

The Fruit of the Spirit: Faithfulness

Lesson Eight

radiate

Settling In: About 10-20 minutes

- 1) Make a note to yourself who, if anyone, is missing from your home group this week:
- 2) Spend some time finding out how everyone is doing: make a note for prayer requests.
- 3) Introduce a time of conversational prayer. Make it clear that group members are not required to participate if they are not comfortable.

or

- 4) After a more brief time of prayer...
 - a) Read: (Psa. 57:10, NRSV) "For your steadfast love is as high as the heavens; your faithfulness extends to the clouds."
 - b) Ask for several members to share testimonies that illustrate the faithfulness of God.

This is only for your information...don't make a big deal of who is missing to the members who are present.

Conversational prayer means each member taking turns praying for various concerns with reasonably short and to the point prayers.

Opener: About 10 minutes

- 1) "By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is ...faithfulness..." (Gal. 5:22, NRSV)
 - a) In the passage the word is almost universally translated "faithfulness" rather than "faith".
 - b) It is most often used in scripture to mean "constancy", perhaps "consistency", "dependability", and "loyalty" or "diligent" and "reliable".
- 2) What images or thoughts does the word "faithfulness" create in your mind? Is it an exciting or boring word?
 - a) Being "faithful" causes us to make choices based on commitments and covenants, instead of convenience or advantage.
 - b) In marriage and in relationship to God "faithfulness" implies being true to an exclusive relationship.
 - c) What does faithfulness mean in the work world? In friendships? At church?

πίστις, though used repeatedly elsewhere in Galatians to signify a person's response of trust regarding God's salvation provided in Christ Jesus (cf. 2:20; 3:6ff.; 5:6), here undoubtedly means the ethical virtue of "faithfulness." Longenecker, Vol. 41: *Word Biblical Commentary*.

This study is a bit different from many of the other Radiate Home Group Guides. Because it is based on one long story, you will probably need to follow the three Bible study sections sequentially.

Mini-teach: About 10 minutes About David

- 1) David is a major character in the Bible. His story is told in great detail in the OT and is frequently referred to in the NT.
 - a) David was the second king of the united Israel (Israel and Judah).
 - b) He is a notable ancestor of Jesus, who is called the Son of David and was born in the city of David, Bethlehem.
- 2) The story of David's life is a rich resource to help us interpret many of our own life experiences.
 - a) The Bible gives a very honest portrayal of David from youth to old age. The story has not been "sugar-coated". We see not only his victories and virtues but also his failures and faults.
 - b) David was a great warrior and king. He was capable of noble acts that serve as positive examples for us today. But he was also capable of serious sins that resulted in tragedy for himself and those around him.

"David was the second king of the united Kingdom of Israel. He is depicted as a righteous king—although not without fault—as well as an acclaimed warrior, musician and poet (he is traditionally credited with the authorship of many of the Psalms). His life and reign, as recorded in the Hebrew Bible's books of Samuel (from I Samuel 16 onwards) and Chronicles, have been of central importance to Jewish and Western culture." *Wikipedia*

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- c) As we refer to David in this study on the virtue of faithfulness, we should note that David was not always the perfect role-model.
 - d) However, what is a model for us is David's ability to admit his faults, return to the Lord and face the consequences of his actions.
- 3) In this study we pick up the story when David is still a young man. His abilities as a warrior brought him into the court of King Saul, who at first favoured David but later was overcome with murderous thoughts toward David. See 1 Sam 18:1-16
- a) Saul's son, Jonathan was heir to the throne. But Jonathan could see that because his father had abandoned his faith in God and was abusing his power as king, God had abandoned his father and rejected him as king of Israel. See 1 Sam 15:10
 - b) Jonathan was caught in a difficult position. Saul continued to expect his son's loyalty even though he had disqualified himself as king. Jonathan believed that God was giving the kingdom to David whom he loved and respected. See 1 Sam 18:3

Scene 1: 1 Samuel 20:1-23 About 10 minutes

Jonathan and David Make a Plan

- 1) Does Jonathan believe David when he tells him that Saul is trying to kill him? Why or Why not?
- 2) What is David's theory of why Jonathan is in the dark about Saul's plans for him?
- 3) David would have been expected to attend Saul's court for the New Moon Festival. How would Jonathan explain David's absence?
- 4) What would be the evidence that Saul intended to harm David?
- 5) What is the nature of the covenant that Jonathan and David swore? Who promised what to whom?
"...so that I may not be killed, and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family..." "It is quite common in the ancient world for the first ruler of a new dynasty to secure his position by murdering all potential claimants to the throne from the preceding dynasty." NIV Study Bible
- 6) What does 20:17 tell you about their friendship? Also see 1 Sam 18:3.
- 7) How did Jonathan plan to alert David if his fears were confirmed? See 1 Sam 20:18-23.

New Moon Festival: "Each month of the year was consecrated to the Lord by the bringing of special sacrifices and the blowing of trumpets. This observance also involved cessation from normal work, especially at the beginning of the seventh month." NIV Study Bible

Scene 2: 1 Samuel 20:24-34 About 10 minutes

Jonathan and David Test Saul

- 1) On the first day of the feast, what did Saul think when David was missing?
 - a) On the second day, what reason did Jonathan give to Saul for David's absence?
 - b) Was it the truth? Was it wrong for Jonathan to lie to his father?
- 2) When Jonathan tells Saul that he gave permission to David to be absent from the feast, how does Saul react? Why? What does Saul guess about Jonathan's

...surely he is not clean...
Saul assumes that David has inadvertently committed a ritual taboo that would disqualify him for the first day of the feast

Insulting another person's mother in a curse is nothing new!

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involvement?

- 3) What did Saul remind Jonathan of regarding the kingship?
 - a) What does Jonathan say in response?
 - b) How does Saul respond?
- 4) In vs. 34, what mixture of feelings does Jonathan have? Why did he feel disgraced?
- 5) What choice regarding faithfulness does this realisation force on Jonathan?
 - a) Have you ever been forced into a choice like this?
 - b) How did you make your choice? How did it turn out? Did it cost you anything? What kind of criteria would you include to make such a difficult choice?

Scene 3: 1 Samuel 20:35-42 About 10 minutes

Jonathan and David Make a Covenant

- 1) What was the signal to David that his worst fears were confirmed?
- 2) Why do you think that Jonathan sent his weapons back to the city with the boy?
- 3) What do David's actions toward Jonathan show about his attitude toward Jonathan?
 - a) Even though Saul treated David as an enemy, how did David respond to Saul? cf. 1 Sam 24:1-7.
 - b) Can you relate David's treatment of Saul to our theme of faithfulness?
- 4) David and Jonathan reaffirm their covenant with each other. (1 Sam 20:42) What was the nature of their covenant?
 - a) Do you think that people today take covenants (agreements or contracts) as seriously as they did then?
 - b) What are some kinds of modern covenants and what do they require of us as far as the virtue of faithfulness? (E.g. marriage, work contracts, etc.)
- 5) Are there any lessons we can draw from this story about the cost of faithfulness?

Perhaps Jonathan was aware that David would be feeling very wary of anyone from Saul's house coming toward him with weapons.

In the ancient world, a covenant was a very serious kind of agreement or contract. Each party made promises, which if unfulfilled, resulted in dire consequences. The "enforcer" of the covenant was God himself.

Closer:

Journal: What does it mean to be faithful:

- To God?
- To your family?
- To your friends?
- To your church?
- To your employer?