

## Character of God:

# Faithful

### STUDY NOTES

When God reveals who he is to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7, one of the ways he describes himself is faithful, or in Hebrew, *emet*.

“Yahweh, Yahweh, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, overflowing with loyal love and **faithfulness**.”

This verse is the most quoted and reused verse in the Hebrew Bible. It's clear that this description of God is core to the biblical understanding of who he is, so we wanted to spend some time focusing on this fascinating passage. In our Character of God series, we're looking at each of these descriptors and digging into their significance in the biblical story and the implications they have for us today. These study notes will help you dig deeper into the Hebrew word *emet* (faithfulness) and see the ideas presented in our video Character of God: Faithfulness.

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# Understanding *Emet*

The Hebrew word *emet* is often translated as *truth*, and as a verb, it means “trust” or “faith.” This word encompasses incredibly important concepts for the Christian life. Trusting God, or deeming him trustworthy, is one of the central ways that we define Christianity. Yet trust, both in God and humans, is a concept that many of us struggle with. As we explore this topic, we will seek to explore the following questions.

1. What does it mean that God is trustworthy?
2. What does it look like to trust or have faith in God?
3. What does trust look like in human relationships?  
What does it require?
4. How important is this concept anyway?

## Key Verses

*Emet* is used throughout the Hebrew Bible, but the following passages are some of the most well-known passages containing this word, translated as “faithful,” “faithfulness,” “sure,” and “amen.”

*Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens,  
Your faithfulness to the skies.  
Your righteousness is like the highest mountains,  
Your justice like the great deep.*

PSALM 36:5-6

*The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;  
The testimony of the Lord is sure,  
Making wise the simple.*

PSALM 19:7

*The psalmist prays, “What profit is there in my death,  
If I go down to the pit?  
Will the dust praise you?  
Will it tell of your faithfulness?”*

PSALM 30:9

*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,  
From everlasting to everlasting.  
Amen and amen.*

PSALM 41:13

*Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are  
the kisses of an enemy.*

PROVERBS 27:6

# ***Emet* and Related Words**

The Hebrew word translated as “faithfulness” or sometimes “truth” in Exodus 34:6 is the noun *emet*. *Emet* and its related words (words that have the same root but occur as verbs or adjectives, etc.) occur 329 times in the Hebrew Bible. So this is a fairly common and important word. The root occurs in the following forms:

## **1. Nouns - Someone or something that is trustworthy and faithful.**

- *Emet* - אמת - trustworthiness, constancy, faithfulness, truth (used 127 times)
- *Emunah* - אמונה - steadfastness, trustworthiness, faithfulness, honesty, permanent position (used 49 times)
- *Emun* - אמן - faithfulness, trustworthiness (used five times)
- *Amanah* - אמנה - firm agreement, royal command (used two times)
- *Omen* - אמן - trustworthiness/faithfulness (used one time)

## **2. Verbs - To be trustworthy, recognize trustworthiness, or trust/believe.**

- *He'emin* and *ne'eman* - אמן - prove to be firm, reliable, faithful, permanent, believe, think (used 96 times)

## **3. Adjective**

- *Emun* - אמן - faithful, trustworthy (person) (used three times)

## **4. Adverb**

- *Amnah* - אמנה - in truth, indeed (used two times)

## **5. Particles**

- *Amen* - אמן - trustworthy, surely, a proclamation: “That’s true!” (used 30 times)
- *Amnam* - אמנם - surely, indeed, truly (used nine times)

## Emet as “Truth”

The word *emet* can mean both “truth” and “trustworthiness/faithfulness,” and these are related concepts. So this verse can be (and sometimes is) translated as “God is full of truth.” But modern notions of “truth” tend to be more oriented toward scientific facts, principles, or concepts (e.g., it is true that 2+2=4). The word *emet* can function this way too, though it is not the primary meaning of the word. Here are some examples of *emet* being used to mean “true fact” or “concept.”

*Send one of you, and let him bring your brother while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is **truth** in you. Or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies.*

GENESIS 42:16

*[When the Queen of Sheba visits Solomon] And she said to the king, “The report was **true** that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom.”*

1 KINGS 10:6

So sometimes *emet* can mean “a true statement,” with the implication that the statement is dependable. But more often, the word has a personal or relational connotation. This is the case in Exodus 34:6, where *emet* is describing a characteristic of God. “God is full of truth” could convey that God does not lie, or that God stands up for truth, or that God will always judge rightly. While these notions may be right, they do not get at the relational aspect of the word *emet*.

## Emet as a Personal Quality: “Trustworthiness”

When *emet* and its related words are used to describe a person, they are typically translated as “trustworthy,” “faithful,” “reliable,” or “truthful.” In English, you can see the relationship between *emet* as a true concept and *emet* as a personal quality, or in other words, “truth” and “truth-ful.”

### Emet as a Human Quality

Humans can possess this quality of trustworthiness or faithfulness. At a basic level, trustworthiness involves honesty or “truth-telling.” Let’s look at some examples from the Hebrew Bible.

***Truthful** lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*

PROVERBS 12:19

*And they did not ask for an accounting from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to pay out to the workmen, for they dealt **honestly**.*

2 KINGS 12:15

But *emet* involves more than just honesty. It involves faithfulness, reliability, and being a person in whom others put their trust. Here are some examples that clarify this from the text.

- In Exodus 18:21, when Moses appoints leaders in Israel, we are told they are to be “people of **truth**.” In other words, people who won’t take bribes or distort justice—people who are faithful and trustworthy.
- In Isaiah 8:2, Isaiah says, “And I will get **reliable** witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me.”
- In Joshua 2:14, when the Israelite spies enter the land and encounter Rahab, they make a promise to her and declare that they will keep their promise: “And the men said to her, ‘Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land we will deal kindly and **faithfully** with you.’”
- In 2 Kings 20:3, Hezekiah prays to Yahweh: “‘Now, O Lord, please remember how I have walked before you in **faithfulness** and with a whole heart and have done what is good in your sight.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly.”

*“[When emunah is used to refer to humans], it often refers to those who have the capacity to remain stable (i.e., faithful) amid the unsettling circumstances of life, realizing God’s truth has established them (Ps. 119:30).” – MARVIN WILSON, OUR FATHER ABRAHAM: JEWISH ROOTS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH (GRAND RAPIDS, MI: EERDMANS, 1989), P. 183.*

## *Emet* as a Quality of Yahweh

To say that God is full of *emet* doesn’t just mean that God tells the truth or stands for truth. It means that God is faithful and worthy of being trusted. Let’s look at how *emet* is used to describe God in the Bible.

*Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham,  
who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his  
**faithfulness** toward my master. As for me, the Lord has  
led me in the way to the house of my master’s kinsmen.*

GENESIS 24:27

*But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord.  
At an acceptable time, O God,  
In the abundance of your steadfast love  
Answer me in your saving **faithfulness**.*

PSALM 69:13

*Into your hands I commit my very breath;  
Save me, O God of **emet**.”*

PSALM 31:5

The word *emet* can carry the connotation of reliability or stability. For example, when the Amalekites fight against Israel in Exodus 17, Moses holds his hands up to defeat their enemies.

*When Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were **steady** [Heb: *emet*] until the sun set."*

EXODUS 17:11-12

The word *emet* also carries the connotation of constancy or security.

*Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the Lord that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "There will be peace and **security** [Heb: *emet*] in my days."*

ISAIAH 39:8

Like Moses' hands and the days of Hezekiah, God's character is also described in terms of stability and constancy. He is steady, reliable, and dependable. This is one reason why he is called a "rock" in so many places throughout Scripture. Deuteronomy 32 combines this image with the word "faithfulness" or *emet*.

*The Rock!  
His work is perfect,  
For all his ways are just;  
A God of **faithfulness** and without injustice,  
Righteous and upright is he.*

DEUTERONOMY 32:4

God does what he says he will do, and he is always consistent with his character. Because faithfulness is the last word of the five used to describe God in Exodus 34:6, it has the effect of declaring that the previous attributes—compassion, graciousness, patience, and loyal love—will endure, or be faithful, forever. In other words, God is full of faithfulness in the sense that we can count on the consistency of his revealed character.

*Yahweh, Yahweh, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, overflowing with loyal love and **faithfulness**.*

EXODUS 34:6

# The Verb Form: “Trust” or “Believe”

This meaning of *emet* also appears as the related verbs *he’emin* (Hiphil form) and *ne’eman* (Niphal form). These are usually translated as “to believe” or “to have faith.” These words are related to the noun *emet*, or “trustworthy,” because they essentially mean “to consider someone trustworthy” or “to trust.”

## The Example of Abraham

The first time we come across these words in the Bible is in the story of Abraham. God makes a promise that Abraham and his wife Sarah will have a huge family, so that through them all the nations will experience God’s blessing (Genesis 12:1-3). But Abraham and Sarah are really, really old; they’ve never been able to have any children. Yet in the face of these challenges, Abraham *he’emin*’s, that is, he considers God trustworthy to open a way forward, no matter the obstacle.

*He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Abram **believed** the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

GENESIS 15:5-6

Paul reflects on this moment as the paradigmatic example of what faith in God looks like. He reflects on this moment as the point in which the whole human family becomes part of Abraham’s family, united to God through this faith.

*Therefore, the promise comes by **faith**, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the **faith** of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he **believed**—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. Against all hope, Abraham, in hope, **believed**, and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Without weakening in his **faith**, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through **unbelief** regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his **faith** and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” The words, “it was credited to him,” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who **believe** in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

ROMANS 4:16-25 (NIV)



## Not Blind Trust

The relationship between the noun “trustworthy” and the verb “to trust” implies that trusting is inherently connected to a person or object’s trustworthiness. Sometimes, modern notions of trust or faith involve belief in something *despite* the evidence, or what we might call blind trust. But this isn’t the biblical notion. Biblical trust is inherently connected to trustworthiness or faithfulness and relies on evidence of that trustworthiness. Let’s look at more examples of *emet* in the Hebrew Bible to see how biblical trust is not blind trust.

Sometimes *emet* means “shown to be true.”

*“Bring your youngest brother to me. So your words **will be verified** and you shall not die.” And they did so.*

GENESIS 42:20

God offers evidence to the Israelites to help them believe.

*“If they will not believe you,” God said, “or listen to the first sign, they may **believe** the latter sign. If they will not **believe** even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.”*

EXODUS 4:8-9

*And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also **believe** you forever.”*

EXODUS 19:9

At first the people do believe.

*And the people **believed**; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.*

EXODUS 4:31

*Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and **they believed** in the Lord and in his servant Moses.*

EXODUS 14:31

But then they encounter giants when spying out the land, and they fail to believe.

*And the Lord said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not **believe** in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?”*

NUMBERS 14:11

# Emet as a Covenantal Word

Something that stands out about the word *emet* and related words is that they most often occur in a covenantal context. In other words, these words—trust, faithfulness, constancy—describe the quality of the covenantal relationship between God and humanity. God is faithful to his people, and he wants that faithfulness to be reciprocated. *Emet* and related words have everything to do with the nature and integrity of a relationship of trust. This has implications for how we understand the quality of close relationships in our own lives—with God and with others. These are characteristics of an ideal partnership.

When Nehemiah recounts God’s faithfulness to the people, God’s covenant with Abram is described with reciprocal language of faithfulness.

*“You are the LORD God,  
Who chose Abram  
And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees,  
And gave him the name Abraham.  
You found his heart faithful before you,  
And made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land....  
And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.*

NEHEMIAH 9:7-8

When the people renew their covenant with God before entering the land, Joshua describes all of God’s faithful acts toward the people, and then he calls the people to respond to God by reciprocating that faithfulness.

*Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and  
in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served  
beyond the river and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.*

JOSHUA 24:14

The people struggle to trust God as their king, and they ask for a human king to be set over them, like the surrounding nations (1 Samuel 12:12-13). Although Samuel calls this a “great evil” (v. 20), he reassures them that God will be faithful to them and “not reject them” (v. 22). He then calls them to respond with like faithfulness to the good things God has done for them.

*Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your  
heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.*

1 SAMUEL 12:24

## God's Covenant with David

After the rise and fall of Saul's kingship, we meet David, a scrappy young man who has one thing going for him—his trust in God. The story of David trusting God in the face of a giant is meant to be a contrast to the previous story of the Israelites who did not trust God when they encountered giants in the land (1 Samuel 17; Numbers 14; 1 Kings 3:6). This story establishes David's trust, or faithfulness, in God. And so God chooses David and makes a covenant with him, and God promises to remain faithful to David's family line.

*But my love [khesed] will never be taken away from him,  
as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before  
you. Your house and your kingdom will endure [ne'eman]  
forever before me; your throne will be established forever.*

2 SAMUEL 7:15-16

Notice that God says he will never take away his *khesed* from David. In other words, God will always be faithful to his covenant. He also says that David's descendants and kingdom will endure, or *ne'eman*, forever. When David is faithful to the one who is ultimately faithful, his kingdom will faithfully endure.

## David's Response to God's *Emet*

*And now, O LORD, let the word that you have spoken concerning your  
servant and concerning his house be established forever, and do as  
you have spoken, and your name will be established and magnified  
forever, saying, "The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, is Israel's God,"  
and the house of your servant David will be established before you.*

1 CHRONICLES 17:23-24

God calls the kings that follow David to walk in faithfulness just like David did. When David is on his deathbed, David reminds Solomon that God desires covenant faithfulness to be reciprocated by the king. And because the role of the king is to set an example for the people to follow, God desires this from his people too.

*Keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways  
and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and  
his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you  
may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, that the  
Lord may establish his word that he spoke concerning me,  
saying, "If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk  
before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their  
soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel."*

1 KINGS 2:3-4

*And if you will listen to all that I command you, and will  
walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by  
keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my  
servant did, I will be with you and will build you a sure  
house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.*

1 KINGS 11:38

Faithfulness, reliability, truth-telling, and trust are defining characteristics of a covenant relationship with God and partnership between humans.

# Failed *Emet* and Israel's Exile

If you read the story of the kings that come from David's line, none of them trust God the way David did. Instead, they trust their own plans to gain security, using wealth, military power, and reliance on other gods. And it leads to injustice, violent ruin, and eventual exile from the land.

Many biblical authors reflect on this covenant unfaithfulness from the people.

*Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly. Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept your law or paid attention to your commandments and your warnings that you gave them. Even in their own kingdom, and amid your great goodness that you gave them, and in the large and rich land that you set before them, they did not serve you or turn from their wicked works.*

NEHEMIAH 9:33-35

*Hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel, for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land.*

HOSEA 4:1

*Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man.*

PSALM 12:1

*Many proclaim their own khesed, but a faithful person who can find?*

PROVERBS 20:6

God made a promise to David that a righteous king from among his descendants would reign on the throne forever. Yet Israel finds themselves in exile with no king and no hope. Psalm 89 is a reflection on the promise of faithfulness from God and the perceived failure of that faithfulness. The first half of the Psalm recounts God's *khesed* and *emet*, shown in the covenant he made to David.

*I will sing of the steadfast love (khesed) of the Lord, forever;  
With my mouth I will make known your faithfulness [emunah] to all generations.  
For I said, "Khesed will be built up forever;  
In the heavens you will establish your emunah.  
You have said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one;  
I have sworn to David my servant:  
'I will establish your offspring forever,  
And build your throne for all generations.'"*

PSALM 89:1-4

The psalmist then praises God's past faithfulness (*emunah*) and might (vv. 5-18), and then again recounts God's promise to David (vv. 28-37):

*My khesed I will keep for him forever,  
And my covenant will stand firm [ne'emah] for him.  
I will establish his offspring forever  
And his throne as the days of the heavens.  
If his children forsake my law  
And do not walk according to my rules,  
If they violate my statutes  
And do not keep my commandments,  
Then I will punish their transgression with the rod  
And their iniquity with stripes,  
But I will not remove from him my khesed  
Or be false to my emunah.  
I will not violate my covenant  
Or alter the word that went forth from my lips.*

PSALM 89:28-34

Then the poet accuses God of doing just that—violating his promises (vv. 38-45):

*You have renounced the covenant with your servant;  
You have defiled his crown in the dust*

PSALM 89:39

He goes on to describe the desolation of Israel (vv. 40-45) and then cries out to God (vv. 46-51).

*Lord, where is your khesed of old,  
Which by your emunah you swore to David?*

PSALM 89:49

It seemed like God was no longer overflowing with *emet*. The destruction of Israel raised the question of God's trustworthiness, faithfulness, and reliability to fulfill his promises to Abraham and to David.

## Hope of Future *Emet*

So the Israelites are left living either in continued exile or under foreign rule in the land, without the same glorious temple as before (Ezra 3:12, Haggai 2:3), and they are still awaiting a king who will bring restoration.

Yet the prophets had been proclaiming a faithful one to come, in whom Israel would again be called into faithful covenant relationship and become faithful ones once again. Let's look at some of these prophecies.

*A throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in **faithfulness** in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.*

ISAIAH 16:5

*Thus says the Lord: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the **faithful** city, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain.*

ZECHARIAH 8:3

Isaiah 53 speaks of this one to come as one in whom it will be difficult to *place trust* (*he'emin*) because of perceived weakness as opposed to power.

*Who **has believed** [he'emin] what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*

ISAIAH 53:1-5

## Words for Trust/Faith in the New Testament

In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) and in the New Testament, the primary words used to translate or express ideas of trust/faith and trustworthiness/faithfulness are *aletheia* and *pistis*.

1. Aletheia - ἀλήθεια: truthfulness, dependability, uprightness, truth, reality (used 183 times in the New Testament)
  - Truth as a quality: truthfulness, dependability, and uprightness
  - Truth as a statement: truth and reality
  - Truth as a synonym for the good news about Jesus
  - Trust in the Gospel of Jesus
2. Pistis - πίστις: faith, faithfulness, reliability, fidelity, commitment, assurance, proof, trust, belief, endurance (used 243 times in the New Testament)
  - The root, πιστεύω, and related words, occur 604 times in the New Testament
  - Often translated as “faith”
    - Faith as trust
    - Faith as trust in the good news about Jesus
    - Faith as a synonym for the good news about Jesus

- Sometimes translated as faithfulness (Romans 3:3; Galatians 5:22). It involves a whole-person response.
- Embodied trust, trusting faith, or allegiance may be better translations.

## Modern Conceptions and Definitions of Faith

### **Faith as unfounded belief, usually as opposed to reason**

“Faith is believing what you know ain’t so.” — Mark Twain

Sometimes people use Hebrews 11:1 to support this idea: “Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

We’ve seen that trust throughout the Bible involves the reliability of the person being trusted.

### **Faith as a cognitive belief only, involving only the mind**

Sometimes faith does have more of a cognitive aspect in the Bible. However, this has to be held in tension with other passages that emphasize faithfulness.

Also consider James 2:19: “You *believe* that God is one. You do well. Even the demons *believe* and shudder!”

Paul speaks of the “obedience of faith” in Romans 1:5 and 16:26.

### **Faith as passive not active**

The authors of the New Testament certainly believe that God’s grace is a gift that no one can earn. But this does not necessitate a passive faith, and there are countless examples of faith as active in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament.

- Faith is “attentive engagement in a promissory relationship.”  
Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith*, 78.

## God is *Emet* in Jesus

### God’s Faithfulness to His Promises

On the first pages of the New Testament, the Gospel according to Matthew begins like this: “This is the genealogy—or the lineage—of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” What the Gospel writer is claiming is that Jesus is the promised king to come and the one through whom all people will be included in Abraham’s family. In other words, God is faithful through Jesus.

Jesus came to embody God's faithfulness, or in Greek, *aletheia*. In Romans, Paul says that Jesus has come on behalf of God's *aletheia*, his faithfulness, to confirm the promises made to Abraham and Israel, so that the nations would glorify God (Romans 15:8-9).

*For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness [aletheia], in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."*

ROMANS 15:8-9

God shows that he is still faithful to his covenant and to his character. Yahweh will not abandon his people or his own *emet*; rather, through Jesus, all the nations are invited into Abraham's family and into a trusting relationship with Yahweh. In Jesus, God shows that he is trustworthy, consistent, and reliable.

## Jesus as the Faithful King

God had invited David and his descendants into covenant faithfulness with himself. The problem was that the kings did not show faithfulness to God. Instead, they broke the relationship through betrayal, time and again. And the people followed in their kings' ways. Jesus is the true faithful king. He fulfills the Davidic role and is the one who will sit on David's throne forever.

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and aletheia.*

JOHN 1:14

*Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast to our confidence and our boasting in our hope.*

HEBREWS 3:5-6

God promises David (in 2 Samuel 7:15-16) that when the king is faithful to the one who is ultimately faithful, his kingdom faithfully endures. The New Testament says the same of Jesus.

*But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness...."*

HEBREWS 1:8-9



# Invitation to Covenant Trust

God shows himself trustworthy through the faithful one, Jesus. Humanity is then called to place their trust in Jesus, and through that trust, they can enter into covenant partnership with Yahweh.

*For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through **faith**.*

GALATIANS 3:26

*Therefore, since we have been justified through **faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by **faith** into this grace in which we now stand.*

ROMANS 5:1-2

Paul is really clear that it's not our worth—whether defined by status, gender, ethnicity, morality, or Torah obedience—but our trust in Jesus that makes us Abraham's offspring.

Jesus calls people to respond with trust and belief and promises that they too will endure.

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever **believes** in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

JOHN 3:16

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever **believes** in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and **believes** in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

JOHN 11:25-26

*Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." ... Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever **believes** in me shall never thirst."*

JOHN 6:28-29, 35

People are called to believe in Jesus because of God's continued faithfulness to his promises, and the eyewitness testimony of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. In other words, just as in the Hebrew Bible, trust in the New Testament is not blind trust. Trust in God is based on trustworthiness. A person's history of trustworthiness is what makes trust a reasonable thing to do.

*And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your **faith** is in vain.*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:14

*Many Samaritans from that town **believed** in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."*

JOHN 4:39

These eyewitnesses, the apostles and disciples, went from town to town proclaiming what they had seen. This telling of the good news of Jesus became synonymous with the word "faith" (*pistis*).

*They only were hearing it said, “He who used to persecute us is now preaching the **faith** he once tried to destroy.”*

GALATIANS 1:23

*And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the **faith**.*

ACTS 6:7

So to trust God is to trust in the good news that Jesus is king.

## Trust as Embodied, Whole-Person Allegiance

In the New Testament, as in the Hebrew Bible, trust/faith involves whole-person allegiance to God. It’s not simply cognitive or passive. If the good news, or proclamation of the faith, is that Jesus is king, then faith (*pistis*) in the Gospel is an allegiance to that king. And that allegiance involves the whole person—cognition, trust, and embodied loyalty.

The words for faith/trust can be translated as “faithfulness” and can refer to God or humans.

*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and **faithfulness**. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.*

MATTHEW 23:23

*What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the **faithfulness** of God?*

ROMANS 3:3

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, **faithfulness**...*

GALATIANS 5:22

## Trust Despite Obstacles

Just as in the Hebrew Bible, trust in the New Testament is often portrayed as something people do or are called to do. The people of God were waiting for a king to come, but because Jesus didn’t seem like a king, they didn’t recognize him as one. He didn’t seize political power or a crown. So to trust him required a transformed imagination. (See Isaiah 53:1, which speaks of the difficulty of belief in one of such a humble appearance). But the Gospels are full of people who place their trust in Jesus despite great odds.

A Gentile centurion appeals to Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant.

*When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, “Lord, my servant is lying paralysed at home, suffering terribly.” And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.” But the centurion replied, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard this, he marvelled and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such **faith**.*

MATTHEW 8:5-10

A Jewish synagogue leader, whose daughter was dying, implored Jesus to come heal her. On the way, his daughter died.

*While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."... Taking [the little girl] by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi", which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement.*

MARK 5:35-36, 41-42

A woman who would have been deemed unclean by society reaches out to touch Jesus.

*And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well." Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.*

MATTHEW 9:20-22

Two blind men recognize that Jesus is the Davidic King.

*And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, "See that no one knows about it." But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.*

MATTHEW 9:27-31

These are only a few examples of the many times people trusted Jesus in the midst of challenging situations. No one is excluded from this kind of trust—Jew or Gentile, male or female, leaders or the oppressed. It is significant that many examples of trust in the New Testament are offered by those who are in the least likely position to recognize Jesus—the Gentiles, the unclean/outcast in society, or those who can't see.

Trust in Jesus is not passive; it is active. It's not simply cognitive; it is relational. And it's not necessarily perfect trust. Like in Mark 9, when a father brings his son to Jesus, begging for healing from a demon.

*"If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can? All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"*

MARK 9:22-24

## Summary

- God is *emet*; he is trustworthy, faithful, and reliable. He is the rock.
- God calls people to respond to his trustworthiness with trust.
- *Emet* is a covenantal (commitment) term. Trust/faithfulness is foundational to partnerships. God calls his people to reciprocate his faithfulness in covenant relationship.
- Although people fail to remain faithful, God remains faithful.
- God has proven himself trustworthy through acts of faithfulness over time, specifically the fulfillment of his covenant promises to Abraham and to David, through Jesus.
- Jesus is the faithful, Davidic King, and humanity is invited to trust in him.
- Trust involves the whole person and is often exemplified in the Gospels by the lowest in society, who often face great obstacles.
- We can follow the examples of those who trusted in Jesus through our embodied allegiance to him as King, despite any obstacles we may face.

Like Abraham, David, and the many followers of Jesus who have come before, we can trust God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Rather than coming up with our own solutions apart from God, we can trust God to provide a way forward. This doesn't mean it's a perfect allegiance. But we are unified with the perfectly faithful one and empowered by the Spirit to follow in his way. This is why Paul can say in Galatians: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by *pistis* in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20)."