

BE FAITHFUL

Part 5 of IMITATE ME. 2 Timothy 3:10-11.
Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. October 22, 2023.

GOD'S SMUGGLER & FAITHFULNESS

God's Smuggler described the faithfulness of Brother Andrew.

- He smuggled Bibles into the Soviet Union to give to underground churches.
- It fired up my faith. Faithful Christians inspire me to live faithfully.

Faithfulness is essential to spiritual growth.

- Paul wrote to his protege to encourage him to continue in ministry by imitating Paul's life and ministry.

2 Timothy 3:10-11 (ESV) You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, 11 my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

- We cannot grow to spiritual maturity until we develop faithfulness.

DEFINING FAITHFULNESS

The “faith” Paul lists in verse 10 has three aspects:

- The faith we **profess** is content, doctrines, beliefs, and theology.
- The faith we **possess** is trust in God, Christ, and Gospel.
- The faith that **possesses** us is faithfulness. It results in loving obedience.

Paul may have all three in mind. They go together.

- Faith IN God produces faithfulness TO God.
- We obey his word and will.

DESCRIBING PAUL'S FAITHFULNESS

The Book of Acts portrays Paul's faithfulness:

Damascus: Acts 9:19-20, 23-25 (ESV) For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. 20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." ... 23 When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, 25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

Jerusalem: Acts 9:28-30 (ESV) So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. 30 And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Antioch in Pisidia: Acts 13:44-52 (ESV) The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. ... 50 But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

Iconium and Lystra: Acts 14:19 (ESV) But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

He went back: Acts 14:20-22 (ESV) But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city (Lystra), and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Paul's faith IN Jesus led to his faithfulness TO Jesus.

DETAILING OUR FAITHFULNESS

We cannot reach spiritual maturity apart from faithfulness.

- Psalm 37 encourages us to “befriend faithfulness” (verse 3).
- But we tend to be self-centered. That’s why Jesus taught:

Matthew 16:24-25 (ESV) Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Three steps to build our faithfulness:

- Step one: Crave the Holy Spirit’s power.

Galatians 5:16, 22, 24 (ESV) But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ... 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is ... faithfulness...

- Step two: Combat the desires of the flesh (sinful nature)

Galatians 5:24 (NLT) 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.

- Step three: Commit to glorify Christ.

Galatians 5:24 (ESV) Those who belong to Christ ... (He bought us)

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV) You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

John 17:4 (ESV) I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

CONCLUSION: BE FAITHFUL

SMALL GROUPS GUIDE

GET STARTED

- Where do you go for fall cider and donuts? Explain why.

DIVE IN

- Review the study guide. What were Pastor Peter's main ideas, insights, or Bible passages related to faithfulness?
- Work as a group to identify examples of faithfulness in the Biblical narrative. Take a look at Hebrews 11 for pointers. List some of the characteristics of faithfulness found in the examples.
- God is always faithful even when we are not (read 2 Timothy 3:13). How does God's faithfulness affect your life?
- Share with the group the things that strengthen or weaken your faithfulness. How do you overcome the things that weaken you?

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

- Have one or two people share an area in which they struggle with faithfulness. Offer them empathy, encouragement, guidance, and prayer.
- Discuss this article by Dennis Rainey on living faithfully: www.cru.org/us/en/communities/families/7-essentials-for-christian-life.html

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray for peace on earth which only the return of Christ will produce. Pray for people in war torn places such as Yemen, Ukraine, Myanmar, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, and the Mexican cartel wars. Pray for Elijah, our missionary in the middle east. Pray for peace in Israel and Gaza, and the protection of civilians. Pray for gospel advance in all these places. Pray for the members of the small group, your pastors/elders, the Cornerstone family, and our outreach partners..