

## FAITHFULNESS UNWRAPPED

Good morning! Welcome to this service. We have been unwrapping the Fruit of the Spirit, the qualities that grow inside us when we decide to follow Jesus and are filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, where have we got to? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness..... So what springs to mind when we think about faithfulness? What does it mean? Has anyone got a dog? Is he or she faithful? What is that like? What about those of us who are married? Has anyone got, or had, a faithful husband or wife? What is that like? What about a translation that is faithful to the original? Or what about a portrait of someone that is faithful to the original? Bear in mind, we are made in the image of God. In all that we do, we should be faithful to God; faithful to the original.

Is God faithful? Yes. Faithfulness is an attribute or a quality of God. Here are some things it says in the Bible about God's faithfulness. The apostle John says, (an apostle is someone sent by Jesus to tell people about God), "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." What does that mean?

The apostle Paul says, "The Lord is faithful and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one." What does that mean? And whoever wrote the Letter to the Hebrews says, "Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." What does that mean? So God forgives and protects us and we are destined to go to heaven. We don't have to worry about any of that. God is faithful.

Here is an example of someone to whom God was faithful. The things that happened to Abraham show God's faithfulness. Do you know about Abraham? Who was he?.....He was born 2,000 years before Jesus, in a place called Ur, which was an ancient city in what is now Iraq. He then lived in Haran, in what is now Turkey. Later on, God asked him to go to live in Canaan, which was the ancient name for Israel and he obeyed God. Read the story of Abraham - Genesis 12 v 1-5 Who is the great nation of which Abraham was the founder?.....The Jewish nation How will they be blessed?.....They were God's chosen people. God looked after them, later on rescued them from slavery in Egypt, gave them manna when they were wondering around in the desert, etc. How are all people on earth blessed through Abraham?.....Jesus was born a Jew. He was born into the race that Abraham started. He came to save every person in the whole world. Did God do what he said he would? Was he faithful to Abraham and to us?

Is Jesus faithful? Jesus is the perfect example of faithfulness. He was always faithful to God, even to the point of dying. When he prayed on the Mount of Olives, just before he was arrested by the Roman soldiers, he said, "Father, if you are willing,

take this cup from me, yet not my will, but yours be done." He was so faithful that he was willing to die for us. Through the ages there have been quite a lot of people who were also willing to die for their faith. What are they called?

How can we be faithful? Most of us are not called to die for God. In the Parable of the Talents Jesus is explaining how God wants us to behave so that we will please him. Matthew 25 v 14 - 30 (A talent was an amount of money worth about £500). So how can we be faithful to God? If God gives us something we should make it work for God. This is not really about money, although if we can invest our money and give some of it back to God (i.e. use it to help others) then that is good. What things does God give us? The clue is in the word "talents". That's it.....talents! Or gifts. What are our talents?.....*Not just things like sport and music; every good thing that we are able to do. Every good thing that we do for each other is for God.* What might some of our talents be that we can use in the service of each other? Do we want to be faithful to God? Why? Because then he will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Dear Lord, thank you that you are totally faithful to us in all that you say and do. We know we can trust you, because you sent your Son Jesus to die for us. Please help us to be faithful to you. May we learn to use all the gifts that you have given us to help each other and especially to teach other people about you. We are your faithful servants.  
Amen

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