

Fruit of the Spirit

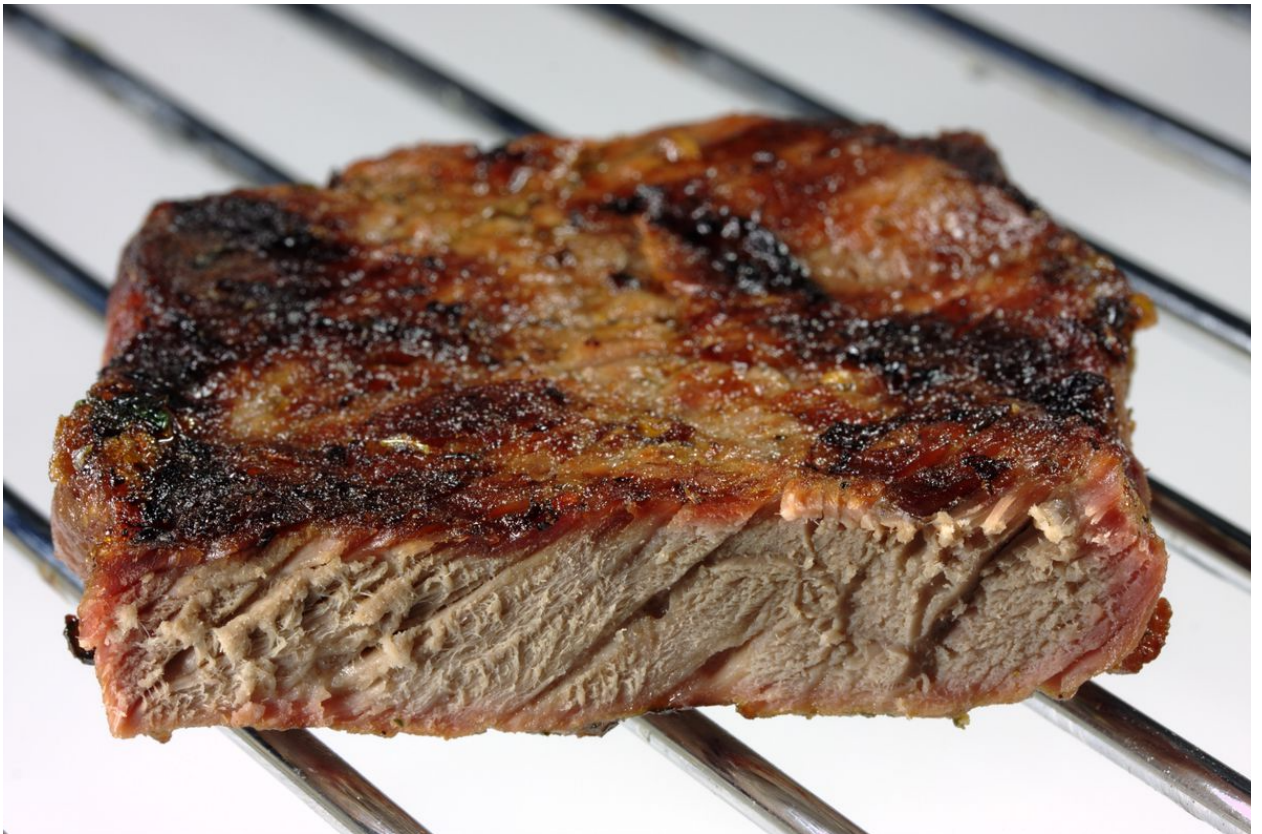
Week 7: Faithfulness

Galatians 5:22-23; various

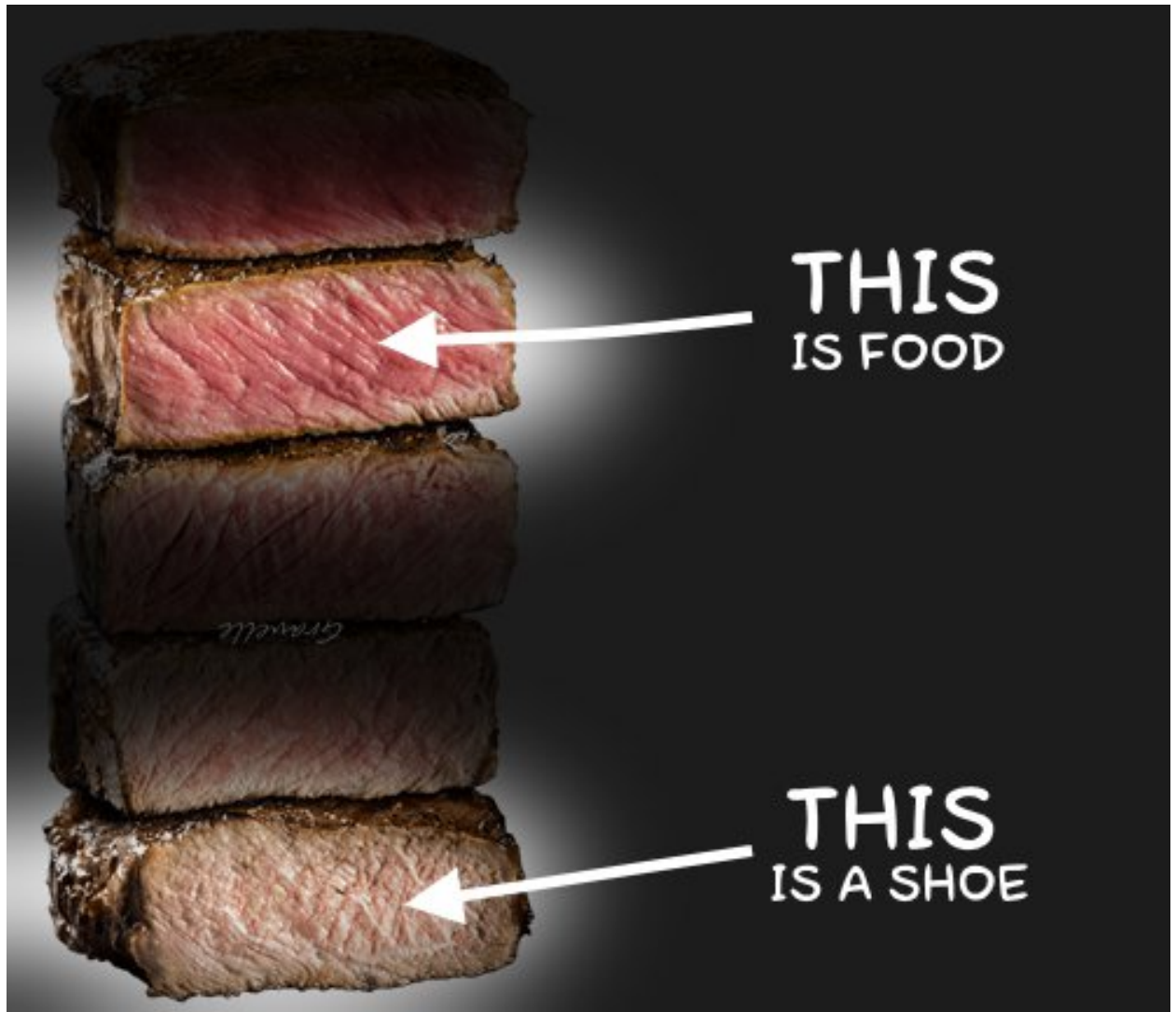
Robert Morris ---- July 23, 2023

Hey, good morning, Grace! We're so glad you're here today as we continue our look at the fruit of the Spirit this morning.

I have a contention that there are two words that we all love to hear. They're powerful in a unique way. We want them. We will put ourselves through a lot of pain to hear them. We will run ourselves ragged in the hope of trying to hear them. If it's only the right person—my demanding father or my hard-to-please mother—who would say these two words: “Well done.” It's so simple, but it never gets old hearing it. We love hearing those two words.



Now there is one exception ... it's steak. Grace—wow. Save some if it for later—I'm going to need some of that. I'm going to need us to plant a flag firmly here at Grace Covenant Church that that's wrong. Okay, we don't like hearing "well done" when it comes to steak.



“Well done”—deep in our heart there is this longing to hear those two words. If it is deserved and we don't hear it, it sometimes leaves us embittered. If we do hear them, but deep in our heart of hearts we know we didn't really deserve it, sometimes it leaves us feeling a little bit of shame. But, oh man, when it is warranted and when it is deserved and when somebody important in your life says those two words “Well done” it does something really profound to our hearts.

And I'm here to tell you that those two words have an origin. There's a seed from which those two words grow out of. There's a catalyst for those being spoken into your lives. It's my

assertion today that on the other side of the fruit of the Spirit is where you'll find those two words. On the way to "Well done" is faithfulness.

We've tackled love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and we've come to faithfulness. And as we dig into this fruit of the Spirit this morning, I'm hoping to accomplish a few things. I'm going to go ahead and tell you where we're headed this morning. First, I want to try my best to define this concept, how it's used and demonstrated throughout the Bible. Next, I want to focus in on one particular passage where we're going to see the reward of faithfulness, what's waiting for those who are faithful. And then at the end, I'd love it if we would imagine or ask, *What would it look like if I had more of this fruit in my life, and how do I get more of that?*

Now before we do that, I do think it's good to remind ourselves of the fruit of the Spirit concept as a whole that we've been talking about a lot, in a bunch of different ways over many weeks. You might have been in and out some this summer. But it's going to be your temptation with the fruit of the Spirit to see this as something that you can produce or build or do in your life. We tend to be very American in that way, to think, *I can train these character qualities into my life. I can work a developmental plan. I can read the right books and make sure I'm checking all the right boxes and building these things into my life. I can just do better.*

But remember, we have to keep reminding ourselves that it's called the fruit of the Spirit, not the fruit of my effort. I can't make this fruit grow, just like I can't grow apples out of my left arm. Galatians 5, the context of our verse, clearly says that the things that Robert Morris produces are the deeds of the flesh. That's what I bring to the table. And it says that the fruit of the Spirit, what I can do, is to attach myself to the vine. I can walk by the Spirit. I can face the right direction. I can have the right orientation, like Pastor Ray mentioned last week. Just as effortless and easy as it is for me to produce the deeds of the flesh, so it is natural and right and easy for a life that is connected in cooperation with the Spirit of God to produce this kind of fruit. This fruit will be gradual and inevitable and a byproduct of walking by the Spirit.

Definition of Faithfulness

So, faithfulness—that's what we're after today. That's what we're hoping will grow in our lives as we cooperate with the Spirit. So, let's define it. What is faithfulness? Let's use the Bible to help us do this.

We're going to start in Galatians 5. The word Paul uses in Galatians 5:22-23 is a Greek word called *pistis*. And this Greek word has the connotation of belief or trust or confidence in something. It's the most common word used in that day and age for trustworthiness. Is someone is committed, true to one's word, steadfast, loyal? People who have deeply committed to something, or they stand by their word—these are all ways that that word was used in the common vernacular of that day and age.

Faithfulness does not mean how much faith a person has; it has more to do with how much faith someone can put in you; how much you can be trusted.

So, what I'm going to today is give you a quick rundown of a bunch of verses as we do a high-level view of the Scriptures and this concept of faithfulness. If you're a note taker, today is your day! Because you can jot them down. Maybe you can read them later this week as you work through this and follow up on today's message.

But what you'll see in the Scriptures is three categories of usage of this idea of faithfulness. One is general principles of faithfulness and how it works. Two is the faithfulness of God, and the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Let's look at each of those.

First, the principles of faithfulness. We'll start in [Luke 16](#). The same word that Paul uses in Galatians 5, Jesus uses in a parable called the "parable of the shrewd or dishonest manager." And in the summary of this parable, Jesus says, *Look, here's the big spiritual point of this.* He uses this word to describe the principle of faithfulness. [Luke 16:11](#) reads this way: "The one who is faithful in very little will also be faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little will also be dishonest in much." Jesus summarizes this and says it's not really about level of responsibility; it has more to do with how you're using that level of responsibility. The only way someone learns if you can be trusted in big things is if you can be trusted in small things. And so, Jesus teaches this parable, which teaches that if you can't even handle the simple things of this earth, then who can trust you with the more eternal or weighty things? The little things are where you get your faithfulness practice reps, so to say.

A little thing is a little thing, but faithfulness in little things is a great thing.

---Hudson Taylor

Hudson Taylor said it this way—he’s a famous missionary. He said, “A little thing is a little thing, but faithfulness in little things is a great thing.”

There’s an Old Testament principle of faithfulness too. In [Proverbs 20:6](#), Solomon says this: “[Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?](#)” Solomon is almost saying, *Look, the world is aching and longing for this kind of characteristic.* And he implies that there’s a lack of real and genuine faithfulness among humanity. There are a lot of people who talk as if they were faithful, but real faithfulness? That’s in short supply. Who can find it?

But, by and large, the large majority of the usage of this concept of faithfulness actually applies to God himself. Over sixty-something times in the Bible you’ll see God’s faithfulness being described to us. Here’s a just a few. If you want to jot these down, you can go look them up later and read more in depth.

[1 Thessalonians 5:24](#) says, “[He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.](#)” If He says He’s going to do something, He’s going to do it. There is always follow-through.

[Lamentations 3:22-24](#)—that “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” song comes from this verse. It says, “[The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies are new to me every morning. Great is Your faithfulness.](#)” The Lord does not cease or slumber. He does not clock out. He is always there, new every morning.

[1 Corinthians 1:9](#): “[God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son.](#)” He is loyal to those whom He has called.

[2 Thessalonians 3:3](#): “[Not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful ... He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.](#)”

[Romans 4:21](#) talks about how we can be fully convinced that God is able to do all He has promised to do.

[2 Timothy 2:13](#) says, “[If we are faithless, He still remains faithful—for He cannot deny himself.](#)” God can do nothing but be faithful.

Here's a great promise from the Scriptures in [1 John 1:9](#). This is an important one for us. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

[Psalm 89:1](#) says, "I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations." I will sing and I will tell others of this great faithfulness.

[Psalm 145:13](#): "The Lord is faithful to all His promises."

[2 Corinthians 1:18](#): "As surely as God is faithful ..."

[Hebrews 10:23](#): "He who promised is faithful."

Now I could go on and on. That's not even the half of it. It's that prevalent of a concept in the Scriptures, this trustworthiness and dependability and faithfulness of God.

The first thing we need to see is that faithfulness is first a characteristic of God himself. He can be trusted to do what He says He can do. When He says it, He will do it. He is steadfast, dependable, loyal. You can put your faith in Him. He is worthy of that.

We also see this concept demonstrated in the life of Jesus Christ, the God-man. [Hebrews 12:2](#) says that we can look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. And we can look to Him because for the joy set before Him---and then it explains how He did everything that was required of Him. He went all the way.

[Hebrews 2:17](#) says that He became a "merciful and faithful high priest."

[Revelation 19:11](#) is one of my favorites. It describes Jesus in His glorious return on a war horse, and it says, "The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True." He is the personification of faithful. He is capital F faithful.

God Is Our Example of Faithfulness

And so, as I did this big summary of what faithfulness is and how we see it in Scriptures, I was trying to find a way to summarize it best for you. How do we know what we're looking at here? I actually found another guy who said it better than I can do, so I'm going to share that with you today. A guy named Jerry Bridges wrote a book on the fruit of the Spirit, and in his chapter on faithfulness he describes the three defining characteristics of faithfulness like this. He said that it boils down to absolute honesty, utter dependability, and unswerving loyalty. These are the things that we see demonstrated by God first. These are the things we see exemplified by

Jesus Christ. And these are the things we see in short supply in humanity. You don't have to live very long to know that there's a lack of these three things in the world. And worse than that, there's a lack of those three things in me. And I, we, need more of this fruit. Our communities and families and workplaces would thrive if there were more of this fruit on the vine. Instead (we know this) we live in a world where promises are made lightly, half-truths are okay and rule the day, RSVPs don't really mean you're coming. There's a lack of follow through in big and little things, a lack of integrity. It doesn't matter what I said yesterday, because if it doesn't serve me today, then it doesn't matter. No loyalty.

And yet at the same time, we long to see this kind of faithfulness from humans. We all do. It's hard-wired in our DNA that we want faithfulness. And I know this because you can't watch the opening scene of a scene of the Pixar movie *Up* without crying. It's not possible. Have you done this? Can you not cry? I don't. I love seeing that kind of love and faithfulness on display in ten minutes of film. We want this fruit.

And more than we want to give it, we want to receive this fruit. We want to be on the other end of this. Because many of us have experienced the sting of a lack of unfaithfulness. I'm assuming that you've been on both sides of this coin, both the giver and the receiver of that kind of unfaithfulness.

But those of us who are followers of Jesus Christ have been shown this kind of ultimate faithfulness. We have a model. We have a way to follow, and it looks like God. It looks like Jesus and His faithfulness to us as a fuel, a kind of foundation for us to give faithfulness to others.

It's His unwavering faithfulness. He demonstrates this absolute honesty and utter dependability and unswerving loyalty. And it gives us a glimpse, it gives us a small picture of the kind of faithfulness that we could have if we were walking by the Spirit.

The Reward for Faithfulness

The last thing I want us to see from the Bible today is that there is a reward for faithfulness. There is a reward for being faithful, for being the kind of person who knows what they are responsible for, who knows what they are not responsible for. They know the difference between those two things. And then they set about and go about doing those things in being absolutely honest, utterly dependable, and unswervingly loyal.

And one of the best passages I know that presents this reward of faithfulness among some others is [Matthew 25](#). It's another parable that Jesus teaches called "the parable of the talents." I love this parable because Jesus is teaching this parable on the Mount of Olives with His disciples within days of the end of His life. And I can imagine our Savior no doubt having the topic of faithfulness on His mind because of what He was going to need to do in an utterly dependable and unswervingly loyal kind of way. And if you're not familiar with it, I would commend you to read it. But He tells this story of three different servants who are given varying levels of responsibility by their master. And Jesus uses a common thing in that day age—He uses money, or what is called "talents", a measurement of that money—to say that they've been responsible for these amounts of resources. But the overarching, bigger theme of that story is if these servants are going to be responsible with what they've been given. And we see two servants do a good job. And then there's one servant who doesn't.

And it's the summary statement of what the master says to these two servants that I want to hone in on with you today. It's the verse we put on the stickers so that maybe you might even put it to memory this week. It's [Matthew 25:21](#). It says this—listen for the reward for faithfulness. "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'" *Enter into the joy of your master*—he gets to hear those two magical words we all love to hear—*Well done*. But it is not just that. He also gets to enter the joy of his master. It's not just about being faithful—that is good—but it's that faithfulness is this gateway, this ticket, to the joy of the master. Wow.

This parable finishes with the master telling the last servant he is wicked and lazy. He does not demonstrate faithfulness. And his responsibility is given to someone else, and he is sent away.

And it's this sobering reminder that there is a reward for being a faithful servant. There is a reward for being the kind of person who can be trusted to be honest and dependable and loyal. And in God's economy that reward is "Well done" and "Enter the joy of your master."

Now, I'll be honest with you. I don't think this is the way it works in our world and in the world's "economy." Everyday ordinary faithfulness is not rewarded in the ways that it should be. There are more flashy displays of character that tend to get the attention. There's no one applauding when you've spent fifteen minutes reading your Bible and praying to God to set the tone of your day and you've done that for the sixteenth straight day or the sixtieth straight month

or the sixtieth straight year. Husbands, there are no parades when you are walking down the street and you divert your eyes quickly so that you can stay faithful in your heart to your wife. There isn't a standing ovation when you show up at that job on a random Tuesday and you show up on time to do what is required of you so that your family has what they need. The "thank you's"—I know this one—don't always come piling in when you spend a season coaching youth soccer. It's rare. It's rare that the level of gratitude matches the level of sacrifice when you've spent another year in one of those buildings teaching five-year-olds or fifteen-year-olds that Jesus loves them and the Church loves them.

But there is not an act of faithfulness, there is not an act of honesty or dependability or loyalty that the Savior doesn't see, and there is a reward of faithfulness coming at the master's return. There's a reward of faithfulness coming at the master's return. And this kind of faithfulness—this kind of ordinary, everyday faithfulness will be rewarded one day. And we know this because the faithful one has promised that's how it is. The faithful one has promised that's how it works.

Would you for a moment imagine with me a moment in front of the Lord when He might say something like "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter the joy of your master." How great a day that would be. But I'm here to tell you that the seed of that day, the beginnings of that day, starts today. That reward is earned starting right now, day after day. And it is so fragile, friends. It is so very fragile. There's not a one of us who doesn't know someone who has blown up a life of faithfulness in a few fleeting moments, so cavalier with their faithfulness to think that they could just earn that back in the same amount of time that it was lost. And so, if you want to hear "Well done" and "Enter the joy of your master," that starts today. And the principle of the Bible is that it starts today with the little things that the Lord has placed in your care.

So, in summary thus far, we've seen a few things. We've seen the concept of faithfulness in Scripture. We've seen God as the ultimate example and the fuel or foundation of this faithfulness in us. And we've seen the reward of being found faithful by the Master.

And I hope that the Scriptures have left you feeling a little like, *Yeah, I need more of this. I could use a little more of this fruit in my life. That tastes so sweet.* I hope that there is this building desire that you would be faithful to God and to others because of God's faithfulness to you.

How Can I Become More Faithful?

And so, the natural question is: What do I do? How can I do this or build this? What is my role here?

There are a couple of things I think you can do. I don't think they're complex, but I do think it's a pattern you're going to hear for the next couple of weeks.

The first thing I think you can do is you can do a fruit audit or a fruit inspection. I know we don't like that word "audit." You can do a fruit inspection. What if you did a walk-through of the orchard of your life, and in a quiet moment this week between you and God, you just asked Him, "God, how am I doing with absolute honesty and utter dependability and unswerving loyalty?" Maybe you could take an inventory, a close look. Maybe you could point to some of these examples in the last few years that would show, that would confirm, your growth in faithfulness. Or the other might be true, that it might show a lack of faithfulness that needs to be addressed.

In fruit inspection, I hope that you can point to something in the last year, or five years, or ten years, that can point to reality that you are growing in this fruit. Because if you're not, the implication of the Scriptures is that there might be something wrong in the garden. There's a disconnect somewhere.

And maybe as part of your fruit inspection you could take an even further and braver step: what if you asked those around you, "Do you find me faithful?" Would they say you're a faithful kind of person, honest, dependable, loyal? What would those closest to you say? Would they say that you have a history of not fulfilling your commitments, maybe quitting too soon, not telling the full truth, maybe leaving some things undone so that it's harder for those who come behind you? Would they say that you're the kind of person who does what they say they will do, even when it's not convenient or appreciated or even acknowledged?

What would your spouse or your roommate or your friend or your kids or your co-workers say if you asked them, "Hey, how am I doing? Do you find me to be the kind of person who's honest and dependable and loyal?"

And that's going to take some bravery. It's a brave step. And if you take it, I hope that you would have the humility to listen in that moment; that you wouldn't quickly rush to defend yourself, but that you might have an opportunity to repent, to turn, to ask for forgiveness.

Because it's my prayer that the hurt or the sting of that moment would not embitter you, but that it would push you deeper and deeper into the realization that you are in desperate need of the Spirit's help to pull this off in your life; that you would come to the end of yourself and say, "Lord, I am going to need You to produce some of this in my life because I can't do it on my own."

So, the first thing I think you need to do is to take a fruit audit, a fruit inspection. How are you doing?

And then I think the second application I'd lay out for you today is that if you're feeling the lack of this in your life and you really want to hear "Well done," you really want to hear this "Enter the joy of your master" phrase—*This is the year—I want a bumper crop of faithfulness in my garden*—I think the second application is just what [Galatians 5](#) says: "Walk by the Spirit." "Abide" is another way we've said it.

The promise of Galatians 5 is that if you walk by the Spirit you will not gratify the deeds of the flesh. Instead you will grow fruit, and part of that fruit is faithfulness, and it won't be in short supply. If you're tapped into the vine, the fruit will follow.

Because we need to have no doubt, friends, that the Spirit's ambition for your life is that you would become more and more like Jesus Christ in all of life, and that you would be connected to the Holy Spirit. And this will mean more and more faithfulness. It will mean more complete honesty and utter dependability and unswerving loyalty. This is the kind of fruit that would burst forth out of your life—not necessarily for the sake of your name or your good reputation, but more for God's glory, that others might say, *What happened to that guy? He is so honest, so dependable, so loyal.*

And if you're like me, you may be wondering, *Well, what do I do to walk by the Spirit?* First listen to Ray's message last week. It was great. Second, I think one of the things I've tried to do in my life is that I try to imagine, *Okay, walking by the Spirit—how do I do that?* One of the ways—at least part of that—is that you use the tools that God has given you. And the main tool that I think the Lord has given you is the Word of God, the Scriptures. And so, I think part of walking by the Spirit is learning how to memorize, meditate, ooze, leak the Word of God. Even if it's not word for word, you've got these concepts and themes of the Scriptures constantly running through your mind. It's the soundtrack of your life. It's constantly on repeat. So, the

moments when you might need to be reminded not to cut that corner or to be loyal or to keep your word, that there might be something back there that you could draw from.

Here's a few verses on faithfulness that you might be able to memorize this week and that might help you. I recommend doing it. Make one of these the soundtrack of your week this week.

[Hebrews 12:1-2](#). I think I mentioned it earlier, but it says that you stand in a great cloud of witnesses who have been faithful before you, and so you can be faithful.

[Revelation 2:10](#) says, "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life."

Maybe your thing is honesty—absolute honesty. You might need to remind yourself of [Proverbs 12:22](#) that says, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are His delight." (If you have the joy of the master, you have His delight.)

Maybe you need to be reminded of [2 Peter 1:3](#), that His divine power has given you everything you need for life and godliness.

Maybe [Luke 16:11](#) is the one you might want to memorize, from earlier. I need to be reminded that I need to be faithful in the little things. Those who are faithful in little things can be trusted with more, and if I'm dishonest in the little things, who can trust me with bigger things?

For you, it might be the one on our sticker today, [Matthew 25:21](#). Maybe the thing you need to do is constantly keep before you the reward of a life of faithfulness. Maybe you could remind yourself to have that thing playing in the back of your mind: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in a little: I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."

Feed your faithfulness. As you walk by the Spirit, feed your faithfulness with the Word of God. Memorize it, meditate on it. Make one of these verses the soundtrack of your week, the thing that's playing in the background. See if it doesn't help you walk by the Spirit and orient you in the right direction.

Now one of our temptations is going to be to think, *Oh, man, I've got to do all of this right away. I want to hear "Well done" at the end, and so I want to win the whole faithfulness war right now.* I think the reminders from the Scriptures we've looked at today are that our job is maybe to win today's battle, to be faithful with the little that God has put in front of you right now, with the power of the Spirit as you walk with Him. What if you win the moment right in

front of you right now? Because I can imagine that for many of you, like it was for me this week, that there's a place right now where the Lord is saying, *That's the place I need you to be more honest. That's the place I need you to be more dependable. That's the place I need you to be more loyal.* And so, what if you asked for the Spirit's help today? What if, because of you asking for the Spirit's help today, because you're spiritually minded, a verse that you've memorized, or a theme from the Scripture that you've put in your heart, wells up? And by the power of God's Spirit you might be able to obey and win today. And then maybe we could just wash, rinse, and repeat for the next forty years or so—I don't know how much you have left—that we could walk by the Spirit and abide each and every day. Because I want myself and I want us, collectively as a church, Grace Covenant, to have a beautiful harvest of faithfulness, a beautiful harvest of absolute honesty and utter dependability and unswerving loyalty.

Because that's what we've been given by God himself. And that's what we've been given by Jesus Christ, who tells us, "Follow me."

And friends, I want that reward. I love hearing "Well done." And one of my great dreams—and it has been for the last few decades since the Lord put this verse in my life—is that I might go to bed each night, put my head on the pillow, and in the still, soft moment of the night, hear my Lord say, "Well done. You were faithful today. Good job." And then maybe, with the Lord's help and the Spirit's help, I might be able to get to the end of my collective days and hear the Lord say, "Well done. Well done, good and faithful servant. Come, enter the joy of your master."

Right now, would you with me just imagine a moment; imagine a place in your life where it is really hard to be faithful. It's tedious, it's not paying off the way it should. There are not enough "Attaboys!" or "Thank you's." There are no parades or celebrations being held in your honor. But could you for a moment hear your Master say, "Stay faithful. You've got this. Walk by the Spirit and you won't gratify the deeds of the flesh. Instead I will produce in you a fruit of faithfulness, a ripe and delicious fruit of faithfulness. And on the other side of that of that faithfulness that I'll grow in you there is a joy of the Master." There is His delight waiting for you on the other side of that faithfulness.

Grace, the gateway to "Well done", the price we pay for the ticket on that ride, is faithfulness.

Let me pray for us.

Father, we come to You today and we ask in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ, the faithful one, that You would empower us; that You would empower the men and women of Grace Covenant Church towards more and more faithfulness, God. Would You help us become like Your Son? Would You help us walk by the Spirit and consistently attach ourselves to the good vine, so that we might, God, have a bountiful harvest of faithfulness in our lives? And we pray that that faithfulness would serve others, but ultimately, that it would serve the fame of Your name on this earth.

Father, would You put in us a great desire for honesty and dependability and loyalty because of how much of those things You've shown us? Lord, could You, would You, with the Spirit's help, get us to the end faithful, so that we might be able to hear, "Well done" and "Enter the joy of the master", both individually and corporately as a group of assembled disciples called Grace Covenant Church? It's in Your Son's name we pray. Amen.