



# fruit


but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,  
goodness, **faithfulness**, gentleness and self-control



Faithfulness

"True faith is never merely a source of spiritual comfort. It may indeed bring peace, but before it does so it must involve us in struggle."

Thomas Merton



# Unchanging

God's faithfulness means, in part, that he is who he says he is. Even when we disagree or claim, in ignorance, that what seems contradictory to us must be untrue.

The Bible teaches that God is love, but that doesn't mean he isn't also just. His goodness is not in conflict with his holiness, or his compassion with his truth. He simply is, and he does not change.

The God that fulfilled his promises to Abraham, Moses, and David is the same God we pray to today. Jesus, who ate with sinners and healed the sick, is the same Messiah we worship now. And the Holy Spirit who empowered the apostles is the same Spirit living in us.

In some ways, the faithfulness of God is a culmination of all his other characteristics—it is every virtue fulfilled. Because he is truthful, because he will not abandon us or change his mind about redeeming us, we can rest in knowing that his love is always available. His

patience will never run out, his mercy will never end, and his goodness will never be overturned. Our part is to trust that he is who he says he is, and always will be.

*Jesus Christ is the same  
yesterday and today and forever.*

*HEBREWS 13:8*

- In a lot of ways, God's faithfulness is expressed when we lack it ourselves. Is this true of your own relationship with God?
- When has his faithfulness been revealed in your life?
- What aspects of Jesus' life don't seem relatable to you?
- Can you translate some of the stories of his life into your context?
- Jesus is the same now as he was 2,000 years ago— what does that tell you about how he interacts with you?

*"God's faithfulness  
is stronger than our  
unfaithfulness and our  
infidelities."*

*Pope Francis*



# Decided

Is having faith as simple as making a decision?

A decision is certainly involved. There is a moment where you acknowledge something as truth, a point where you commit yourself to something. It is not a matter of fact, a decision resting on rational analysis. Faith is, in part, a belief. But faith is not solely the one-time acknowledgment of Jesus as lord. It is not a step you take to move into something else.

Neither is faith simply a feeling. It is not a hope that God exists somewhere out there, or a vague sense that all is right in the world. Feelings are fleeting, and oftentimes heavily influenced by circumstances. A faith that is subjected to constant change isn't faith at all.

To have faith means to accept that God directs every part of the spiritual life. It's not the absence of doubt, nor is it an unexplainable



experience. It is the man crying out to Jesus, “I believe, help my unbelief!”

Sometimes it seems like the only thing the Bible has to say about faith is that it will be tested. Among God’s promises for goodness, direction, and purpose are his promises for comfort, strength, and courage during the inevitable times of grief, weakness, and fear.

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.*

- In what ways are Christians today tested in their faith?
- Where in your life do you feel tested?
- Is faithfulness anything more than just 'not walking away' from Christ?
- Is faith purely a product of adversity?
- Is it possible to be faithful, to live a brave faith, without struggle?

*"You scarcely dare to admit it to yourself, but in spite of all your misgivings you realize that you are going somewhere and that your journey is guided and directed and that you can feel safe."*

*Thomas Merton*



# Darkness

Many times, faithfulness is like being in a dark room. And instead of fleeing, you slowly let your eyes adjust. And just as soon as you can make out a few shadowy objects, you're lead into deeper darkness. And all of life can feel like an unending journey into darker darkness. Each room that comes is impossibly dark for a long time, and all of the squinting and straining does nothing. All you can do is sit in the darkness and wait for something else to give you sight.

This is a world where he doesn't show himself clearly, he only gives us glimpses. He hides himself and his voice, and asks us to believe what our senses and minds say is impossible. We are led into places we don't understand.

That uncomfortable darkness reveals our faithfulness, or lack thereof. We are forced to come to terms with the inadequacy of our greatest strength and the failures of our strongest virtues. We are brought to a place where we cannot rely on ourselves, where no light in our world

could guide us.

It's hard to feel excited about faithfulness, when all it appears to be is survival or refinement. Those moments in the dark do not feel very victorious. There is little pride in being pulled through the trials and barely making it by the skin of your teeth. But to be at one's lowest, to have had sleepless nights and worried days, and still say, "I believe. I trust," is the whole of faithfulness.

You cannot remove faith from the uncomfortable darkness. It's understanding the incomprehensible by understanding that you can not understand it. The faithfulness of the Holy Spirit is what empowers us to believe and keep believing.

*"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith— more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire— may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."*

<sup>1</sup> PETER 1:6-9

- What kind of trials has your faith faced, when you had a dark night of the soul?
- How did that change your belief, or your view of God?
- What brings you light when you are in darkness?
- How can you learn to adjust to living in the unknown?

*"Why must holy  
places be dark  
places?"*

*C.S. Lewis*

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