

SPIRITUAL GROWTH REVIEW

The Fruit of the Spirit Is...



THE SECRETS OF BEING FRUITFUL

Memory Verse for this week: *"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope. Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."* Lamentations 3:21-23

1. What are the defining characteristics of someone who is faithful? What does it look like for someone to be faithful to others? What do they do to prove their faithfulness? When do we witness faithfulness lived out? *The faithfulness of friend is affirmed through a trial. Are they committed to a relationship or will they leave when things get difficult? Sometimes we get hurt. Sometimes we get bored or lazy or complacent. Sometimes we feel tired. A faithful person will not let excuses to get in the way of their commitment to show up and be present for someone they care about, even if it may come at a cost to them.*
2. Consider **Proverbs 18:17**. Have you ever listened to one side of a story and believed it? Did you ever hear the other side of the story and realize that the truth may be with one side or the other - or neither? How should we deal with situations where people want us to side with their story? *Unless we know both sides of a story, we should not be quick to judge. Get the rest of the story before you make a decision or take a side. If you don't have the whole story, you can make a situation worse instead of better. Sometimes it is hard to discern the truth in a matter, but if we take it to prayer and meditate upon it, God will help us to see past the lies to understand the truth.*
3. What is it in our lives that generally challenges our faithfulness to God? What are our biggest hangups? *This certainly will vary from person to person, but we could say that our biggest challenge with faithfulness is our own lack of self-discipline and commitment to carry out the will of God in our lives. We get comfortable and complacent and do our own thing. When we deal with trials and temptations, we also are challenged to believe the lie that God is somehow responsible for our misery. God is always good, He is always present, and He loves us with all His heart.*
4. Look at **Romans 5:3-4**. Why does God allow for our faith to be tested? Isn't there a risk that we might fall away from faith? *The testing of our faith makes us stronger if we are in Christ. If we are not yet abiding in Christ, then a test may be a way for God to draw people to Him in their time of need. Testing may be uncomfortable or even painful, but that doesn't mean that it's not good for us. It is a gift and an opportunity to learn more about the faithfulness of God to us and how He wants us to demonstrate it towards others.*
5. Read **1 Peter 1:6-7**. Have you ever had your faith tested? What should we do when we feel like we are facing a test? *We should definitely pray for strength in our trial. Seek the Word of God for wisdom. Ask for wise counsel from mature believers. Share your burden with someone who will pray for you. Being tested isn't necessarily bad; in fact, it can be good. If we remain steadfast through our struggle, we will be stronger for it in the end.*
6. In **Job 2:9**, Job's wife told him to "Curse God and die!" When life is really difficult, why do some people reject God and leave the church? *We may get angry at or blame God for our trials because we do believe that He is able to make our lives better but He doesn't always*

do that. Some people may doubt God's love or His power and they leave Him to look for a better solution. People who do this cannot see past their pain and to not rest in the truth of God's goodness and plan. Life may hurt at times, but not all pain is bad.

7. Pick one of the following passages to look at: **Philippians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 6:6-8; or Hebrews 13:5.** Are you thankful for and content with what God has blessed you with? How do you know if you are discontent or not? Should we never want anything more than we have? *Are we constantly wishing for, looking for, and planning to get something that we don't have? It can consume our thoughts and distract us from fully living for and serving God. Being content doesn't mean that we are complacent or apathetic, but it does mean that we are grateful for what we have and thank God who provided it for us. We shouldn't force the hand of God through acquiring unnecessary debt or by stepping on other people to get what we want.*
8. Consider **Proverbs 3:3-4.** Who should we be faithful to? Everyone? Are there some people that we are not obligated to be faithful to? *God places people in our lives that He wants us to love and to be faithful to. This certainly includes your family and especially your spouse, but it may also include some friends, too. We cannot be truly committed to be the support and wellbeing of everyone on the planet, but we can be faithful to a few, and we can always be a faithful witness of God's love to the other people that God may bring across our path. Ultimately, we are being faithful to God who commanded us to "go and make disciples of all nations."*
9. When we commit to being faithful to someone, what are we committing to? Their physical provision? Taking care of them? *Being faithful to someone means that we are devoted to the overall spiritual wellbeing of someone that God has placed in our lives. We support them by any means that will keep them centered on the will of God. We love them. We encourage them. We look past their sin and see their potential. We speak the truth in love. We forgive them. We restore them. We treat them as God has treated us!*
10. Where is the boundary between faithfulness and codependency? Is there a time to say "no" to being faithful? *We should not be faithful to anything that will bring harm to us. Being faithful doesn't mean letting someone continue to abuse use or hurt us. We need to set healthy boundaries for our own wellbeing. If we are not healthy ourselves, we will not be any help to others. Being faithful doesn't mean giving to others what they want, but loving them enough to give them what they need. Be faithful to God and His truth, and then be faithful to show His love to the world.*
11. Read **Romans 12:11.** How can we be sure to remain faithful to God for a lifetime? How can we prevent life's trials from wearing us down? *Life certainly can wear us down over time or even quickly through a difficult trial. We need to set ourselves up for success in faithfulness by surrounding ourselves with people who will build us up, by dying to ourselves daily, by casting our cares upon Him and trusting Him (1 Pet. 5:7), and by being obedient to His will as we abide in the Spirit. It is our never-ending pursuit of the heart of God.*
12. Who are the top five people on your list that God wants you to be faithful to? How can you be more faithful to them? *Share some ideas about what this might look like. Make a regular phone call to your adult children or parents. Invite friends or family to come to church. Make sure that they have everything that they need. Forgive them. Pray for them...*

For this week: How can you be more faithful to those around you? How can you be more faithful to God? If your heart has weakened in its commitment to others, ask God to show you what you can do to guard your heart against apathy towards those He cares about.