The Fruit of Faithfulness

Many Christians genuinely want to live faithfully, love others well, and see God move in their lives. But somewhere along the way, the effort becomes exhausting. This is a closer look at why striving harder often produces worse results, and what it actually means to trust in the faithfulness of God.

Why You Can't Be More Faithful Than You Know God Is Faithful

Faithfulness is not something you can manufacture through willpower. The Bible makes clear that as we behold God as He truly is, we are transformed into His image. That means the more clearly you see His faithfulness, the more faithful you naturally become.

A failure to remain faithful is often rooted in a lack of revelation about God's faithfulness. When you truly understand that He backs you up, you can stay the course. You can keep your word even when it costs you. You can endure hard seasons without quitting.

And here is the encouraging part: God will take your mistakes and turn them around for your good when you look to Him and trust Him. He is not waiting for you to be perfect. He is faithful even in the middle of your mess.

What Is the Difference Between the Fruit of the Spirit and the Works of the Flesh?

Galatians 5 draws a sharp line between two ways of living. The works of the flesh, things like hatred, jealousy, and outbursts of anger, are called "works" for a reason. They are the result of striving in your own strength.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." - Galatians 5:22-23

Notice the word "fruit." Fruit is not manufactured. It grows naturally when a branch stays connected to the vine. You have never seen an apple tree straining and sweating to produce apples. It simply abides, and fruit comes.

The Pharisees are a sobering example of what happens when religion becomes about performance. They were devoted to keeping the law, yet they became hateful, hypocritical, and ultimately orchestrated the crucifixion of Jesus. The harder they worked at righteousness, the further from it they got.

Why Trying Harder Often Makes Things Worse

This is one of the most counterintuitive truths in the Christian life. The more you try to not do something in your own strength, the more power that thing seems to have over you. The law actually stirs up the flesh rather than subduing it.

Jesus said it plainly: "Abide in me, and my words abide in you… you will bear much fruit." - John 15:5 (paraphrased)

The invitation is not to try harder. It is to stay connected. When you abide in Him, fruit comes naturally. When you disconnect and start striving, everything gets harder.

How Your Attitude Affects How You Get Through Hard Seasons

The Children of Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years. It was not because the desert was impossible to cross. God had already parted the Red Sea. Getting them through a desert would have been nothing for Him. The problem was their attitude. Their murmuring, complaining, and unbelief kept them in the very place they were desperate to leave.

The same principle applies today. Many people are crying out for God to change their circumstances when He is first working to change what is inside them. He wants to deliver the place out of you before He delivers you from the place.

Moses was in the same desert as the complaining Israelites. Same heat, same sand, same conditions. But he was glowing with the glory of God. The difference was not the environment. It was what each person was looking to.

What Does It Mean to Commit Your Situation to God?

First Peter 2 gives a striking instruction to employees dealing with harsh or unfair employers:

"Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully." - 1 Peter 2:18-19

This is not a call to be a doormat. It is a call to trust the ultimate Judge. When you know that God sees everything, that nothing escapes His attention, and that He will commend and vindicate those who endure wrongdoing with the right attitude, you can release the need to defend yourself.

Jesus modeled this perfectly. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten. Instead, He committed Himself to the One who judges righteously.

"Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously." - 1 Peter 2:23

God does not miss anything. Wealth gained dishonestly will diminish. Injustice done in secret is still seen. And faithfulness shown in private will be commended publicly, both in this life and on that final day.

How to Ask God for Help the Right Way

Sometimes we pray for God to fix the situation so we do not lose our composure. But the more important prayer is asking Him to help us not go wrong, even if the situation does go wrong.

When the focus shifts from "Lord, make this go smoothly" to "Lord, help me remain right no matter what happens," something changes. The inner posture shifts, and often the outer circumstances follow.

It is more important to be great than to have things go great. But when you are great, things tend to go great. You reap what you sow.

The Holy Spirit's name includes "Helper." He wants to help you with everything, including the small things. Nothing is too minor to bring to Him. Ask, believe you receive, and let Him work.

Are You Taking the Blame or Giving God the Glory?

There is a subtle trap in works-based living. If you believe you are the one responsible for making things turn out right, then you will take the blame when things go wrong and take the credit when they go well. Either way, it is all about you.

Both self-pity and self-congratulation are two sides of the same coin. Both keep God out of the picture. The goal is a life lived through Him, for Him, and to Him, where He gets both the responsibility and the glory.

God works in you "both to will and to do for His good pleasure." - Philippians 2:13

Even your desire to come to church, to read your Bible, to seek God, that is Him drawing you. He is already doing the work. The invitation is simply to stop resisting and let Him.

What Does It Look Like to Truly Abide in Christ?

Before the fall, Adam lived in unbroken connection with God. There was no striving, no thorns, no sweat. Everything flowed. It was the separation from God that made life hard.

Through the new birth and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, believers are brought back into that place of connection. The life of God is now on the inside. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, and His nature, love, joy, peace, self-control, flows out naturally when you stay connected.

The key is keeping your eyes on Him rather than on yourself and your performance. Get your eyes off of you trying to do better and fix them on the One who is better. Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

The Power of God's Word Working in You

Every time you get into the Word of God, you are planting seed in your Spirit. You may not fully understand everything you read. That is okay. Get it in you anyway. The Holy Spirit can bring it to your remembrance exactly when you need it, even years later.

Jesus said His Spirit would bring all things to your remembrance. But He can only bring to mind what has been deposited. Spending time in prayer, in the Word, and in fellowship with God is not wasted time. It is preparation for every situation you will face.

Life Application

This week, instead of praying for your circumstances to go smoothly, try shifting your prayer to ask God to help you remain right no matter what happens. Ask Him to think through your thoughts, speak through your lips, and not let you get in His way.

Stop striving to produce fruit and start abiding. Ask the Holy Spirit for help with the small things. Release the outcomes to the One who is faithful and true.

Ask yourself these questions as you go into the week:

- Am I praying for God to fix my situation, or am I asking Him to fix my response to my situation?
- Where am I striving in my own strength instead of trusting God to work through me?
- What would it look like this week to truly abide in Christ rather than perform for Him?
- Is what is coming out of me reflecting the fruit of the Spirit, or the works of the flesh?
- Am I taking the credit or the blame for things that belong in God's hands?

God is faithful. He is not waiting for you to get it all together. He is already working. Take your foot off the brake, keep your eyes on Him, and let the gravity of His glory carry you forward.

Quotes

1. You can only be as faithful as you know God is faithful.

2. The more we see His faithfulness, the more faithful we become.

3. Unfaithfulness reveals a lack of revelation of God's faithfulness.

4. God backs you and empowers you to remain faithful.

5. God can turn your mess-ups around for your good.

6. The Christian life is lived by faith, not works; works are faith's fruit.

7. The harder you try to be righteous, the more religious you become.

8. Fruit doesn't struggle to grow; it comes forth naturally.

9. Abiding in Christ produces fruit without striving.

10. How you are matters more than how things go.

11. It's not about having a smooth path but being a smooth operator.

12. What matters isn't how they treated you, but how you responded.

13. It's not what comes against you, but what comes out of you that defiles.

14. Nothing you do can stop God from loving you.

15. The harder you strive, the harder life becomes.

16. If you take the blame for failure, you'll take the glory for success.

17. Everything should be by Him, through Him, for Him, and to Him.

18. Take your foot off the brake and let God's glory carry you!

19. God wants you blessed and successful more than you do!

20. A carefree heart can enjoy life even among difficult people.

Verses

1. Mark 11

2. Galatians 5:22-23

3. Galatians 5:19

4. 1 Peter 2:18-20

5. 1 Peter 2:23

6. Psalms

7. Proverbs

8. John 6

9. Romans 6:23

Summary

Faithfulness is not something you can manufacture through willpower. The more clearly you see God's faithfulness, the more faithful you naturally become. Just as fruit grows when a branch stays connected to the vine, the fruit of the Spirit flows naturally when you stay connected to Christ. Striving harder in your own strength often makes things worse, while abiding in Him makes everything easier. The key is shifting your prayer from asking God to fix your circumstances to asking Him to keep you right no matter what happens. God is already at work in you, both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Stop striving to produce fruit and start abiding in the One who is faithful and true.