

Faithfulness | Dan Greene

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[0:00] Spiritual thing you can think of because your responsibility there is to work faithfully. Fired of stewards that they be found what?

Faithful. God has entrusted you with physical blessings. He's entrusted you with spiritual blessings. He's given you at least one spiritual gift.

Are you being faithful with those? I imagine there's some sitting here today that would say, I used to lead a small group. I used to help out with the children.

I used to volunteer with the youth. I used to volunteer here. I used to volunteer there. Well, what happened? So you're still a steward.

And you're still responsible to be faithful. When the master came back in Matthew 25, do you remember what happened to the servant who buried his talent?

[1:29] It was taken away. Which tells me, in God's economy, you either use it or lose it.

And you use it by working faithfully. Let me give you a third checklist on the checklist. And that is your wealth.

In Luke 16, 10, Jesus said, He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much. So Jesus says, If you're going to be faithful with a lot, you have to start by being faithful with a little.

I heard about a little guy who came up to a big guy. This big guy was about 6'8", 300 pounds. He said, If I was as big as you, you know what I'd do?

And the big guy said, What? And the little guy said, If I was as big as you, I'd go out in the woods and I'd find myself the biggest bear I could find and I would wrestle him to the ground. And the big guy looked at the little guy and said, You know, there are a lot of little bears in the woods.

[2:41] When Jesus made this statement, if you go back to Luke 16, you'll find that he made it in the context of talking about money, which makes it rather interesting.

Because I hear a lot of Christians who say, Well, if I had a million dollars, this is what I'd do for the church. And this is what I would do for the kingdom of God.

And the truth is, whatever you're doing with a hundred dollars is what you would do with a million dollars. Because Jesus says, He who's faithful with that little will be faithful with the much.

I came up to my wife recently and I said, Honey, be honest. You won't hurt my feelings. Did you marry me for my looks?

And she said, No. And I said, Well, why did you marry me? And she said, I married you for your brains. It's the little things that count. Again, the Bible tells us we're all stewards.

[4:05] A steward ran the estate of a wealthy landowner. He lived in the house, farmed the land, managed the property, but he didn't own it. So to be a steward, we have to have that same perspective.

We don't own anything. We only manage it for our boss. And who is our boss? It's God. That house you live in is God's.

That car you drive is God's. Those stocks you invest in are God's. That bank account you balance is God's. And the ultimate question is, Are you faithful in managing?

Right after saying, He who is faithful in very little will be faithful in much, Jesus applied it this way. In the very next verse, He says, So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?

Interesting. As Christians, we kind of reverse the order on that. We think, Well, if I'm good as a spiritual manager, God will give me worldly riches.

[5:23] But that's not what the principle is. The principle is, if you're a good manager of God's physical money, He will entrust you with true riches, which is spiritual blessings.

So ultimately, the little is the physical, and the much is the spiritual. So if you're thinking, When I get really spiritually mature, I'll give 10% or 12% or 15%.

You need to reverse that order. The order is, If you give of your material blessings, God will entrust you with more spiritual blessings.

I love this, because I can talk about money and not feel bad at all here. And if you don't believe me, just try it. You may be lukewarm here today, apathetic spiritually.

You start giving, and God's going to do something spiritually in your life. God promises that in Malachi. Malachi 3.10, He said, Bring all the tithes in and see if I will not throw open the windows of heaven and pour out for you so much blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

[6:43] What are those blessings? They're true riches. They're spiritual riches. I used to say, If God gets your heart, He'll get your wallet.

I don't believe that anymore, because it's not biblical. Jesus said, Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

So if you're investing your treasure in material things, that's where your heart's going to go. If you're investing your treasure, your wealth, in heaven, in eternal things, in the kingdom of God, then God's going to bless you spiritually.

So let me ask you, Are you faithful with your wealth? Faithfulness doesn't wait till you have more. It starts with what you've got right now.

Fourth area you're to be faithful in is your worship. Hebrews 10.25 says, We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the habit of some is, but we're to encourage one another.

[7:53] We gather together to worship. We gather together to encourage each other in our faithful walk with the Lord.

We gather together because we're part of each other. We're the body of Christ. We went down to Playa del Carmen, Mexico, a couple years ago, and I was surprised to see they have Walmart, Sam's, Subway, McDonald's.

They have a Starbucks on almost every corner. Fortunately, I mean, we've exported everything, but fortunately, we haven't exported uncommitted Christians to other countries.

the 25 largest churches in the world are not in North America. In fact, in the U.S., if a church has 100 members, it usually has about 50 showing up every Sunday.

In Asia, Africa, Central, and South America, if a church has 100 members, it has 150 people showing up every Sunday.

[9:05] Imagine joining an army where the soldiers slept in and showed up when they wanted to and left when they wanted to, and when things got tough, they bailed out. You wouldn't want to be in a foxhole with somebody like that.

Well, we're in a spiritual battle and too many soldiers are AWOL, absent without love. God calls us to be faithful in worshiping together.

Now, let me ask you what your standard for faithfulness is. If your car starts one out of three times, is that okay? If the internet works every other day, you say, great, that's fine.

If your refrigerator stops working a day or two, now and then, do you say, oh, well, it works most of the time? If you miss a couple loan payments, does the bank say, that's all right, 10 out of 12 ain't bad?

What do you think God's standard for faithfulness is? If you fail to worship God two out of four weeks, you think God considers that faithful?

[10:22] Most of you know that a little over a year ago, right before Father's Day, my son died from a motorcycle accident.

that, I didn't come back to Missouri right away because we were going to delay the funeral plans. And so I was there in Scottsdale and I went to church on Father's Day.

Two reasons. One, I wanted to celebrate the fact that I got to be a father.

father. And secondly, I knew I needed to worship God. Like Job, lost his 10 kids and he said, naked I came into the world, naked I go out.

[11:47] The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Did I feel like worshipping? No.

But when I worshiped, my spirit became healthy and I sensed the presence of God ministering to me. There's a phrase in the New Testament that says, we're to give to God a sacrifice of praise. Now when is praise a sacrifice? When you don't feel like it. Sometimes praise comes easy. Sometimes praise is a sacrifice.

Either way, we're to be faithful in our worship. Let me give you a fifth area you're to be faithful in. Your word Proverbs 12, 22 says, lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal faithfully are His delight.

[13:00] God delights in faithful lips. Faithful speech, faithful words. Do people trust you?

When you say something, do they know that's accurate? When you say something, do they know you're not spinning it? You're not manipulating it?

God requires faithfulness in your words. Ephesians 4, 29 says, let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth. How many? None.

Jesus said in Matthew 12, 36, every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. That's sobering.

I'm going to give an account for every word that comes out of my mouth. Are you faithful in your words? Can people count on you? Someone has said the weakest handshake ought to be better than the strongest ink on a contract.

[14:02] when you give your word, keep it. I mean, think about it. Your word is the only thing that is not worth giving unless you keep it.

Are you faithful in your word? Then let me give you a sixth on your checklist. You're to be faithful in your witness.

Revelation 1, 5, Jesus is called the faithful witness. And He has called us to be faithful witnesses as well.

Paul says in Acts 20, 26, I am innocent of the blood of all men. Now, how did He make that statement? Because He was a faithful witness.

Whenever He got the opportunity He took it. Now, let me ask you, what is it that keeps you most from being a faithful witness? And I think I already know the answer because it's pretty universal.

[15:13] And that is fear. It's the fear of the what if. What if I, what if they don't like me? What if they call me a Jesus freak?

What if they stone me? What if they ask me a question I can't answer? And we have fear of the what ifs. And so we stay silent so often.

Let me just show you a passage in 1 Peter chapter 3. If you want to turn over there, I want you to see this.

1 Peter chapter 3. And look at verse 14. The last part of that verse says, And do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled.

So Peter realizes, hey, the problem you're going to run into in trying to be a faithful witness is fear. So he addresses it up front here. And then he's going to give the antidote to fear.

[16:18] And that starts in verse 15. And notice what he says. But, sanctify, the word sanctify is a fancy word that means set apart.

Set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts. How do you overcome fear? You set apart Christ as Lord in your heart. And when Christ is Lord in your heart, guess what you are?

You're a servant. When Christ is Lord in your heart, guess whose glory you are now concerned about? His glory and not my glory.

I'm not concerned about what people think about me so much. Now I'm thinking about what people think about my Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ.

So to overcome fear, you set apart Christ as Lord in your heart. And then notice the next phrase. He says, being ready to make a defense.

[17:24] One of the things I hear from people all the time is, I don't know what to say when I share the gospel. Well then, prepare. Get ready.

And I bet in this room I could ask some of you what Mason Wynn's batting average is and you know what it is. I used to know all the baseball statistics. I know people that can quote lines out of movies and I'm like, I never even saw the movie.

And you're quoting. Some of you do sales presentations. You've got it nailed. You can give that sales presentation. But when it comes to the gospel, we haven't prepared for that moment when we get that opportunity.

And so here he's saying, prepare ahead of time. Prepare. Get ready for what you're going to say when those opportunities come. And then he says, being ready to make a defense or an answer. Let me underline this as I say it. Evangelism requires a voice. And you're the voice. In Romans 10, Paul says, how are they going to believe if they don't hear and how are they going to hear if nobody proclaims it?

[18:42] St. Francis Assisi is famous for a quote. I'm not even sure he gave this quote, but the quote is, go and preach the gospel and if necessary, use words.

Well, they're necessary. Use words. You can't go out silently sharing the gospel.

That would be like saying, go and feed the poor and if necessary, use food. It's necessary. Okay?

You are the voice. So you need to prepare, be ready for those opportunities, and then speak up when you get those opportunities. That is a faithful witness.

And who do you speak to? To everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.

When somebody asks you, why are you so patient? Why don't you laugh at dirty jokes?

[19:41] Why are you so crazy in love with your wife? Don't say, my mama raised me that way. say, Jesus made that difference in my life.

And then notice at the end of verse 15, he says, yet with gentleness and reverence. And I love that. I have never argued anybody into the kingdom of God. In fact, the Bible says, it's the kindness of God that leads us to repentance.

repentance. And so we don't beat people with the gospel until they repent. We show them the kindness of God by showing them that same kind of kindness and respect when we're sharing the gospel.

And then I want you to notice verse 16 and 17. It says, and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which they are, you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

for it is better if God should will it so that you suffer for doing what is right. You see, the platform for your faithful witness is your faithful lifestyle.

[20:54] You're to have a good conscience. You're to have good behavior. You're to be doing what is right over and over and over again. So you see, your platform for your faithful witness is your faithful walk.

Then let me give you a seventh area. And I had to stretch this one to be a W. It's your well-beloveds. Your well-beloveds.

I can't even say the word. Your family and friends. Okay? Are you a faithful family member?

Husbands, wives, parents, children?

Are you faithfully doing your duty until your duty is done? When families are going smoothly, faithfulness is not as big an issue as when families are going through tough times.

And then an unfaithful family member really causes problems. In fact, Proverbs 25, 19 says, Like a bad tooth or a lame foot is reliance on the unfaithful in times of trouble.

[22:01] In other words, they cause a lot of misery and a lot of agony when you are an unfaithful family member.

And it extends to friends. You can't choose your family, but you can choose your friends. And if you go through this life with some real friends, you're rich.

Proverbs 17, 17 says, A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity. Friend and faithful are like synonyms.

A few years ago, a magazine had a contest asking people to find a friend. A couple of the honorable mention submissions were a friend is someone who multiplies your joys and divides your sorrows.

A friend is someone who understands your silence. But here's the winning entry. A friend is someone who walks in when all the world walks out.

[23:06] Now you're probably thinking, I want a friend like that. Well, if you want a friend like that, you need to be a friend like that. Proverbs 18, 24 says, A friend sticks closer than a brother.

the key characteristic of a friend is faithfulness. It's being there. And then the final, the eighth thing on the checklist is your wedding vows.

And we could spend a whole session on this, but I won't. But if you're married here today, at some point you said, I do till death. and you're, you signed up in a covenant to be faithful.

We got any marines in here? Ex-marines? What?

There is no ex-marine. There you go. Okay. My bad. The motto of the marines is Semper Fidelis. It's Latin.

[24:16] Means always faithful. A marine says, I'm not just faithful when it's convenient. I'm not just faithful when it doesn't cost me anything.

I'm not just faithful when it's popular. I'm not just faithful when I feel like it. A marine says, I am always faithful. Well, God is looking for a few good men.

God is looking for a few good women. God is looking for some marines. God is looking for people who say, when it comes to my walk, my work, my wealth, my worship, my word, my witness, my well-beloved family and friends, my wedding vows, I am always faithful.

God is looking for a few The greatest ability is dependability, and it will be to the faithful servant that Jesus will say, well done.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word today. Thank you for this concept of faithfulness that you exude.

[25:31] And Lord, I pray that you would just challenge us today to examine our lives and to see where we need to commit ourselves to faithfulness to allow your spirit to produce this fruit in every area of our life so that we are reflecting and looking more like Jesus every day.

And we thank you for that in Jesus' name. Amen.