

Bible Study - God's Character

Week 6 - Faithful

Recap

- ❖ Loyal love, or *khesed*, is an action
 - God shows loyal love to us
 - We can show loyal love to others
 - We can also show loyal love to God
- ❖ God's loyal love is embodied in Jesus who came to receive and show God's loyal love and to restore the partnership between God and humanity



Opening Question:

What is another
word for faithful?

Objectives for today's Bible Study

- ❖ Define faithfulness
- ❖ Observe variations of faithfulness in the Bible
- ❖ Summarize God's faithfulness



Understanding Faithfulness

- ❖ In Exodus 34:6-7, the word faithfulness is translated to the Hebrew word *emet*
- ❖ *Emet* means truth, and is a verb
- ❖ It can also mean “trust”, “trustworthiness” and “faith”, hence the translation in Exodus 34
- ❖ It can also be translated to “Amen”, which is a Hebrew expression meaning “That’s truth”

Emet as Truth

- ❖ *Emet* can mean both truth and trustworthiness/faithfulness
- ❖ Modern definitions of truth tend to orient toward facts, principles or concepts
- ❖ *Emet* can function to mean the modern sense of truth, even though that's not its primary focus
- ❖ When *emet* is used in the “modern” sense, it is more so to mean a “true statement”, meaning that the statement is dependable. → Genesis 42:16, 1 Kings 10:6

Emet as Truth

- ❖ This is the case in Exodus 34:6, where faithfulness can also be stated as “God is full of truth”
- ❖ “God is full of truth” conveys that God does not lie, that God stands up for truth, or that God will always judge rightly.
- ❖ While all of these statements are correct, they do not get to the relational aspect of the word *emet*

Emet as a Personal Quality: Trustworthiness

- ❖ When *emet* and its related words are used to describe a person, they are typically translated as “trustworthy”, “faithful”, “reliable”, or “truthful”.
- ❖ People can possess these qualities. At a basic level, trustworthiness involves honesty or truth-telling.
 - Proverbs 12:19
 - 2 Kings 12:15

Emet as a Personal Quality: Trustworthiness

- ❖ *Emet* involves more than just honesty - it involves reliability, faithfulness, and being someone that others can trust.
 - In Exodus 18:21, when Moses appoints leaders in Israel, we are told they are to be “people of truth”. In other words, people who won’t take bribes or distort justice
 - In Joshua 2:14, when the spies enter the land and encounter Rahab, they make a promise to her and then declare to keep that promise
 - In 2 Kings 20:3, Hezekiah prays to God to remember how he walked faithfully

Emet as a Personal Quality: Trustworthiness

- ❖ To say that God is full of *emet* means that God is faithful and worthy of being trusted → Genesis 24:27, Psalm 31:5, Psalm 69:13
- ❖ The word *emet* can carry the connotation of reliability and stability (Exodus 17:11-12), and also of constancy and security (Isaiah 39:8)
- ❖ God's character is also described in terms of stability and constancy. He is steady, reliable, and dependable, hence why God is often described as *The Rock* (not to be confused with Dwayne) → Deuteronomy 32:4

Emet as a Verb: Trust and Believe

- ❖ *Emet* also appears as the related verbs *he'emin* and *ne'eman*, which are usually translated as “to believe” or “to have faith.”
- ❖ The first time we come across these words in the Bible is in the story of Abraham. In the face of his limitations to having children, Abraham (eventually) *he'emin's* → he considers God trustworthy to open a way forward no matter the obstacle
 - Romans 4:16-25

Emet as a Covenantal Word

- ❖ *Emet* and its related words appear most often in covenantal contexts. These words-trust, faithfulness, stability-describe the quality of the covenantal relationship between God and people. God is faithful to His people, and He wants that faithfulness to be reciprocated.
- ❖ For example, when God makes His covenant with David after the rise and fall of Saul, He promises to remain faithful to David's line (2 Samuel 7:15-16) and David responds by promising to be faithful to God and (for the most part) being faithful to God (1 Chronicles 17:23-24)

Failed *Emet* and Israel's Exile

- ❖ God calls the kings that follow David to walk in faithfulness just like David did, yet none of them trusted God the way that David did, and most of them didn't even try.
- ❖ This would eventually lead to injustice, violent ruin, and eventual exile from the Promised Land.
 - Nehemiah 9:33-35
- ❖ The Israelites who survived the siege felt that God had abandoned them and the covenant He made with David, due to the destruction and desolation of Israel
 - Who failed who?

Words for Trust/Faith in the NT

- ❖ In the NT, the primary words used to translate or express ideas of trust/faith and trustworthiness/faithfulness are *aletheia* and *pistis*
- ❖ Aletheia - truthfulness, dependability, uprightness, truth, reality
 - Truth as a quality: truthfulness, dependability
 - Truth as a statement: truth and reality
 - Truth as a synonym for the good news about Jesus
 - Truth in the Gospel of Jesus

Words for Trust/Faith in the NT

- ❖ In the NT, the primary words used to translate or express ideas of trust/faith and trustworthiness/faithfulness are *aletheia* and *pistis*
- ❖ Pistis - faith, faithfulness, reliability, fidelity, commitment, assurance, proof, trust, belief, endurance
 - Often translated as faith
 - Faith as trust
 - Faith as trust in the good news about Jesus
 - Faith as a synonym for the good news about Jesus

God is *Emet* in Jesus

- ❖ Matthew 1 opens with “This is the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham”. The author of Matthew is claiming that Jesus is the promised king to come. In other words, God is faithful through Jesus.
- ❖ Jesus came to embody God’s faithfulness, or *aletheia*. Paul states that Jesus came on behalf of God’s *aletheia* to confirm the promise made to Abraham and Israel
 - Romans 15:8-9

God is *Emet* in Jesus

- ❖ Unlike David's descendants, Jesus fulfills the Davidic role and is the one who will sit on David's throne forever (Hebrews 3:5-6)
- ❖ God promised David (in 2 Samuel 7:15-16) that when the king is faithful to God who is ultimately faithful, his kingdom will faithfully endure. And since Jesus is the embodiment of God's faithfulness, His kingdom will faithfully endure (Hebrews 1:8-9)

Invitation to Covenant Trust

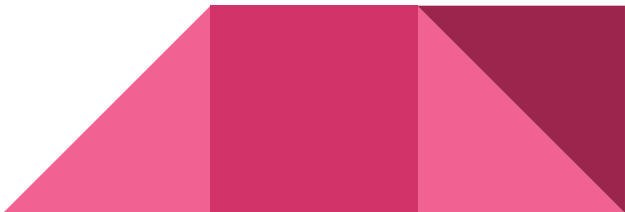
- ❖ God shows Himself trustworthy through Jesus, the faithful One. Humanity is then called to place their trust in Jesus, and through that trust, they can enter into covenant partnership with God
- ❖ It is not our worth - whether defined by status, gender, ethnicity, morality, voting habits, or even obedience - but our trust in Jesus that makes us Abraham's offspring
- ❖ Jesus calls people to respond with trust and belief, and promises that they too will endure
 - John 3:16, John 6:28-29,35, John 11:25-26

Trust as Embodied, Whole-Person Allegiance

- ❖ Trust in God is not blind trust - it is based on God's trustworthiness.
- ❖ Trust/faith cannot be cognitive or passive. If the good news is that Jesus is king, then faith in the Gospel is an allegiance to that King.
- ❖ Swearing allegiance involves the whole person - cognition, trust, and embodied loyalty.

Trust Despite Obstacles

- ❖ In the Bible, trust is often portrayed as something people do or are called to do
- ❖ The people of God were waiting for a king to come, but they didn't recognize Jesus as any king they were familiar with (Isaiah 53:1) So to trust Him required a transformed imagination.
- ❖ Yet, the Gospels are full of people who placed their trust in Jesus despite great odds.




Trust Despite Obstacles

- ❖ The Roman centurion who appealed to Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant (Matthew 8:5-10), a Jewish synagogue leader who implored Jesus to heal, and then to resurrect his daughter (Mark 5:35-36, 41-42), the woman with the issue of blood who would have been deemed unclean by society (Matthew 9:20-22), and two blind men who recognize that Jesus is the Davidic king (Matthew 9:27-31) are just a few examples of the many times people trusted Jesus in the midst of challenging situations.

Trust Despite Obstacles

- ❖ Trust in Jesus is an action you choose. It is both cognitive and relational.
- ❖ And it is not perfect, like in Mark 9 when a father asks Jesus to help his unbelief that his son will be healed from a demon
- ❖ In summary, like the many followers of Jesus who've come before, we can trust God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We can trust God to provide a way forward. This doesn't mean we're in perfect allegiance all the time, but we are unified with the Faithful One and empowered by the Holy Spirit to follow in His way.



This Week's Action Item:
Consider all of God's
characteristics that you've
learned about over these past
weeks. How has this
changed/enhanced your
understanding of the Character
of God?



AND THAT'S ALL, Y'ALL

Join us next week for a new
Bible Study series