said that what she had done was a marvellous job which they thought was impossible. She spent eighteen years of her life on Skopje, not much information was given about her life because she didn't like to talk about it, but as far as people know is the obvious, she was vertically challenged yet full of life.

She showed faithfulness and compassion for others, she was faithful to God by doing many things for the good of humanity and being humble. She opened an aids clinic in America, to help those with aids. In 1952 the first Home for the Dying was opened in a space made available by the City of Calcutta. Over the years, Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity grew from 12 to thousands serving the "poorest of the poor" in 450 centres around the world. Mother Teresa created many homes for the dying and the unwanted from Calcutta to New York to Albania. She was one of the founders who established homes for AIDS victims.

For more than 45 years, Mother Teresa comforted the poor, the dying, and the unwanted around the world.

She wrote to a governor begging him to spare the life of a **mentally retarded serial**

prisoner who was to be executed. **Mother Teresa saved** the lives of many and definitely made a change in lots of people's lives. She went to jails preaching the word of God and converting them into Christians. After that she begged the guards and governors to let them go and they said "Only the sick ones, since they won't be harmful to anybody..." She was grateful.

She bought land for all those people with the money she got from charity. They built their own houses and lived there until death, they couldn't say in words how thankful they were to live near their families.

But it wasn't just easy for this woman, she had obstacles and problems, one of them was that she suffered a heart attack whilst on her way to the pope, and then another heart attack in later years. Shortly after, she was diagnosed with pneumonia in Mexico, her health had now become a worry to everyone she planned to quit but shortly after, Teresa wrote in her diary that her first year was fraught with difficulties. She had no income and had to resort to begging for food and supplies. Teresa experienced doubt, loneliness and the temptation to return to the comfort of convent life during these early months.

Later she quoted: "God doesn't require us to succeed, He only requires us to try our



For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly (Psalms 84:11).

hardest, he will never give us more than we can handle." And that inspired me to carry on in the work of God.

How we know she was full of faith is because she always took action now.

A preacher once said "Hope is set for the future, but faith is an action supposed to be taken now!"

God has already given us all faith. What you focus on is what you get, so what you focus on you shall prosper in if you have faithfulness and you know how to put it to work, you can make a great change in this world.

A faithful person is somebody who people rely on and have confidence that their trust in them will not fail them, something a lot of people had in Mother Teresa.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them (Ecclesiastes 12:1)

Mother Theresa (continued)

We all need to be faithful, and when we are we need to keep it.

Faithfulness is a principle that helps us in all those little things, and all those little things we do can add up to a lot, as we can see in mother Teresa's life.

She served her generation so us as Christians should serve our generation as well. Will you show the faithfulness that God requires from you?

Peter: From A Fisherman to A Faithful Fisher of Men

The highlights of Peter's faithfulness include:

1. Spreading the gospel
2. Trusting Jesus when he walked on water with Him
3. He was loyal to Jesus despite persecutions (Being faithful makes one humble)
4. Although he was unfaithful in some circumstances for example denying Jesus three times; he got back his faith and remained faithful until the end.
5. He gave up his life for what he believed in.

Peter was bold and daring in

spirit. He did something the disciples probably thought was crazy. It wasn't crazy to Jesus. Jesus wanted Peter to experience what it actually meant to function in faith. The result – Peter was walking on water - Faithfulness in action!

Can we imagine the exhilaration Peter must have had? I'll bet he was' over the moon' for a long time after this experience.

This is the life of faith. God is working around us, in us and through us. We may not always respond the way we should – but we can see God working. Do you see God working? Are you responding IN FAITH?

If you have structured your thoughts towards a life of comfort, you are moving in the wrong direction...

We learn this from the account in Matthew 14:22-32 (NIV) *Immediately Jesus **made** the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. 25 During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. 27 But*



And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men (Matthew 4:19)

Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." 28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." 29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" 32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the devil smiles. When he stops studying the Bible, the devil laughs. When he stops praying, the devil shouts for joy.

In this bible passage, we see how Peter was faithful and how he lost faith. We need to be faithful to God but we also need faith.



The Ascension

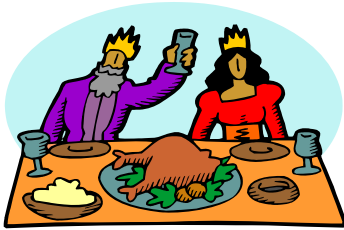
"... and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Peter (continued)

Peter was Faithful and loyal to God when he went on the water after Jesus told him to.

Faith demands absolute believe in God. When Peter thought he could not walk on water then he began to sink.

Faithfulness Of Esther



A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones (Proverbs 12:4).

One of two women after whom books of the bible were named, Esther certainly deserves her title. Esther's story is certainly special because Esther was much like Jesus' mother Mary - possibly the most unlikely choice for the Lord to choose out of history and use for His glory. From the second chapter in this wonderful book we see Esther's entrance and story begin. She was a young Jewish girl who lived in an empire where the Jews had been in captivity for a long time. However, against the odds, by the great hand of God she was miraculously selected as queen for the Persian King, Ahasuerus, as a result of a beauty contest therefore replacing Vashti.

And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds: but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them (Job 37:21).

It is noteworthy that when it was Esther's turn to go to see the King, she did not desire any additional item of fashion other than the basic provisions she was given - a poignant reminder that faithfulness to God, not external beauty or fashion brings divine favour before God and man.

As the new first lady, Esther made sure not to misplace her loyalties which were primarily to the God of Israel and then to Mordecai her cousin-guardian who raised her as his daughter after her parents were taken captive as a young child. This is an example of an aspect of her life in which she demonstrated faithfulness, because even though her position was much greater than that of Mordecai's she still listened to his advice and kept her nationality a secret as an act of obedience to Mordecai.

The Lord's grace for Esther started with his appointment of Mordecai to care for her and from that point he became an essential part of Esther's journey; without him we wouldn't today have the book of Esther.

Esther's faithfulness to her responsibilities meant caused her to risk her life in order to protect the Jewish people from a plot devised by Haman to destroy them from the whole



Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies (Proverbs 31:10).

kingdom of Ahasuerus as a result of Mordecai's refusal to bow down and reverence him.

As it was, Haman, like everyone else, did not know that Esther was Jewish and it was this lack of knowledge that brought him to ruin as Esther had more power than he did before the King.

Mordecai challenged her to intercede on behalf of her people before the king but anyone who went into the inner court uninvited would be killed as it was against the law, so this would not be an easy task. In determination, she decided she would go to see the king but only if she was supported by prayer and fasting and said "...if i perish, i perish."

So she sent a request for the Jews to fast and pray for three days and nights and she did likewise despite the fact that she lived in the king's house where there would've been an abundance of food, which could've been tempting.

In the end, she made a bold appearance before the King. God's people were saved from destruction... Glory be to God!

King David: A Man After God's Heart

One of the most famous characters in the Bible is King David, son of Jesse, son of Obed, who was son of Ruth and Boaz, and great... great grandson of Naomi.

David is known as a, "man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). David's love for God is evident throughout the Psalms that he wrote. David was a man with great character. He was brave, strong, passionate, and overall, faithful to God. He stood for justice. David's passion for justice was evident in some of his actions. When the young David heard how Goliath mocked Israel and the God of Israel, he stood up and decided to fight and defeat Goliath without being concerned about his own limitations, but rather manifested full faith in the name of the God of Israel. He simply trusted in God's blessing with the faith he attained through his personal triumphs in life, when he fought the bear and the lion as he shepherded his father's sheep and kept them safe.

David explained to King Saul about how he fought to protect his sheep. When the bear or the lion took one of his sheep, David would not give up on that sheep. He went after it and not only rescued it from the mouth of the predator but also defeated it. David killed the enemy so that it would not come again at a later time to

devour his sheep. His stance for righteousness and justice, and his faith in God was what gave Israel their victory time and time again.

David manifested faithfulness through:

1. His faith in God when he killed Goliath.
2. Genuine repentance when reproved of sins.
3. Dancing and praising



Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands (1 Samuel 17:45-47).

God till his clothes fell off, when the ark of covenant was returned to Israel.

4. Serving Saul and respecting him even though Saul wanted to kill him.



In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death (Proverbs 12:28)

He manifested unfaithfulness by:

1. Numbering Israel
2. Committing adultery with Bathsheba and plotting the death of the husband – Uriah.

The key episodes in David's life include the killing of Goliath, adultery with Bathsheba and the numbering of Israel. These instances are chapters in a very long life of the Bible character David. But they are profound because rarely are such extreme human qualities found in the same individual. These qualities make David a human character we can all identify with and draw strength from. We also learn much from the way he was treated by God in each instance.

David showed uncommon courage against all odds as a young boy, only later to show incredible weakness as a mighty king before his own desire. However, through these



But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4:18).

David (continued)

two life challenges and many in between, David always displayed incredible faith in God.

So, while he was not spared the consequences of his actions, he received mercy and forgiveness as well. While David is long since dead and buried, the God of David is very much alive and dispenses the same mercy and forgiveness today to those who contritely ask for it.

Rewards of faithfulness

When struggles in our lives seem to overwhelm us, you and I need to remember to be faithful to God. Sometimes, our workloads can become unbearably heavy and our days extremely hectic with responsibilities, it is then that God looks down and picks us up holding us fast, securely in His hand.

The Lord devises ways of turning difficulties into deliverances and problems into praise. He will glorify His name in our lives even when we are in tough situations.

When all that we do is done to gain glory for the Lord, God blesses and multiplies that kind of attitude.

The load you carry may be huge or you may be struggling to see your way around the mountain of responsibilities, but be faithful and you will soon hear God's **"Well done, my Faithful Ser-**

vant!" (Matthew 25:23).

Never lose sight of your goal to make an impact for Christ on peoples' lives. That will ultimately also make an eternal difference. How many souls will know Jesus better because of the impact you've made on them.

A person who has never lost himself in a cause bigger than himself has missed one of life's mountaintop experiences. I know we have all found ourselves facing tasks bigger than ourselves. It is then that you and I must learn to "lean heavily" on God's promise to equip us and go before us, as He opens the doors. **A faithful man shall abound with blessings." (Proverbs 28:20)**

Our responsibility is to "sow

But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4:18).

seeds" wherever we are. We may be unaware of the crop we have sown. Some never know they have planted a forest. They will be stunned to find those extra jewels in their heavenly crowns. God has promised that "His word shall not return unto Him void." Our faithful work for Him will never return void!

When the days become exceedingly weary, Psalm 23 tells us that our Shepherd will refresh us and carry us to



And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you (Isaiah 46:4)

quiet streams of peace and hope and comfort. He knows we need those precious moments to reflect only on Him. If Jesus needed to be refreshed, how much more do we need that special time of coming apart into our Heavenly Father's presence.

Nothing is more rewarding than to know that God only asks each of us to be a vessel to do His work on earth. Our responsibility is to use our abilities to sow the seed He designs for us to do. It is God who brings the increase that He desires from our labours. When we do the Lord's work, our efforts do not return empty but will accomplish whatever He wishes (Isaiah 33:11). And we don't do His work without His help. Philippians 2:13 tells us that "God is at work within you



Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them (Isaiah 34:16).

Rewards of Faithfulness (continued)

helping you do the tasks assigned to you.” Duty is ours. The results are God’s.

“Life is worth nothing unless we use it for doing the work assigned to us by the Lord Jesus Christ.” Let’s not let our hectic schedules and heavy loads overwhelm us, but let us “keep on, keeping on!” God gives great rewards for our faithfulness!

You must operate your faith at its highest level. Always turn to God as your total source of supply. In Luke 10:2 the Bible tells us that God is the Lord of the harvest. God will never fail you, He will never let you down, he wants to give you a harvest.

I believe that God will give you a window of opportunities, a window of time that when you ask God to do something in your family, in your finances, workplace, you ask God to do something in your business, God will connect you to a person who will work with your faith to get you to a place that will take you to higher places. The difference in the season is your faith. And faith is simply confidence in God.

Our faith will be rewarded abundantly. In Mark 5:34 we learn **“And He said to her, Daughter your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.”**

If God will say to your life that your business will flourish then

will you choose to believe in Him? if God says that He wants to restore your relationship, then will you choose to believe Him? If God says He wants to prosper you and wants you to be in good health will you then believe God?

Exodus 14:14 tells us that “The Lord shall fight for you and you shall hold your peace.”

God will give you a supernatural breakthrough and shower you with blessings. He will open doors for you, you can only imagine. God will let you see what others cannot see.

Isaiah 41:10 says **“Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”** God will turn things around for you for good.

The word of the Lord states clearly that when we obey the Lord, when we praise and please him, He will give us the wealth of the sinner so we can prosper and bless his work. God said to Abraham, “I will bless you to make you a channel of blessings.” God doesn’t want to bless you so you can go and have a picnic, He wants to bless you so you can be a channel of blessings to the world.

God has already put people in place for you. God wants you to set the highest standard. Your boss, supervisor or manager should be able to say



Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds (Psalms 36:5)

watch that man, be like that man, learn from him, pick up from him, learn his habits and develop your skills as they develop his. With faith, you have life without limits. It is not about how you look, it’s about who you belong to. When God blesses you, you cannot be cursed. What God has blessed, no man can curse. His compassion never fails and He is never going to run out of compassion. If there is something from the past that you may still be carrying, take a moment and call on his name. Let him refresh and restore your soul. Praise him and thank him for the work He is doing in your life.



Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers (Jeremiah 33:20-21)

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

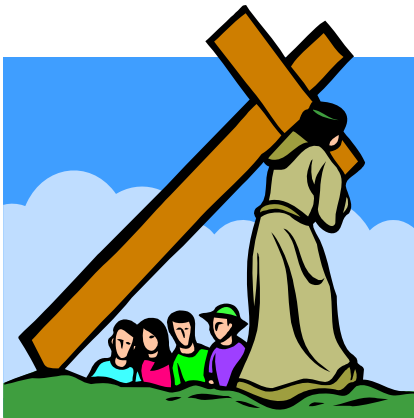
1.
 "Great is Thy faithfulness", O God my Father,
 There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
 Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
 As Thou hast been Thou for ever will be.

*"Great is Thy Faithfulness! Great is Thy Faithfulness!"
 Morning by morning new mercies I see;
 All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
 Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

2.
 Summer and winter, and spring-time and harvest,
 Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
 Join with all Nature in manifold witness,
 To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

3.
 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
 Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
 Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
 Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

4.
 Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
 Morning by morning new mercies I see;
 All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
 Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.



**All the way to Calvary, He
 went to pay the price for
 my sins.**

Faithfulness Means:

- **Faith**
- **Accountability (Action)**
- **Integrity**
- **Transparency, (Trustworthy, Teachable-ness)**
- **Honesty (Humility)**
- **Fulfillment (Fearlessness, Fruitfulness)**
- **Uprightness (Upfront)**
- **Love (Legitimacy, Legal)**
- **Normal (Noble, Notable)**
- **Excellence (Exemplary)**
- **Submission (Sincerity)**
- **Steadfastness**



**Marvelous are all His works
 from the beginning of the
 world.**

*Victorious Christian
Ministry*

**Cardigan Centre
145-149 Cardigan Road,
Burley,
Leeds LS6 1LJ
Worship: 1.15 Every Sunday**

**Faith is the
currency of heaven!**



**Faithfulness
knows no
boundaries,
makes no ex-
cuses and has
no limits!**

**Empowering Saints To
Live Like Christ**

Programme Schedule

- 13.15-13.30 Opening Prayers
- 13.30-13.45 Worship
- 13.45-14.00 What Is Faithfulness
- 14.00-14.15 Characteristics of a faithful man / woman
- 14.15-14.30 Testimonies, Worship
- 14.30-15.00 Faithfulness (Youth Presentations)
- 15.00-15.15 Announcements, Worship, etc
- 15.15-15.30 Reward of Faithfulness
- 15.30-15.45 Indices of Faithfulness
- 15.45-16.00 Questions and Answers
- 16.00-16.10 Benedictions and close

Website:
www.victoriouschristianministry.org

E-mail:
webmaster@victoriouschristianministry.org

Faithfulness Examination: How Faithful Are You in:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Your relationship with God? | vows? | 17. Diligent study? |
| 2. Daily quiet time (reading the Bible and praying)? | 10. Paying your tithes and giving offerings? (Malachi 3:8-12) | 18. Providing for the family? |
| 3. Keeping yourself pure before God? | 11. Owing no man anything (Romans 13:8) | 19. Honouring your parents? |
| 4. Overcoming temptations? | 12. Loving God with all your heart? | 20. Conduct and your conversation (e.g. having a good report of others)? |
| 5. Praying for one another? | 13. Loving your neighbour as yourself? | 21. Making use of your talents at every opportunity to serve God? |
| 6. Preaching the gospel? | 14. Letting your yes be yes and your no be no? | 22. Being balanced in all areas of Christian living? |
| 7. Regular attendance at Church services? | 15. Keeping / fulfilling your words and promises? | |
| 8. Being punctual to Church programmes? | 16. Your work ethic? | |
| 9. Keeping your marital | | |

**It is better to die early
in faithfulness than to
live long in
unfaithfulness**