

Bible Correspondence Course

10 - Living Faithfully

Truth For The World

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In this lesson:

- 1. What is Living Faithfully?
- 2. Why Live Faithfully?
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Living Faithfully

In this lesson we will first examine what living faithfully means. Then we will examine why that it is important, and that Christian living doesn't stop after obeying the steps to salvation, it really just begins. Then we will look at some insight into living faithfully that the Bible provides.

What is Living Faithfully?

The idea of "faithful" simply means "full of faith." We understand that it carries with it the idea of loyalty and remaining true to something. A faithful friend is one that you can always turn to. A faithful dog stays by you and doesn't run away. The same idea is true when it comes to being a Christian. Once we become a Christian, which means "follower of Christ," we dedicate our lives to staying faithful to Jesus and His laws, remaining true to His teachings, and not straying away.

The Bible says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17) We get a biblical faith by basing it on biblical evidence, the word of God. We do not construct our faith on our own feelings and ideas. If we place our faith in that, then we are just putting our faith in our own faith, and not the truth of God's word. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1) Biblical faith is not a blind faith, but is based on

evidence. In previous lessons we have seen the evidence for the existence of God, that the Bible is communication from Him, and so forth. Our Christian faith must come by hearing and obeying the word of God!

Therefore, a Christian must be a follower of Christ that is full of the faith based on the word of God, a believer in that word, and one who practices the teachings of Jesus. A Christian is one who stays true to the example of life Jesus gave us and does not stray away from the Bible. That person will be a faithful Christian

Why Live Faithfully?

Our Souls Depend On It

In the 1st century Roman Empire, as well as in some parts of the world today, Christians are persecuted and killed for their beliefs. Jesus spoke to a church in Smyrna that were apparently about to have tribulation. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Revelation 2:10) Jesus told them that they were about to endure a hard time, but He made something clear. He made them a promise. If they were to remain faithful, even if it cost them their lives, He would give them a "crown of life." The reason we should live faithfully serving Jesus is that our souls depend upon it.

Some people have the idea that once you obtain salvation and become a Christian, you cannot lose that salvation. The idea may sometimes be phrased as, "Once saved, always saved." But,

The freewill that God gave you to choose to love Him and follow Him does not evaporate and go away once you decide to become a Christian. That freewill is still there and you are capable of choosing whether or not to stay faithful to Jesus.

that idea is not supported by the evidence of the Bible.

In fact, the Bible makes it very clear that once you start following Christ, it is up to you to continue to follow Christ. Let's look at some ways Paul's writings in the Bible show us that you can "fall from grace," or lose your salvation. Paul wrote to Christians in Corinth and said, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12) Paul also wrote, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia." (2 Timothy 4:10) To "forsake" means to leave something behind on purpose. Apparently Demas was working with Paul. "Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers." (Philemon 1:24) But, using his own freewill, Demas decided to leave the work of Christianity behind and did it on purpose. Paul explains the reason as the fact that Demas "loved this present world." Demas forgot about the better life to come in Heaven and chose to indulge in this world.

Peter also shows us in his writings that you can lose your salvation. Peter wrote, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter 2:20-22) Note that Peter makes it clear that people had escaped the world through Jesus, but then became entangled again in the world. If they had escaped the world through Jesus, then they had been saved. That's what "being saved" means. But now, they have decided, like Demas, to go back into the world. He paints a disgusting picture of a dog going back to lick up his own vomit again to describe the digusting picture of people who had escaped the world and sin but then decided to dive back into it. Peter even says that the state that they are in now is worse than when they

were lost originally. They had salvation in their hands and they let it slip away. Their punishment now may be greater than if they had never obeyed the steps to salvation. Why? Because they had accepted the blood of Jesus on their behalf to be saved, and then they took it and trampled it under foot. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29) Notice that the Hebrews writer says that the person was "sanctified," or cleansed. But now, they have rejected the blood of the sacrifice of Jesus and counted it as "unholy." Basically, God died for them, they accepted the sacrifice on their behalf, and then they turned around and threw the sacrifice and love of God back in His face, and called it "unholy." What a dreadful mistake!

These passages make it clear that humans who have been saved can still make the poor decision to go back into the world and reject the gracious gift of salvation that God offers. The same freewill that caused them to sin in the first place, is the same freewill that causes them to forsake their salvation.

Bearing Fruit

In <u>Matthew 25:14-30</u>, Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like a man who traveled into a far country and delivered goods unto his servants. To one he gave five talents (amounts of money), to another two, and to another one. After a while, he came back and asked them what they had done with what they had been given. The ones with the five and two talents had taken the money and used it to earn more. The master spoke to each one of them. "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matthew 25:21) A couple of things to note here: 1) the servants were called faithful, and 2) the servants had been busy working for the master in order to make a profit. In contrast, the one who had been given one talent said, "And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is

thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:... And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 25:25-26,30) The man with the one talent who did nothing with what he was given was called "unfaithful," "wicked," and "slothful," or lazy. His punishment was to be cast away instead of rewarded.

The one talent man was not condemned because he only had one talent. He was condemned because he did nothing with it. Jesus expects us to do something with what we have been given.

We learn from this parable that in order to be faithful to God we must be busy working for Jesus and bearing fruit. Should we take the time, health, and abilities that God has allowed us to have and not do anything for Him, when Jesus returns He would be justified in calling us "unfaithful," "wicked," and "slothful." We do not want that! Becoming a Christian is not only about getting rid of our sins and being saved, it is about dedicating our lives to faithful service to God. The Christian is a follower of Christ. Did you ever play "Follow The Leader" as a child? One child would be "The Leader" and everyone else would follow them. Whatever, the Leader did, the other children would have to do. If the leader started skipping, everyone else started skipping. If the leader jumped, everyone else jumped. As we are Christians, followers of Christ, we do what Christ did. We look at His life as the perfect example and start imitating it. We love others, we serve others, we teach others about the word of God. We follow our leader and "bear fruit." By living like Jesus, others will learn about Jesus and God and see Christ living in us. That will make some others want to be like us, and have the joy we have, and have the salvation we have. When they decide to become Christians, too, that will be the fruit and the prosperous thing we can show to our Lord when

He returns. We can say, "Master, you gave me time and health and abilities, and I have told others about your word and shown them a good life like Christ lived. Others have decided to obey and become Christians, too. Here is the increase to your family because they have obeyed!" Since we have been fruitful, we expect Jesus to say, "Well done, thou good and **faithful** servant!"

How to Live Faithfully

Before we were baptized, we had to repent, meaning we turned away from sin and changed our mind about it. We then need to change our actions and stop sinning. But, being baptized under water doesn't automatically change all our habits. Sometimes, it takes time and effort and learning to get rid of sin. It takes growing up and maturing as a Christian to become someone who is more like the perfect example of Jesus.

Much of the New Testament deals with what you need to know and do in order to live a Christian life. You can read about the successes and failures of different individuals and congregations. Of course, Jesus lived a sinless life so His example is the best. Studying His life and teachings are always important.

While we cannot talk about all the things a Christian may face in His life and we can't talk about all the things a Christian needs to know in this short lesson, there are some important things we can learn to help with how to live faithfully.

Peter wrote, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-8) Peter clearly shows how we need to grow in our Christian faith so that we are "neither barren nor unfruitful." This is exactly what we want! We want to be found a "faithful" servant who has brought forth fruit for our Master, the Lord Jesus. If we focus on adding these things to our lives, Peter says we will be fruitful! Let's examine these components we need to add to our lives.

Faith

Peter says to add these things to your faith. Therefore, you first need faith. As we saw before, a biblical faith is one based on the evidence of God's word, the Bible. Therefore, we need to be studying the Bible and growing in our knowledge. Some things will be easy and some things may be hard, but we need to keep pushing forward in our knowledge. Everything is harder when you are first learning something! But then, when you

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start to learn more, the things that were harder at first seem easier. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15) The one who will be approved by God is the one who gave diligence and studied and can handle the word of God correctly!

Another reason you learn more about the word is so that you can teach others.

The Hebrews writer scolded those who were satisfied just to have the "milk of the word," and did not go on to learn more difficult things in the word and be able to teach others. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebrews 5:12-14) One reason we learn the word is to be able to teach others. It's hard to teach something you don't know!

Virtue

Virtue can be defined as "moral excellence." In essence, we are talking about what is right. We need to add to our faith that which is morally good and right. How do we know what is good? It is good when it is approved of by God.

The Bible is our source of learning what is approved of by God. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17) What we learn, how we correct ourselves, and how we know to do good works all come from the Bible. Once again, we need to be studying, learning, and then putting good works into practice.

Looking for what is right is one thing, but we also need to be open to receive it. Some people sit and hear a preacher stating that the Bible says they need to stop doing something and the people say "Amen," stating that they agree. But, then they go out into the world and keep on doing it. Jesus said, "*Take heed therefore how ye hear:*" (Luke 8:18) Hearing and learning what is virtuous is only part. We need to let what is virtuous transform our lives. Knowing what is right doesn't help if we can't put it into practice!

Knowledge

We need to add knowledge to our virtue. We can't do what is right if we don't know what is right!

Knowledge of God's word is required. The requirement of knowledge is built into the purpose of life. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14) We can't keep the commandments of God if we don't know what they are. We can't be more like Jesus if we don't know what He is like!

Adding virtue means we start looking for what is right and we are open to receive it. Adding knowledge gives us the information of what is right and helps us to learn it.

Remember, the reason for gaining knowledge is twofold: 1) to grow as a Christian, and 2) to be able to teach others. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (2 Timothy 4:2) We cannot reprove wrong, exhort or lift up others with right, and use the correct doctrine of God's word if we don't have proper knowledge!

Temperance

Temperance is "self-control." This is where we take the knowledge of what we have learned from God's word and we let that knowledge take control of our lives. Instead of just acting or reacting how we might have done in the past, we let the word of God and the example of Jesus dictate our actions.

We need to believe it is possible not to sin! Since we are human, we may accept the idea that we are sinners but incorrectly allow that to excuse future sins or be lazy about avoiding sin. This is a defeatist attitude and we get the idea that we will fail before we even get started! Jesus was human and had the same freewill to sin as we do. Yet, He showed it was possible not to sin, just as it was possible to sin. Every chance to sin is also a chance NOT to sin! "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13) With every temptation there is a way of escape. We just have to choose to take it.

We need to have a predetermined commitment that whatever is right is what we will choose. In other words, we need to take the choice out of the choice! When faced with temptation to sin, we need to react as if the decision has already been made, and that decision is to let God choose! If we let God choose our actions and let His word dictate our actions, then we will do what is right.

Patience

Patience may be defined as the practice of temperance consistently over time. In other words, someone who exercises self-control over and over again may be called a "patient" person.

Patience is one of those things that doesn't come just by knowledge and understanding. It takes trials and tribulations. It takes chances for us to need to exercise self-control. And times when we need to exercise self-control may be some of the harder times. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;" (Romans 5:3) "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

(<u>James 1:3</u>) But, if we can consistently exercise self-control over time, then we will be adding patience to our lives.

The parable of the sower talks about the seed that had no root and only endured for a time. "And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended." (Mark 4:16-17) When troubled times came, these people were not rooted and so they did not endure. When adversity comes, we must be patient and endure. What can we do to make sure we are rooted and that we patiently endure?

We can be patient and rooted because we understand that this life is temporary and anything we have is not really ours. When Job lost his possessions and children he reacted with a patient attitude. "And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21) Hardships and perseverance are temporary, but life in Heaven with God is eternal. When you lose something in this life you lost something you never had to begin with and would never be able to take with you.

We can be patient and rooted because we understand that life has good and bad in it. That's just the way it is in this sin-cursed world! "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:45) Everyone on this Earth gets both good and bad.

We can be patient and rooted because we know in whose hand we live. Remember, that God has not forgotten His faithful children. "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30)

We can also be patient and rooted because we **must** be patient in order to obtain salvation. "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." (Matthew 10:22)

Godliness

If we add a "k" to the word "godliness," we get "god-likeness." But, what is it about God that we are to be like in order to be "godly"?

The definitions for the word translated "godliness" can mean "reverent" and "pious." The word "pious" can mean "fidelity" and dutifulness." If we try to put these things together we might say that "godliness" is living like God by being reverent, faithful, and dutiful to the Father.

Jesus fits the definition and is our example of godliness. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (1 Timothy 3:16) Living a godly life is being like God by reverently and dutifully obeying God, like Jesus did.

Think about when Jesus was about to go to the cross and die as the perfect sacrifice to pay the penalty for man's sins. He did not want to go through the agony of the cross. No one would! He even prayed to God about avoiding it. "And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matthew 26:39) Nevertheless, even though Jesus did not want to go through the death on the cross, He reverently, faithfully, and dutifully submitted to the will of the Father. This is our example of godliness.

As we go through life there may be times when we know what is right but don't want to do it. We may face tribulations and want to give up. That's when we need to add godliness to the temperance and the patience we have. We need to exercise self-control, let the word take control and reverently, faithfully, and dutifully do what is right. Remember the attitude of Jesus in prayer before going to the cross to remember what godliness is.

Brotherly Kindness

The word translated "brotherly kindness" is the Greek word "philadelphia." We know this as a city in the United States, sometimes called "the city of brotherly love." We are referring to

the love that Christians have for each other.

Once we become Christians we are adopted into the family of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." (1 John 3:1) Just like a physical family has love for each other, our spiritual family should share in brotherly love.

We are to show our fellow Christians the love of God. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." (1 John 4:9-11) The love of Jesus put others above Himself. We need to show that love to our brothers and sisters in Christ. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." (Philippians 2:3-4)

The love we have for each other needs to be "unfeigned," or without pretending. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:" (1 Peter 1:22) Don't just pretend to love each other, really love each other!

The love we have for each other needs to be equal. "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Corinthians 12:25-27)

The love we have for each other needs to be continuous. "*Let brotherly love continue*." (<u>Hebrews 13:1</u>)

How can we practice brotherly kindness?

- See each member of the body as equal and loved by God.
- Do good to each other when you have an opportunity.

- "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10)
- Comfort and build each other up. "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." (1 Thessalonians 5:11) If we are busy building each other up we won't have time to tear each other down with gossip and backbiting and complaining.
- Provoke, or urge each other, to love each other and do good deeds. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:" (Hebrews 10:24)
- Forbear, or simply put up with, each other. Just because we are all Christians in the body doesn't mean that our personalities automatically get along with each other. Patience and forbearance is needed. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;" (Ephesians 4:1-2)
- Be merciful and forgiving. Just because we are Christians doesn't mean we are perfect. Just as God was merciful and forgiving to us, we need to be merciful and ready to forgive our fellow Christians. "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (Colossians 3:13) "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32) "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16)

Charity, or Love

The type of love we are talking about here is what is called "agape" love. "Agape love" is the love you have when you put others first, even if it means you don't get what you want.

Remember, we saw this love with Jesus when praying before going

to the cross. He put the needs of mankind's salvation first, even if it meant He did not get what He wanted, which was avoiding the cruel death of the cross.

There are two great loves we can see in the Bible. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matthew 22:37-39) There is a love for God and a love for our fellow man.

How can we show the love of God and the love for our fellow man? We can do it both physically and spiritually.

Physically, we can treat others as we would like to be treated. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

Spiritually, we can put the eternal salvation of the other person above other things. Could we say the best thing that could happen to someone would be that they go to Heaven when they die? If so, then agape love would be wanting what is best for the other person, even if you don't get what you want. Therefore, if I am to show agape love to others spiritually, I will want them to learn about the steps to salvation and living faithfully, even if it means I don't get what I want. Any embarrassment, my comfort level, money I can afford to give, or even public ridicule should not stand in the way of loving the souls of other people. Church leaders should not put attendance numbers or contribution amounts in front of telling others they need to stop sinning or lose their souls. To love someone spiritually is to tell them what they need to hear in order to go to Heaven. That is putting others first, even if you don't get what you want, just like Jesus did.

Jesus showed agape love by dying for us on the cross, even though He didn't want to suffer.



TFTW-BCC-10-Review Questions

(Select the letter of the correct answer)

1. Once we start following Christ, it is possible to forsake Him because:

- **a.** we still have freewill
- **b.** God determines if we will be faithful and saved or not

2. Since God gave us abilities and time, He expects us:

- a. to enjoy ourselves as much as possible
- **b.** to bear fruit for Him
- **c.** to put living as a Christian in one part of our lives

3. Much of the New Testament deals with:

- **a.** how to live the Christian life
- **b.** interesting, but trivial, facts about God
- **c.** suggestions on how to enjoy the pleasures of the world

4. "Virtue" is described as:

- **a.** the good qualities you are born with
- **b.** moral excellence

5. "Temperance" is defined as:

- a. drinking a lot
- **b.** giving in to temptation
- c. self-control

6. "Patience" might be defined as:

- a. practicing self-control over time
- **b.** not putting up with the misbehavior of others
- c. seeking out persecution

7. Being reverent, faithful, and dutiful to God is being:

- a. patient
- **b.** godly
- c. virtuous

8.	We can practice brotherly kindness by:
a.	provoking each other to good works
b.	being merciful and forgiving to each other
c.	doing good things for each other

all of the above d.

- What is "agape love"? 9.
 - Putting yourself first a.
 - Putting others first, even if you don't get what you want b.
- Jesus showed us agape love when He: 10.
 - walked on water, even though He didn't want to a.
 - met children, even though He didn't want to b.
 - raised Lazarus, even though He didn't want to c.
 - suffered on the cross for us, even though He didn't want d. to suffer

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