

*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."
The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;
it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. – Lamentations 3:22-26*

Let me begin with apologies. Last night at midnight I sat upright in bed as I realized I hadn't done the blog for today. Then I began laughing as I realized that the topic for today is all about... faithfulness! I love the irony.

What do Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Levi, David, Hezekiah, Joseph, Timothy, Tychicus, the Colossians, Epaphras, Onesimus, Jerusalem, the Israelites, the Zadokites, Jesus Christ, and God the Father have in common? All are called "faithful" at one time or another in scripture. So let's broaden the list. Who would you add to that list, not just from scripture but from your own life? Would your name be on it?

As far as the Fruits of the Spirit go, Faithfulness is one of the more forgettable ones. In fact, most of the time I've heard people stumble over that list, it's been over faithfulness. It doesn't have the romantic connotations of Love, nor the exuberance of Joy, nor the calm of peace. In fact, faithfulness is so hard to remember because it is so assumed. Isn't Faith what Christianity is all about? Isn't it the primary cause of the great church splits of history (the Great Schism of 1054 and the Protestant Reformation of the 1500's)?

In regards to faithfulness, we need to get back to the Old Testament. There is a marked shift from the OT to the NT in this area. In the OT, most of the talk is about "faithfulness", while in the NT most of the talk is about "faith". It is a shift from a description of a person to something they have. This year at the Midwinter conference, a week-long gathering for Covenant Pastors, one of the speakers asked what might change if we changed the Fruit of the Spirit from adjectives to adverbs. In other words, what if these fruit didn't describe a thing but an action? What if we stopped calling ourselves peaceful people and started asking if that particular word we just spoke was peaceful? What if we stopped thinking of ourselves as having joy and instead asked if that thing we just did was joyful? This is what I mean by getting back to the OT. Do you have faith? Or today at 9:35am, was the action you took faithful?

If I am a regular attendee at a church, I consider myself faithful. Regardless of whether I even think about God through the week, or am actively about helping those Jesus helped, or reading my bible to get to know God better, or praying in order to align my mind with God's, I am still faithful. And as church attendance expectations have shrunk in the past decade (from "attending 5x/mo" to "attending 3x every 2 months" statistics show), so has the requirements in our minds for the title of Faithful.

But take a look at that list again. Not everyone in scripture is called Faithful. That means it is not such an easy thing to do. Maybe church attendance isn't the way we determine faithfulness – maybe it's much, much more. What if faithfulness means both focus and endurance? What if faithfulness means that our focus is on God and His mission all the time, not just on Sundays or devotional time, or when we're serving with the food pantry, or when I think of it? What if faithfulness means keeping on with the things to which God has called us, like prayer, forgiveness, serving the lost/last/least/littlest, and yes, joining with the community God has put us in.

There are enough questions already to ponder today, so nothing new. Just be like Jesus: faithful to the end.