

VIRTUES OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER – THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING FAITHFUL

“The Lord preserves the faithful” [Psalm 31:23]. With regards stewardship, we are told to, **“Be faithful in all things”** [1 Timothy 3:11].

“Faithful”, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is (1) *showing complete trust*, (2) *being loyal*, (3) *being constant or accurate*.

Joseph, the Lord’s earthly father, is an unsung hero. His faithfulness was astounding! Engagement among the Jews was as binding as marriage. When Joseph discovered Mary’s condition, he naturally assumed she had been unfaithful to him. Note his reaction, **“While he thought about these things”** [Matthew 1:20]. How important it is to be slow to get angry and consider matters thoughtfully! [Proverbs 21-5]

According to the law, Mary could have been stoned. However, it was more common that the Jews would rather allow the innocent party to quietly divorce the unfaithful mate. It must have taken great faith for Joseph to believe God’s message in the dream. But his love for God and Mary made him willing to ‘bear reproach’ for Christ’s sake. Can you imagine how the neighbours must have talked? In **John 8:41**, there is a suggestion that the Jews slandered Christ’s birth, intimating that He was born of fornication. Satan has always attacked the truth of the virgin birth, for when he does, he denies the Person and ministry of Jesus Christ and the truth of God’s infallible word.

We must admire Joseph’s faithfulness to Mary and his obedience to God. His great character is evidenced by his unwillingness to expose his betrothed wife by repudiating her before witnesses. He was careful to do what was right and thereafter keep his relationship with his wife pure.

Joseph was truly faithful under pressure! What we mustn’t forget is that Joseph’s dilemma preceded his dream; and this was the exact opposite of what happened to Mary. The big question today is this; **“Are you prepared to remain faithful, even when you don’t understand your circumstances?”**

Will you remain faithful when you don’t understand other people’s circumstances? Will you be gracious to those around you who are struggling with issues you can’t get a handle on? Can you forgive those who have hurt you or been rude to you? Are you being constant, accurate and loyal in your workplace? Do you show complete trust with regards your loved ones?

In the Bible, “faithfulness” is used in relation to God far more than man. **Proverbs 20:6**, **“But who can find a faithful man?”** Therefore, faithfulness must be quite a rare commodity! But what exactly is it? Faithfulness is trust *dependability*, *loyalty* and *stability*. It especially describes God in His relationship with believers. Great is God’s faithfulness [Lamentations 3:23]. It’s not surprising that this aspect of the Father’s nature should be in Jesus - **“who is clothed in faithfulness”** [Isaiah 11:5]! And who is described as **“the faithful One”** [Revelation 19:11].

God’s faithfulness is the source of your deliverance from temptation [1 Corinthians 10:13]. And also, the forgiveness of your ongoing sins [1 John 1:9]. God is faithful to His children because He is first of all *faithful to Himself* - who He is [2 Timothy 2:13]. God’s faithfulness should be deeply reflected in your life too [Galatians 5:22], so that you can simply be called **“the faithful”** [Psalm 31:23]. You are expected to exercise faithfulness, first toward God and then toward each other. Faithful people are stable people and stable people are dependable at all times. Stable in the home, in church and in the workplace!