

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS FAITHFULNESS

1 FAITHFULNESS DEFINED IN SCRIPTURE

One Dictionary defines faithfulness as being full of faith. It enlarges on this by saying faithfulness is to be steadfast in keeping a promise, an oath, or a contract. A spiritual contract in Deuteronomy 7:9 is from a faithful God, who keeps his covenant of love and mercy with his people. 1 Corinthians 1:9 says God is faithful, who has called us into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The word used in Galatians 5:22 is not faithfulness but faith. Young's literal translation says, "The fruit of the Spirit is faith." There are at least three uses of this word in Scripture. There is the faith we need to become a follower of Christ. In this context, Galatians 3:11 says, "The just shall live by faith." There is faith given for special occasions. 1 Corinthians 12:8-9 says, "To one there is given through the Spirit the gift of faith." This is the faith that can move mountains. But the fruit of the Spirit called faithfulness is not the faith we need for salvation or to move mountains, it is a growing faith in God that learns to trust in him.

Faithfulness is not about how dependable or trustworthy we are. It is about how faithful God is. The more we lead people to him, the more faithful we will be in a faithless world. This leads to our definition. *The fruit of the Spirit called faithfulness is a growing faith in God that overflows to others so that they too can trust in him and be faithful.* We will now see this...

2 FAITHFULNESS DISPLAYED IN JESUS

At the end of his life, Moses said in Deuteronomy 32:3-4, "Praise God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong." Like a rock, God is solid and immovable. This is the faithfulness we see in Jesus.

Throughout his life, *Jesus displayed a faith in God that overflowed to others so that they too might trust in him.* After working as an artisan for most of his life, Jesus committed himself to a way of life that led to his death. Hebrews 2:17 says, "Jesus became a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God." Even though his disciples left him, Jesus remained faithful. 2 Timothy 2:13 says, "If we are faithless, he remains faithful; he cannot deny himself." He will never let us down.

In application, Hebrews 3:1-2 says we should consider Jesus... who was faithful to the one who appointed him. Filled with his Spirit, we too can be faithful in leading others to him who is steadfast and reliable. To help us do this, we need to be led by the Spirit of faithfulness; we need to walk in the Spirit of faithfulness; we need to keep in step with the Spirit of faithfulness; we need to sow into the Spirit of faithfulness. When we do this...

3 FAITHFULNESS DEPLOYED IN US

To help us apply the fruit of the Spirit of faithfulness, we should see it in the context of the other fruit. The first three fruits of love, joy, and peace are related to God and develop as we walk with him. The next three: patience, kindness, and goodness develop as we walk with God and with others. Faithfulness belongs to the final three, which are more personal. To be faithful we need to build a stronger faith. We should then become more faithful as we walk with God and with others

Our faithfulness should then be seen in our family, at work and elsewhere. This happens as we display an implicit trust in the God who made us, the God who loves us, and the God who cares for us. This can be evident in a world where so many are struggling to trust anyone. This is why we need *a growing faith in God that overflows to others so that they too can trust in him and be faithful.*

An old war poster said rather dramatically, *your country needs you.* Your country needs you to be faithful. Your family needs you to be faithful. Your work needs you to be faithful. Your church needs you to be faithful. At the end of his life, the Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” Starting well is not enough; continuing well and finishing well is what we need in an unstable, insecure, and uncertain world. *We need a growing faith in God that overflows to others so that they too can trust in him and be faithful.*

DISCUSSION GUIDE

to help us reflect further on the message

1. How can we help with the disillusionment felt in the world today about who to trust? How can spirit-filled faithfulness help? *Galatians 5:19-23 may help your discussion.*
2. Discuss and differentiate between saving faith (Galatians 3:11), faith as a spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12:8-9 and 13:2), and faith as spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22). *How does this take us from initial salvation to spiritual growth?*
3. Discuss the following definition of faithfulness: *The fruit of the Spirit called faithfulness is a growing faith in God that overflows to others so that they too can trust in him and be faithful.*
4. Discuss the significance of 2 Corinthians 1:18-22 in context. See also Revelation 1:4-8.
5. Discuss Hebrews 3:1-6 in the light of the faithfulness of Jesus. *How does this apply in 2 Corinthians 11:2-3?*
6. Discuss the idea that, we are called to have a positive faith that is an alternative to the instability, inconsistency, insecurity, and uncertainty in the world.
7. How can Galatians 2:20 help us understand the development and growth of faith in our experience? *You may want to discuss this in the light of 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4.*
8. How can we become more faithful according to Romans 10:17? *You may want to compare this with Colossians 3:15-17 with the application up to Colossians 4:6.*