

As you think about faithful people who do you think of? Why do you think of these people? Faithfulness is a belief in truth, a conviction, reality. We focus our deepest faithfulness on things that are most "real" to us.

Psalm 145:13 says "The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made." Faithfulness is believing the reality of a sovereign God.

We believe *in* Christ and *on* Christ as our Lord and Savior. But do we believe Christ in our ;day to day living? in our home ? in the place where we work? in our most difficult times? when life is r-e-a-l-l-y hard? Do we believe who He *is* and what He *says* ?

Let's read Exodus 34:4-6. ABOUNDING means exceeding, full, great. what does God's abounding in love and faithfulness mean to you in v6 ? In Paul's prayer to the Ephesians he tries to get these believers to have even a little understanding of how great God's love and faithfulness to them is. Let's read Ephesians 3:17-20.

God's love and faithfulness to each of us is wider, longer, higher, deeper than we can understand with our minds, more than we could ever ask for, or even imagine or think up in our thoughts ! This is His power, love and faith at work in us. **WOW ! WOW !** But... how long will this last? Read Psalm 11:7-8 Forever and ever! Through these Scriptures God tells us:

- 1) He is for certain, real and we can depend on that
- 2) He is true-He cannot lie
- 3) He is ENDURING, without end

We know His Word exists. His Word is truth and His Word will last forever. God is faithful because: He can be depended on, He can be trusted, He endures forever.

We know we can trust the faithfulness of God to endure forever. But what about you and me? Do we base our faith on what God does or on who He is?

If you believe God as long as He does what you ask, then your faith depends on how often and how well God answers prayers. This faith is based on results and is a faith by sight only. Why and how does this become a problem?

God's actions are beyond our earthly understanding. What does Isaiah 55:8-9 tell us? A faith that depends on what God does is really no faith at all, because it's based on what is seen. God does not call upon us to seek His *works*. He calls on us to seek His *heart* in a relationship. This faith helps us understand His ways and why He does what He does.

His faithfulness flows from who He is. To please Him our faithfulness must do the same. "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ" Romans 10:17. Hopefully we will behave differently because we believe differently.

GENTLENESS

Let's go from the seventh quality of the fruit of the Spirit, faithfulness, to the eighth quality, gentleness. What are some words you would use to describe a person who shows gentleness? 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____

The dictionary describes it as "meekness, mildness, FORBEARANCE. It is for us a calmness toward God. We can describe it as complete surrender to God's will and way in our life. Meekness or gentleness is the power and strength created from surrendering to God's will. It means stop resisting God! When the wind of God's will blows, ride along wherever or however it takes you. **

Has your life ever been in a tangles mess? Have you allowed certain situations to go resisting taking care of them when they were small and they got bigger and bigger? I have. Oh my, yes I have. We are to rest in God's faithful care, crying if you must, but allow Him to comb out the tangles until you are free. Hold onto nothing except Him. He's the only one who can help. Surrender dear friend, be freed of the tangled mess.

Not only does gentleness mean we are to surrender to God's will for our life, but we are to humble ourselves before Him. John the Baptist speaks to the attitude of humility we need. In John 1:27 "He (Jesus) is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." and in John 3:30 "He must become greater; I must become less". Yes, God's will should become greater and our will become less.

What will happen if we humble ourselves before God? Let's read His Word to know.
2 Chronicles 7:14 "I will hear from heaven and _____. 2 Ch 34:27 "I have _____ you
declares the Lord" Ezra 8:21-23 "answered our _____. James 4:10 "he will _____ you up

So we are to:

- 1) surrender our will to God's.
- 2) humble ourselves before God
- 3) be teachable in Spirit

Are you willing to be taught? Eager to learn? Do you have a teachable Spirit?

Have you ever come to know that something you had always believed about God all
your life was not ACCURATE? I did ! Growing up I thought that believing in God was
the same as "walking with God" and "believing God". As God showed me how this was
not accurate I wanted to learn more about this as I matured as a Christian.

Sometimes God can teach us in unusual ways. When we are proud, rebellious and
insist on our own way He might deliver His message to us in a way we might not expect.
Let's read Numbers 22:21-38. What can we learn from this story?

- * What did Balaam's donkey see and do? What did Balaam do?
- * Where did the donkey see the angel the second time? What did she do?
- * What did Balaam do? What happened the third time?
- * Why did God oppose Balaam? How did Balaam respond? (v38)
- * What did God say to Balaam? What did Balaam say?

Have you ever had a STUBBORN time like Balaam when you didn't listen to God?
Tell about that if you would like. Let's read:

Proverbs 4:13 Proverbs 13:13 Proverbs 16:20

What do these verses tell us about God's instruction?

The last quality of this wonderful fruit the Spirit develops in believers is self-control. Any man, woman or child is a mighty warrior if he or she has self-control. Without self-control they are bound up in living as the world lives. Proverb 25:28 "Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control."

In our culture we see the results of human INDULGENCE. Popular actors, entertainers and many of our young people dying from drug related deaths. Abuse of power in politics, sports and business are in the news daily. All indulgence from not keeping in control passions and appetites for worldly things.

Not having the strong walls of self-control in our lives kills self-respect, friendships, marriages, life work and ministries. Name some temptations you can think of.

Self-control means not to practice excesses or to indulge yourself without moderation or balance in some area of your life. Self-control is about authority and boundaries in your life. If we don't allow the Holy Spirit to be the authority in our life and to show us where we need boundaries then the walls of our lives crumble and fall. This invites in the world, sin and behavior not pleasing to God.

We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Let's read 1 Corinthians 6:19 We are the Lord's ! Anything with value is worth protecting. He values us ! The Holy Spirit is our authority and protector in the form of self-control. Any out of control area in our lives, no matter how large or small is an invitation for the enemy. He knows our strengths and weaknesses and looks for a crumbling wall where he can enter. His weapons are your greatest temptations. His goal is to hold us captive with shame, guilt, frustration and failure for as long as possible. I know because I've been there. Are you a prisoner of this war?

Misuse, abuse and bitterness destroys our temple (our body) and our lives for Christ. Pray for the filling of your heart with the Holy Spirit for with Him comes the fruit of the Spirit. Let's finish our study from God's Holy Word. Galatians 5:16-26. We are indeed a life set free in Christ Jesus.

Memory Verse: James 1:21 "Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent (all around us) and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you"

IS THERE A SIN TO CONFESS? Faithfulness is a belief in truth, gentleness is humbling ourselves toward God, self-control protects us from indulgence. Confess all sin to God and ask for His strength and wisdom to live a spirit controlled life. A life set free in Christ
WHAT DID GOD SHOW US TODAY?

- 1) The Lord is faithful to all his promises. Psalm 145:13
- 2) Our faith comes through hearing the message through Christ. Romans 10:17
- 3) Gentleness is surrender to God's will.
- 4) Anyone without self-control is like a city whose walls are broken down. Proverb 25:28
- 5) Our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:19

What will you do to show Godly faithfulness and gentleness?

What steps will you take to rid yourself of over-indulgence?

Prayer Request: _____

Word Study:

- 1) abounding: to be great in number, rich and well supplied. His love was abounding in us.
- 2) accurate: free from mistakes. Her beliefs were not accurate according to the Bible.
- 3) enduring: lasting, permanent, patient. His love is enduring forever.
- 4) forbearance: patient endurance, to refrain or not do something, self-control. His forbearance brought lasting peace.
- 5) indulgence: satisfying a desire, to allow temptations to be satisfied. Her indulgence in unacceptable behavior was a great disappointment to many.
- 6) stubborn: not willing to move or change, hard, tough, difficult to teach. She is stubborn