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Growing in Faithfulness
Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Samuel 24
April 12, 2015, Jeff Germo
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Galatians 5:22–23 (ESV)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

This is God's goal for us. Growth in the fruit of the Spirit is a by-product of discipleship. What God wants to do in our hearts and minds is to transform us so we are continually growing in our capacity to love, which means we, at all times, will be growing in each of these fruits of the Spirit. When we mix all of these ingredients together, the outcome God produces in us is unconditional love, the kind of love with which he loves us.

Each week when I study the various fruits of the Spirit I always think, "This one is so important. Without this fruit the others are not possible." And it's true. You cannot grow in one and not grow in the others. No one can say, "Patience is the fruit I am focusing on. I'm an expert at it, but I don't need gentleness, or kindness, or self-control." Each of the fruit is connected to the others. If we are growing in one we will grow in the others.

And each of the fruit has to do with how we relate to one another. If I am impatient with you, I will, at the same time, be unkind, unloving, ungentle, and I will not have used self-controlled. My actions or words will not be coming from a place of goodness, and if I am self-aware at all, I will at the same time lose my joy and peace. Joy and peace are not possible if my relationships are not what they should be. So, every single one of the fruit are important for all of us and we should be growing in each of them at all times.

Next year at this time, we will be able to look back and see a difference in each of the fruit in our lives and how we relate to others. And, those who are closest to us will be able to notice the biggest difference.

It's interesting and very sad that the very people we are supposed to be closest to and love the most, often get the brunt of our worst behaviour. When we are at church we wear our happy face mask. We don't want anyone to know that, underneath the mask, we are struggling, we have fears, we have addictions, we have insecurities, and our relationships are not what they should be.

At home we let our guard down. Self-control gets thrown out the window and our true selves rise above all the fluff. The person you portray at church is, unfortunately, many times, not the person your family sees. You know this. Your family and those closest to you know this. And, perhaps, it torments you.

You come to church and you look around at all the other people and they look like they have it all together. You couldn't possibly open up to someone else in the church. They wouldn't understand you. If you told them what was really going on they would judge you and you would lose all respect.

Here's the deal. You need to know that you are not alone. All of those people you are comparing yourself to, they are wearing masks too. And they are looking at you, thinking the same thing. They think you have it all together because of the happy face mask you are wearing.

The first step to growing in any of the fruit is to admit that we fall short in every area. It's the human condition. We may as well stop pretending. I sometimes have people come to me after a sermon and thank me for speaking to the other people about the ways others fall short. "THEY need to hear this." And sometimes they will go on to tell me how they are not like those other people. And I feel so sad when that happens because they are so blind, and they will remain blind and immature as long as they think that God is speaking to everyone else and not to them. The only way I will grow is to admit that I am the problem. Don't worry. Nobody will be surprised. We are all in the same boat.

I struggle just like every single one of you. There is none of us who is immune to acting out, at times, with the counterparts of each of the fruits of the Spirit. The good news is that if we spend time with Jesus he can transform us so we will grow in each of the fruit. There is hope. Nobody is beyond hope as long as you admit that you are broken, and then give the Spirit permission to make the necessary changes. This is when the journey with Jesus gets exciting.

Today we are going to look at what growing in “faithfulness” looks like.

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How many of you have been to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming and experienced the Old Faithful geyser? I’ve never been there. But, from what I understand it gets its name from being very consistent in its eruptions. On average, every 63 minutes it erupts and spews 14,000 to 32,000 litres of boiling water to a height of 106 to 185 feet. It’s so consistent that in the late 1800’s people used to lay their dirty laundry on top of it between eruptions and by the time it finished, which would last from between one and a half to five minutes, their laundry would be clean.

Old Faithful is not the largest geyser in the park, but it is the most consistent. It is the one that can be counted on to erupt on average about every 63 minutes. It’s been doing it ever since it was discovered.

That is what faithfulness means. It means that one can be counted on to do what she says. Now, just like each of the other fruit, nobody is perfect in this one, but we can grow in it. We can learn to be more faithful. That is the good news.

We need to remember that each of the fruit has its source in Jesus. The goal is to become like him. But, we need to know that we will never become like him if we don’t stay connected to him. Jesus said in John 15 that we cannot bear fruit apart from him. When we look at Jesus, what we will see is that he perfectly exemplified each of the fruit of the Spirit. This is true of faithfulness as well. Jesus is the complete and perfect expression of faithfulness.

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The Greek word for faithfulness in Galatians 5:22 is *pistis*. Some synonyms for faithfulness are: reliability; commitment; assurance; trustworthiness; confidence; believability. When we observe what God is like from the Scriptures this is what we see. Let’s just take a look at a sampling of verses in Bible about God’s faithfulness, because our faithfulness will grow out of his faithfulness.

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Numbers 23:19 (ESV)

19 God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

[6]

Deuteronomy 32:4 (ESV)

4 “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.

[7]

Joshua 21:45 (ESV)

45 Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

[8]

Psalms 9:10 (ESV)

10 And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

[9]

Psalms 36:5 (ESV)

⁵ Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.

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Lamentations 3:22–23 (ESV)

²² The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

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Romans 4:20–21 (ESV)

²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

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2 Corinthians 1:20 (ESV)

²⁰ For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

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1 Thessalonians 5:24 (ESV)

²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

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2 Timothy 2:13 (ESV)

¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.

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Hebrews 10:23 (ESV)

²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

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Revelation 19:11 (ESV)

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

So, we can see here, from beginning to the end, God is described as completely faithful and trustworthy. He always does what he promises. That is the basis of faithfulness. So, one of the questions we need to ask ourselves this morning, do I always do what I promise? Truthfully, there is nobody here that can answer “yes” to that. However, we have a God who always, one hundred percent faithful and trustworthy.

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Philippians 4:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

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Knowing that God is faithful is the foundation out of which our faithfulness will grow. We need to marinate in this truth. Our faithfulness grows out of God’s faithfulness to us. What does it mean to us that God will not forsake us even when we fail him? It is not easy to love someone who is not loving towards us is it? But, God is faithful to us even when we let him down.

When I think of this fruit of faithfulness and what characters in the Bible exemplify it, several come to mind; Abe, Jake, Dan, Joe, and Moe. They are all so human. The Bible does not leave out the flaws in God’s people when it tells the stories of them walking with him. We see them with warts and scars and imperfections, and we also see that, along the way, they grew in faithfulness.

David is a great example of this. He is called “a man after God’s own heart”, and yet he also failed God miserably when he committed adultery with Bathsheba, and then tried to cover the whole thing up by having her husband killed in the front lines of battle. David was so very human.

Let’s take a look at one story that shows his quality of faithfulness, keeping in mind that he’s just like you and me, meaning he sometimes fails miserably.

Turn back in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 24. Let me set the scene for you. Israel asked God for a king. They initially had no king. They didn’t need one. God was their king. But, they saw that the other nations around them had kings, and so they thought, if the Jones’ have a king, well they should have one too. God told them he would comply with their wishes, with the warning that a human king would subjugate them so that they would rue the day they requested this from God.

God anointed Saul as their first king. He, in human terms, was the likely choice. He was tall and good looking and imposing. He was the kind of person who, when he walked into a room, everyone took notice. He had a commanding presence.

Saul did ok at first, until David came along. David was a young shepherd boy, the youngest and lowliest in his family. David got the notice of people when he first of all beat the giant Goliath in a one on one battle, and then became even more popular when he began to lead the Israelite army to win battles. He became so popular that the ladies started to sing songs about him comparing his amazing victories to Saul’s lesser victories. Saul was okay with David until the young upstart began to eclipse him in popularity. Then jealousy set in, and David, in Saul’s eyes, went from being a comfort and a help to an annoyance. Saul was tormented with jealousy and unsuccessfully attempted to kill David, several times.

David, though, remained faithful to Saul. Even though his men suggested that he should kill Saul, David wouldn’t take matters into his own hands. He trusted God was big enough and faithful enough to do what he said, so he was content to let things play out. Let’s read this account from 1 Samuel 24.

[19–21 - photos of Ein gedi - slides will advance automatically)

David is hiding out in the wilderness of *Ein gedi*. Ein gedi means “spring of the goats.” The group that went to Israel visited there. It’s an oasis in the wilderness, near the Dead Sea. There is a spring that flows down the dry valley where you can usually see wild goats, called ibex. When we were there we had the pleasure of seeing a mother ibex with a day old kid. As we were walking up the valley it was easy to imagine David and his battalion of men hiding out from Saul, being refreshed by the cool springs and, perhaps feasting on wild goat.

Let’s read this and pay attention to the heart attitude of David. He is proving out his faithfulness to Saul, which is rooted in God’s faithfulness to him.

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1 Samuel 24 (ESV)

1 When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, “Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.” 2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Wildgoats’ Rocks. 3 And he came to the sheepfolds by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave.

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4 And the men of David said to him, “Here is the day of which the Lord said to you, ‘Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.’ ” Then David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.

Now, likely the corner of the robe referred to here is the tzitzit, the tassel that God, in Numbers 15:38 and Deuteronomy 22:12, commanded the Israelites to sew on to the corners of their garments to remind them to obey God. They were also to include a blue cord on the tassels to remind them that they were a royal priesthood. Saul would have had these tzitzit on his robe and this is likely what David cut off.

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5 And afterward David's heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

David realized that he had just made a mockery of Saul and his position as king and in so doing was not being faithful to Saul or to God, so he immediately has a change of heart. As soon as he cut off the tzitzit he lost his peace.

When we do something that goes against our values, or what we believe is right, we lack faithfulness and we will lose our peace because there will be a dissonance between our spirit and the Spirit of God. So, David needed to make things right.

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6 He said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the Lord's anointed." 7 So David persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul. And Saul rose up and left the cave and went on his way. 8 Afterward David also arose and went out of the cave, and called after Saul, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage.

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9 And David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Behold, David seeks your harm'? 10 Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the Lord gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, 'I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed.'

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11 See, my father, see the corner of your robe in my hand. For by the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it. 12 May the Lord judge between me and you, may the Lord avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you.

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13 As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes wickedness.' But my hand shall not be against you. 14 After whom has the king of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog! After a flea! 15 May the Lord therefore be judge and give sentence between me and you, and see to it and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand."

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16 As soon as David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 17 He said to David, "You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. 18 And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the Lord put me into your hands.

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19 For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? So may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. 20 And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. 21 Swear to me therefore by the Lord that you will not cut off my offspring after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house." 22 And David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

So, David proved himself to be faithful to both God and to Saul even while he was tempted to take matters into his own hands. This is just one example of how the fruit of faithfulness can be played out.

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As we noted earlier, the essence of the Greek word, *pistis* is, reliability; commitment; assurance; trustworthiness; confidence; believability. In part, it means that you do what you say. Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 5:37, ***"Let your yes be yes and your no be no."*** Do what you say. Faithfulness is all about trustworthiness.

As disciples of Jesus, we should be known for our integrity. Integrity means that our outer self is integrated with our inner self. We are not playacting. A faithful person will not compromise their values.

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When we compromise our values we will lose our peace and joy. For example, if one of your values is to love your spouse, you will not compromise that love by being unfaithful to him or her. You will not look at pornography because you know that does not honour your spouse. And if you do happen to do something that compromises your values and integrity it will create dissonance in your spirit.

For those of you who are not tone deaf, you can hear when someone sings or plays a note that is off key. It creates an unhealthy dissonance. Even if you are not musical, and don't know any music theory, when you hear a bad note it grates on your nerves. You know there is something wrong and there is a longing in your heart for that person to stop singing, or get voice lessons and learn to sing on key. You know that something has to change.

It's the same way in regards to faithfulness. Because you have been made in God's image, you have his values stamped on your heart. When you act against those values you will know there is something wrong. Those God-given values will be at war with your actions or your thoughts, and you will be tormented. You cannot have peace or joy if you continually act contrary to your values. That dissonance is a sign that something needs to change.

It's important to pay attention to that dissonance and make the necessary changes because if you continue behaving against your values it is possible that your conscience will become deadened to the truth so it no longer bothers when you act in ways that hurt others. That is a dangerous place to go. And the only way to mature past it and gain your peace and joy back is to own up to your sin by confessing it to God and the person you hurt, and perhaps a small group of people you trust, like your Growth Group. Ask them to help you become that person of faithful integrity. And then submit to Jesus.

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Here's the good news. **We CAN grow in faithfulness.** Faithfulness is one of the fruit of the Spirit, which means that it's not just a matter of you becoming better at it on your own steam. It is something that the Spirit will form in you as you honestly own up to your limitations and failings and cooperate with him on a minute-by-minute, day-to-day basis. Allow him to work a change in your heart. To grow in any of the fruit of the Spirit is not a quick fix. There is no magic bullet or pill you can take. It is a long journey with Jesus and with each other.

When you walk this way with Jesus, peace will follow closely behind because your thoughts, words, and actions will come in line with your God-given values.



Growing in Faithfulness
Learning to Walk in the Freedom of Christ
Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Samuel 24
Week of April 12th, 2015

Objective of this study: To understand the faithfulness of God and grow in the fruit of faithfulness.

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes of silence have someone interrupt the silence and read Psalm 111 meditatively to the group. Then pause for about a minute and let it sink in.
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)

What is the most faithful vehicle you have ever owned? What is the most unfaithful vehicle you have ever owned? What made them either faithful or unfaithful?

Word (20 - 30 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read or recite Galatians 5:22-23.
 1. Flesh out in your own words what faithfulness means. Go deep here. Don't do just one pass. Peel away the layers until you feel like you all have a clearer picture of what it means.
3. Divide up and read the following verses about God and in your own words describe what he is like.
 1. Numbers 23:19; Deuteronomy 32:4; Joshua 21:45; Psalm 9:10; Psalm 36:5; Lamentations 3:22-23; Romans 4:20-21; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; 2 Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 10:23; Philippians 4:19.
 2. Sermon quote: **"Knowing that God is faithful is the foundation out of which our faithfulness will grow."**
4. Think of other Bible characters who demonstrated faithfulness, that is, they lived in line with their values and they could be counted on. What good results came from their faithfulness?
5. Review together the relationship of King Saul and David. How did it change over time?
 1. Describe the ebb and flow of David's faithfulness. How does that encourage you?

Work (30 - 40 minutes)

Sermon Quote: **Because you have been made in God's image, you have his values stamped on your hearts. When you act against those values you will know there is something wrong. Those God-given values will be at war with your actions or your thoughts and you will be tormented. You cannot have peace or joy if you continually act contrary to your values. That dissonance is a sign that something needs to change.**

1. Have you experienced this conflict between your values and your behaviour? Describe the situation. What did it do to your peace and joy?
2. Dissonance is a sign that something needs to change.
 1. How has God's Spirit been nudging you?
 2. What is he showing you needs to change?
 3. How do you feel about these insights and the way forward?
 4. What are some specific next steps for you in developing the fruit of faithfulness?