

Defining “Faithful”

People define “faithful” differently. Context is often the key. A dog is considered “faithful” when it is partial to, prefers, and is obedient to its “master/owner.” A spouse is considered “faithful” when he or she doesn’t *cheat* on their mate. A teenager is considered “faithful” when they can be trusted to carry out the parents’ wishes even when the parents are out of town. But Christians are often considered “faithful” when they attend all the services of the local church on a regular basis- regardless of how they choose to live otherwise.

“Faithful” is generally translated from the Greek term *pistos*. “Believing” is also translated from the same word. But *pistos* is additionally defined and translated to mean “trustworthy,” cf. 1Timothy 4:9; Titus 1:9. What does this imply regarding our ideas of “faithfulness”?

We had a dog (she was actually our son’s) that was allowed inside, but was not allowed on the couch or love seat. She never got on them *while we’re home*, but I occasionally saw doggie footprints and doggie hair on them after we had been away for a while. Was she faithful/trustworthy?

Do you have to hide car keys to keep a teenager from taking your car out for a spin while you’re away even though you’ve specifically forbidden them from driving it? Or, do you depend on neighbors to “watch the house” and report any house parties thrown by your teenagers if you’re away for a few days? Are they faithful/trustworthy?

Do you constantly worry and watch your spouse for signs or indications of an affair? Ask yourself, “Why?” The answer is one of two choices: 1) You’re paranoid and have trust issues; or, 2) Your spouse is giving you indications of untrustworthiness or has repeatedly broken your trust in the past, causing you to doubt their fidelity and commitment. If it is #2, are they faithful/trustworthy?

With these examples in mind, let’s switch this up a little. Think about your “faithfulness” and “trustworthiness” to God. Is it limited to consistent attendance at all services, or is there more to it? Are you only “faithful” to Him when He’s “in the room and watching you”? Obviously, there is a problem here since the omnipresence of God indicates He knows everything we do (and think!). Can God “trust” you to do the right thing whether you realize He’s present and watching or not? Do we expect God to continually “trust” us even though there have been many lapses of fidelity in the past? These examples of dogs, teenagers, and spouses should cause us to think about the issue of faithfulness/trustworthiness a little deeper, and more seriously, than just check marks in an attendance book.

But let’s take this subject of “faithfulness” a little further. Shouldn’t our “faithfulness” to God also enable Him to *trust* us to:

- Think about things the way He does? To look to His Word to determine the rightness or wrongness of something instead of bowing to societal pressures or our own understanding?
- Feel about things the way He does? To have the same disdain for sin, compassion for sinners, and love of truth and righteousness?
- Act in a way that is consistent with our profession of “faith” in Him? In brief, to act in a way that He would approve?

Please do not misunderstand. I would never discourage regular and consistent attendance at all worship and bible class opportunities of the local church- such is far too important and beneficial to our spiritual health and well-being. However, “faithfulness” is not defined simply by consistent attendance, and should not be viewed as such. Remember this oft-repeated simple statement, “*God is faithful*,” Deuteronomy 7:9; Isaiah 49:7; 1Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; 2Corinthians 1:18; 1Thessalonians 5:24; 2Thessalonians 3:3. In every circumstance and in all applications, **God is faithful**. While we cannot match or reciprocate His level of “faithfulness” to us, and we certainly don’t want to belittle or discount His *grace*, ought we not at least attempt to come as close as we possibly can to being “faithful” to Him? Think about it, please. (Philip C. Strong; Southside Church of Christ; 602 Henderson St. {mail to P.O.B. 1448}, Jacksonville, TX; online at southsidechurchofchrist.net; on youtube and facebook @ [southsidecoctx](https://www.facebook.com/southsidecoctx); email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)