

*Nine*  
F r u i t s  
*of the*  
S p i r i t

A Bible Study on Developing Christian Character

*Faithfulness*

R o b e r t   S t r a n d



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## *Introduction*

There is an ancient story out of the Middle East which tells of three merchants crossing the desert. They were traveling at night in the darkness to avoid the heat of the day. As they were crossing over a dry creek bed, a loud attention-demanding voice out of the darkness commanded them to stop. They were then ordered to get down off their camels, stoop down and pick up pebbles from the creek bed, and put them into their pockets.

Immediately after doing as they had been commanded, they were then told to leave that place and continue until dawn before they stopped to set up camp. This mysterious voice told them that in the morning they would be both sad and happy. Understandably shaken, they obeyed the voice and traveled on through the rest of the night without stopping. When morning dawned, these three merchants anxiously looked into their pockets. Instead of finding the pebbles as expected, there were precious jewels! And, they were both happy and sad. Happy that they had picked up some of the pebbles, but sad because they hadn't gathered more when they had the opportunity.

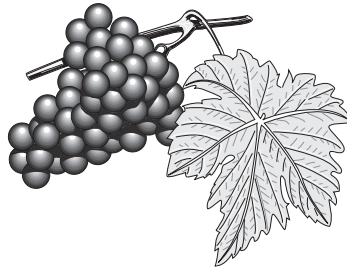
This fable expresses how many of us feel about the treasures of God's Word. There is coming a day when we will be thrilled because we have absorbed as much as we have, but sad because we had not gleaned much more. Jewels are best shown off when held up to a bright light and slowly turned so that each polished facet can catch and reflect the light. Each of these nine jewels of character will

be examined in the light of God's Word and how best to allow them to be developed in the individual life. That is how I feel about the following three verses from Paul's writings which challenge us with what their Christian character or personality should look like. Jesus Christ has boiled down a Christian's responsibility to two succinct commands: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and body, and love your neighbor like yourself. Likewise, Paul the apostle has captured for us the Christian personality in nine traits:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25).

At the very beginning of this study, I must point out a subtle, yet obvious, distinction. The "fruit" of the Spirit is a composite description of what the Christian lifestyle and character traits are all about — an unbroken whole. We can't pick only the fruit we like.

Unlocked in these nine portraits are the riches of a Christ-centered personality. The thrill of the search is ahead of us!



# Faithfulness

*PISTOS* (Greek), meaning: to be trusted, reliable, believing, to be counted on at all times, of a firm persuasion, faithful.

*THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS . . . FAITHFULNESS*



This seventh fruit of the Spirit is the word for standing fast, steadfastness, loyal, devoted, tried, constant, reliable, unwavering, trustworthy, dependable, resolute, honest, punctual, and steady. Quite a quality of character. This fruit could also be called fidelity. It also speaks of endurance — a firmness of purpose, especially when the living is tough. It is more than a “grin-and-bear-it” kind of attitude.

It’s a very positive, active attribute of character and a much-needed one in today’s flippant, irresponsible world. The faithful person is dependable in all kinds of life circumstances. This is a much-desired characteristic in others with whom we have any kind of relationship. We all need to be people of faithfulness!

D.L. Moody said: "I believe in a faith that you can see; a living, working faith that prompts action. Faith without works is like a man putting all his money into the foundation of a house; and works without faith is like building a house on sand without any foundation."

God is the source and standard of faithfulness which He has demonstrated in His dealings with the human race. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ models this same kind of faithfulness in relationships with His followers. The Holy Spirit is ready to bring this trait of character to full maturity in your life and mine . . . so that we, too, can be counted on to be faithful in all circumstances with all our relationships.

It's an old hymn which can usually be found in most any denominational church hymnal. In fact, you may have sung it the last time you were in church and it will do all of us good to contemplate these words as we begin this study:

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;  
As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

(Chorus)  
Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new  
mercies I see;  
All I have needed Thy  
hand hath provided;  
Great is Thy faithfulness,  
Lord, unto me!  
(Thomas O. Chisholm)

Faith and faithfulness are closely linked — faith being foundational to all that we believe and act upon. Faith is that undefinable power through which we can realize as reality things that are as yet unseen. Faithfulness is the working out of this inner belief system. When we have faith in God, we act in faithful ways. Acts of faithfulness are the demonstration that we have a true faith in God and such acts are the threads holding our belief and behavior system together. As the writer has said, “faith without works is dead.”

Let’s begin our study with a look at the foundation for faithfulness from the “faith” chapter of the Bible.

## Theological Insight

*Pistis is the original Greek word most often translated as faith in the Bible. It means to be of a firm persuasion, a conviction which is based upon hearing (peitho, which is to persuade), and is used in the New Testament always of faith in God or Christ or of things spiritual.*

*Pistos is the original word translated into faithful, faithfully, and faithfulness. It is an active word which takes pistis and lives it out as pistos.*

*There is another interesting word, apistos, which is the negative meaning, not worthy of confidence, an unbeliever.*



Please read Hebrews 11:1–40.

Write in your own words the biblical definition of faith:

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How are we to apply faith to our daily living?

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In your thinking, who of these “heroes” of the faith was the most faithful? Why?

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How was it possible for them to believe and never see the fulfillment take place in their lifetime?

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How much faith is required in order to be faithful and pleasing to God?

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How does God demonstrate the fact that He is faithful in this study?

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