



GROW.PRAY.STUDY

Weekly Study Guide



Summer Fruit: Faithfulness

September 9, 2018

Scriptures:

Lamentations 3:19-26 (CEB)

The memory of my suffering and homelessness is bitterness and poison. I can't help but remember and am depressed. I call all this to mind—therefore, I will wait. Certainly the faithful love of the Lord hasn't ended; certainly God's compassion isn't through! They are renewed every morning. Great is your faithfulness. I think: The Lord is my portion! Therefore, I'll wait for him. The Lord is good to those who hope in him, to the person who seeks him. It's good to wait in silence for the Lord's deliverance.

Matthew 25:14-30 (CEB)

"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who was leaving on a trip. He called his servants and handed his possessions over to them. To one he gave five valuable coins, and to another he gave two, and to another he gave one. He gave to each servant according to that servant's ability. Then he left on his journey. "After the man left, the servant who had five valuable coins took them and went to work doing business with them. He gained five more. In the same way, the one who had two valuable coins gained two more. But the servant who had received the one valuable coin dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money. "Now after a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five valuable coins came forward with five additional coins. He said, 'Master, you gave me five valuable coins. Look, I've gained five more.'

"His master replied, 'Excellent! You are a good and faithful servant! You've been faithful over a little. I'll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.' "The second servant also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two valuable coins. Look, I've gained two more.' "His master replied, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful servant. You've been faithful over a little. I'll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me.' "Now the one who had received one valuable coin came and said, 'Master, I knew that you are a hard man. You harvest grain where you haven't sown. You gather crops where you haven't spread seed. So I was afraid. And I hid my valuable coin in the ground. Here, you have what's yours.' "His master replied, 'You evil and lazy servant! You knew that I harvest grain where I haven't sown and that I gather crops where I haven't spread seed? In that case, you should have turned my money over to the bankers so that when I returned, you could give me what belonged to me with interest. Therefore, take from him the valuable coin and give it to the one who has ten coins. Those who have much will receive more, and they will have

more than they need. But as for those who don't have much, even the little bit they have will be taken away from them. Now take the worthless servant and throw him outside into the darkness.'

Introduction to the Study

This 7th Fruit of the Spirit means standing fast, steadfastness, loyal, devoted, constant, reliable, unwavering, trustworthy, dependable, resolute, honest, punctual, and steady. It could also be called fidelity...quite a quality of character! It speaks of endurance—a firmness of purpose, especially when life gets tough. It's a positive, active character trait—one that's needed in today's flippant world. It is also a much-desired characteristic in those with whom we are in a relationship. God is the source and standard of faithfulness. In the New Testament, Jesus models it in his relationships with God's people. The Spirit is ready to bring it to full maturity in us, so we, too, can be faithful in our relationships and in all circumstances.

Daily Study Guides

MONDAY 9/4/17 *Faith and Faithfulness*

Read Hebrews 11:1-40

Faith and faithfulness are closely linked. Faith is foundational to all we believe. Faith is that undefinable power through which we understand things unseen. When we have faith in God, we act in faithful ways. Faithfulness acts demonstrate our true faith in God, and are the threads holding our belief and behavior system together.

- What is the biblical definition of faith? How are we to apply faith to our daily living? How much faith is required to be faithful and pleasing to God? How does God demonstrate that God is faithful? How does God's faithfulness bring hope to humans?

Prayer: Gracious God, we know you are faithful toward us, but sometimes we fall short in our faithfulness toward you. Help us to be faithful in all we say and do. Amen.

TUESDAY 9/5/17 *When There Is No Faithfulness*

Read Malachi 2:10-17; 3:13-18

Faithfulness is vital...without it our society would collapse. Every day we depend on the faithfulness of others. We eat food prepared by others, fly on airplanes we trust have been examined faithfully, and we trust our health to doctors who are properly prepared. But what happens when there is a breakdown? IF things were right 99.9% of the time, there would be one hour of unsafe drinking water per month; two unsafe landings per day at Chicago's O'Hare Airport; 16,000 pieces of lost mail per hour; 20,000 incorrect prescriptions filled per year; 500 incorrect surgeries per week; and 50 babies would be dropped on the floor at birth every day! We expect perfection, but often our expectations are far from met.

- Have you ever had someone break a commitment? How did you feel and how did you react? Describe the commitments that were broken by the Israelites as described in Malachi 2:1-14. What happens when we "break faith" with another?
- Is there a connection between God and the faithfulness of God's people? How does God respond when God's people are faithful? When they are unfaithful?
- In Malachi 3:13-18, there are a number of blessings and benefits listed that God will bestow upon the faithful. What are they? From verse 18, specifically, what is the distinction "between those who serve God and those who do not?"

Prayer: Loving God, our expectations of others are high, but we don't always hold ourselves to the same high standard. Help us to be faithful just as we expect you and others to be faithful. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 9/6/17 *God's Promise of Support*

Read Joshua 1:1-9

Think about God's faithfulness and unchanging nature! God's AGE doesn't change...God doesn't get older as time goes on. God's PLACE doesn't change...God is everywhere! God promises God's faithfulness to all people in all situations. God is always faithful!

- Describe what you think Joshua felt when he was told to lead God's people. What promises did God give to Joshua?
- Think of a time when you faced a challenge too big to handle: How did God's promise of faithfulness help you through it?
- In verse 5, God promised Joshua, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Why are God's promises so encouraging to us? Do the promises made to Joshua apply to us today? How does God's promise help you be "strong and courageous?"

Prayer: Holy Lord, we rely upon your promises. They help us grow in strength and perseverance. Help us to rely on you. Amen.

THURSDAY 9/7/17 *Gods Promise To Be There*

Read Lamentations 3:19-26; Ruth 1:1-22

Faithfulness implies that someone will be there when we really need them. God's promise to be with us is evident throughout the Bible—it brings comfort when we struggle.

- The writer of Lamentations is desperate. Why does he/she have hope? Why is God faithful? How should we respond to God's faithfulness? How is God's faithfulness evident in your life?
- Consider the reading from Ruth. Why is faithfulness so important to lasting relationships? In verses 16 & 17, we read the finest declaration of faithfulness. What do they say about faithfulness?

Prayer: Loving God, we know how important it is to be faithful, but we don't always follow through. Help us to be faithful, not only to you but toward others, and especially those we love. Amen.

FRIDAY 9/8/17 *The Rewards of Faithfulness*

Read Matthew 24:14-30

One of our goals in life should be to live so, at the end, we hear God say "Well done, good and faithful servant!" We are caretakers of God's business. We are given a part charged with taking care of it: increasing it, investing it, and presenting it back to God.

- In the parable, what does the master expect of his servants? In what ways do the servants meet or fall short? What are God's expectations for you? How have you met or fallen short?
- How can the principles of this parable apply to your life? Your relationships? Why is faithfulness part of the Christian lifestyle?

Prayer: O God, we know that sometimes being faithful to you means taking a risk with the things you have given us: our time, our resources, even our lives. Give us the strength to be willing servants who are ready to take those risks. Through Christ, Amen.

SATURDAY 9/9/17 *In Summary*

Faithfulness, as nurtured by the Holy Spirit in your life, is an absolute necessity for productive Christian living! It's a hard harsh truth. It seems to be a negative until you look at the other side, the positive side. Think about the most joyful people you know... what is their secret of joy? The most joyful people are the ones who never stop growing. When you give, you get more to give. When you faithfully use what's you've been given, you get more to use! The greatest commendation any human could receive is to hear the Master say: "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things."

Prayer: Holy Lord, we want to be faithful to you and your people. Be with us and encourage us in everything we do, so we will do it faithfully, in a way that is pleasing to you. Amen.