

The Obvious Christian: Characteristics That Make A Christian Stand Out.
Message 7 – The Faithfulness of an Obvious Christian, March 30, 2008
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Has anyone ever given you their word and failed to keep it?

That can be very disappointing can't it?

You and I live in a time characterized by unfaithfulness. At every level people fail to carry through with their promises. It happens in our families; between husbands and wives, between parents and children. It happens in relationships between adults and young people, and it happens with those we consider our friends.

In our day of broken promises, you and I have a tremendous opportunity to stand out in our world, for Jesus. A promise kept gets people's attention. However, Christians are often no better than the rest of the world. We too struggle with keeping our promises. The areas named above can be named among us as well. That should concern us. When a Christian fails to keep his or her word, it is different from the rest of the world, because we represent Jesus Christ. That is why it is so important we **stand out** as Obvious Christians. We are not just representing ourselves we are representing Him and all of Christianity!

However, unlike the rest of the world we have someone to help us be faithful: the Holy Spirit. When you and I walk in submission to the Holy Spirit, He characterizes our lives with faithfulness. Again we want to look at Galatians 5: 22...

Those who stand out as Obvious Christians are to be characterized with faith. The Greek word for faith and faithfulness in the New Testament is exactly the same. In this case it does not refer to the ability to believe, as when we believe on Jesus Christ as Savior, but to the ability to be **believable**. Such a person is someone who is reliable, trustworthy, and true to his or her word.

As with our other studies on these characteristics of an Obvious Christian, to better understand this idea of faithfulness we must start with the One who is faithful: God Himself. There is no shortage of Bible testimony in this regard.

I want us to quickly look at several references so we can see what the Bible says about the faithfulness of God.

From the Old Testament:

Deuteronomy 7:9... the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy

Psalm 89:1-8...

Isaiah 25:1... O Lord, thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth

A good passage to memorize is Lamentations 3:22-23...

From the New Testament:

1 Corinthians 1:9... God is faithful

1 Corinthians 10:13... God is faithful

1 Thessalonians 5:24... faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it

2 Thessalonians 3:3... the Lord is faithful

2 Timothy 2:13... God abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself

Hebrews 10:23... He is faithful that promised

The clear testimony of all theses scriptures is **God keeps His Word!** He is faithful to the promises He has made to us.

Imagine what a difference it would make if God were **not** faithful. Depending on Him would be no different than anyone else. There would be no certainty about our salvation. There would be no assurance in His Word. It would leave us without hope for today and tomorrow.

But because God is faithful then we do have confidence, assurance, hope, and certainty.

Numbers 23:19 – He does what He says He’s going to do.

Psalms 46:1-2 – He is there to help us when we need Him.

Philippians 1:6 – He finishes what He starts.

1 John 1:9 – He is always ready to forgive us when we confess our sins.

Since becoming a Christian at age 20, I have always found Him faithful and I am now 54. I have been able to take His Word, live by it, and have always found it to be true. Without hesitation, I can encourage you to do the same thing because I know God is faithful.

A.W. Tozer says in his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, “*Upon God’s faithfulness rests our whole hope of future blessedness. Only as He is faithful will His covenants stand and His promises be honored. Only as we have complete assurance that He is faithful may we live in peace and look forward with assurance to the life to come.*” (Harper & Row, 1961, page 87)

How grateful we all should be for the faithfulness of God. But while God is characterized by faithfulness, man has not been so. Proverbs 20: 6 asks, “*But a faithful man, who can find?*”

Mentally, circle one of the following: Do you

usually...

sometimes...

seldom...

never...

keep your promises? (REPEAT)

For those who desire to **stand out** as Obvious Christians, which of those would be **un**acceptable? **All of them!**

1 Corinthians 4: 2 says, “*It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*”

In Matthew 24: 45-51 Jesus asks, “*Who then is a faithful and wise servant?*”

Let's open our Bibles to that passage and see how He answers the question...

According to Jesus the faithful servant is the one that does what God says in **all** of his activities. The unfaithful servant just lives for himself. The reward of unfaithfulness is punishment, but the reward for faithfulness is the blessing of God.

I want to take a brief detour on this subject of rewards and see how God connects them with faithfulness: Psalm 31:23-24 (the Lord preserves the faithful); Proverbs 28:20 (the faithful will abound with blessing); Rev. 2:10 (Jesus says be faithful and I will give you the crown of life)

The incentive for faithfulness throughout God's Word is **His blessing**.

But there is something we must understand – faithfulness is neither automatic nor permanent for Christians. Demas is mentioned by the Apostle Paul as a fellow and faithful laborer in Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 1:24, but in 2 Timothy 4:10 he had become unfaithful. No matter how faithful we are right now, it is no guarantee we will remain so. **We must always be on our guard!**

Look with me at 2 Peter 3:17-18...

We must always be on our guard. It is too easy to slip and fall if we are not careful. So, **let's stay on our guard!**

There are some great examples of faithfulness in the Bible for us to follow:

Abraham is one of the best -

Read Nehemiah 9:7-8...

Being re-gathered in Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity the Levites prayed one of the great prayers of the Bible on the theme of God's faithfulness. At the start of this prayer **Abraham** is mentioned first as an example of faithfulness? According to Genesis 15:6, he believed God and sought to live in light of His Word. The same will set us apart as examples of faithfulness.

A second example is Moses. Look at what is said about Him in Hebrews 3:1-6...

Jesus is shown by the author of Hebrews to be greater than Moses, because Jesus is the owner of the house of God, Moses was a servant in the house. That being demonstrated, do you see what is said of Moses? In **all** his house, Moses was faithful.

In Numbers 12:7 God said, Moses is faithful in **all** My house.

Can you imagine that! **What a wonderful thing** to have God call you faithful!

A third example is the Apostle Paul – Look at 2 Timothy 4:6-8...

Paul was encouraging Timothy to be faithful and used himself as an example. He stayed the course, kept the faith throughout his life, and expected to be rewarded by God.

You and I should be able to say to others, “*Follow my example of faithfulness.*”

Besides these three examples of faithful men there are many more of both men and women mentioned in the Bible. Paul often closes his letters with references to the faithful men and women that served with him. He was faithful, but he also surrounded himself with faithful people, and encouraged others to do the same (2 Timothy 2:2).

Be honest with yourself. Would someone of the faithful character of the Apostle Paul be able to hold you up consistently as an example of faithfulness to others?

To have such a testimony we:

1. Believe what God says.
2. Do what God says.
3. Keep doing it!

Look with me at Matthew 25:14-30...

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns will we be counted among the unfaithful or the faithful? **Will we** hear the words, “*Well done, thou good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*”

This has been the driving ambition of my Christian life, and I believe it is a worthy ambition for you too!

Now is a good time for you to decide. Don't live your life giving in to the temptations of the world thinking you will have plenty of time to change. We don't know when Jesus will return. It could happen at any time. **Now** is the time to decide that you want Him to find you faithful.

If you have never received Jesus as your Savior, do so today.

Admit...

Believe...

Call...

If you have already, but have been unfaithful in your walk with Christ, confess it to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive.

If you have not already made a commitment to faithfulness, **do so today.**