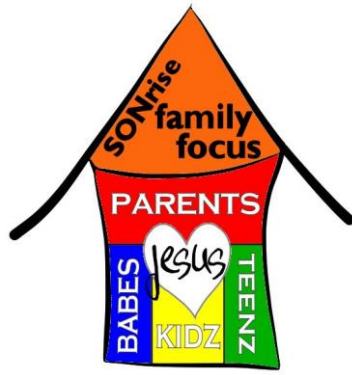


Family Focus

FAITHFULNESS

August ~ 2015



“Faithfulness”

Dear SONrise Church Family,

Are you good at finishing the work you have been given at school or home? Do you keep your word when you make a promise? Are you a loyal, true friend to those around you? If you answered “yes” to all of these things then you would be described as a **faithful** person.

The Holy Spirit wants to produce His fruit in us as Christ-followers to make a difference in this needy world. This month we will be studying **faithfulness**, which is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23). Join with us in studying this important fruit that the Holy Spirit wants to produce in our lives!

Tom and Janet Walker

Welcome to Family Focus. The purpose of Family Focus is to help train and equip parents to teach their children the Word of God. The Bible teaches through Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 78:4 and Proverbs 22:6 that parents are to be the primary spiritual leaders and teachers of their children. Therefore, instead of the "traditional" Sunday School model, we, at SONrise Church, have made the intentional shift in the way we minister to children, by equipping parents to be the primary spiritual leaders of their families. Family Focus is a Bible teaching model that helps families learn spiritual truths together. Our desire at SONrise is to see each family unit spend one hour each week in the Bible together. To help you with this adventure, we have provided materials for you. The materials will be available on the website or you can pick up a new packet each month at SONrise.

When you go through the Family Focus material, you are going to REAP - read, explore, apply and pray.

Read - In this section, you will read a short explanation about the passage of scripture we are reading and read the passage.

Explore - In this section you will be digging into the passage and exploring the meaning of the passage. This section includes questions and ideas for discussion.

Apply - This is where you will find activities to help your kids to make the passage real. Every week there is a different activity, there are games, snacks, movies and art activities.

Pray - It can be hard to take the time to pray as a family, but it is worth it and important to take ample time to pray together and for each other.

Our prayer for you is that as you REAP together you will reap a great harvest in your family.

We love you SONrise Church!

A Faithful Servant

Week 1

Read

After Jesus rose from the dead he stayed with his disciples for 40 days. He reminded them of many things He had been teaching them for the three years He was with them. As he prepared to go back to heaven he gave them a job to do. He said, “go, make disciples of the nations,” Matthew 28:19,20.

Wow, they had a big job to do. Jesus was wanting them to be **faithful** in telling others of their need to trust Him as their Savior, Messiah. They were not only to tell their neighbors and friends but they were to take this message “to the ends of the earth” Acts 1:8.

This month we are studying **faithfulness**. It means to be reliable or to “do what we have been assigned.” It is a quality or “fruit” that the Holy Spirit produces in our lives as we obey Him.

In this week’s lesson we will be looking at a parable. A parable is a story that Jesus told to teach a specific lesson. In this story a wealthy master gives a job to his servants while he goes away on a long journey. Just like Jesus did with his disciples, the master in the story expects his servants to be **faithful** to do what he said. Let’s read the story together in Matthew 25:14-29.

Explore

(suggested answers are in italics)

The Assignment. This story starts by the master making plans to go away. He gives three different servants the assignment to invest the money that he gave them. Answer the following questions together.

1. How much silver did the Master give to the first servant? The second? The third? 25:15.

Five bags, two bags, and one bag.

2. What does it mean that the master was “dividing it in proportion to their abilities?”

Not everyone has the same abilities, but all are responsible to be faithful with what they have. .

3. What did each man do with his money? 25:16-18

The first two invested theirs while the third one buried his.

The Report. The master returned from his long trip. He called each of the three servants in to give an account of how they used his money. Answer the following questions together.

4. How did the first servant do investing the master’s money? The Second? 25:20,22

Both the first and second servant invested the money and doubled the amount to return to the Master.

5. How did the Master respond? 25:21, 23

He praised and rewarded them for their faithfulness and threw a party to celebrate!

5. What did the third servant do with his money? 25:24,25

He buried it..

6. How did the Master respond? 25:26-29

He talked to the servant and took the money from him and it was given to the other servant. He was thrown out .

The Lesson. What do we learn from this story that we can apply to our lives?

It is important to use or invest what God has given us. We too have been given money, abilities, and talents that God wants us to be faithful in what we do with that investment. Jesus wants to celebrate with us over our wise choices.

Apply

Drama Time— This is one of the best ways to remember this story so your children can keep it in their memory to retell it to their own children some day.

As you begin to re-read the story choose a master and three servants to act it out. If you have plenty of cash on hand give five one dollar bills to the first servant, two dollars to the second servant, and one dollar to the third servant. (Of course your children would love for you to continue to illustrate by doubling the cash.) Or you can use something other than money to represent the 5 (& 2, & 1) bags of silver. .

Sometimes we assume masters or people we work for are selfish and just want more, more, more so we make choices out of fear. We must seek to understand our Master and Savior's heart of love for us.

Talk about ways this cash could be invested to make it double. Buying vegetable seeds or plants to produce vegetables to be sold at a farmers market. Or talk about those who buy a laying hen and sell the eggs. What makes good financial investments on farms or ranches may be different for people who live in town.

Talk with your children about discovering the talents or abilities God has given them. Some children like to draw, others sing or play a musical instrument, some like to bake bread or cookies, and others like to learn mechanics or build things. Some children like to play sports and some like to invest their time in watching TV or playing video games. Discuss what investments could bring a good return. Parents need to be careful to encourage children to pray about making wise choices. Be sensitive to how God gifted your children. Take turns talking about each family member and what they do well. Talk about how much time to invest on what abilities. Do you find yourselves evidencing the fruit of the Spirit, **Faithfulness** and enjoying God's blessing on your investment?

(Read these articles in "thrivingfamily.com" magazine: "Life's Skills Checklist" or "Raising Dream Chasers")

Key verse to memorize:

Matthew 25:23 (NLT)

The master said, "Well done, my good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful in handling this small amount,

so now, I will give you many more responsibilities.

Let's celebrate together!"

Pray

Get out your family prayer journal and record the abilities you see in your children. Pray about being found **faithful** in this investment of time. Pray for sensitivity to how God gifted you and your children and being able to encourage one another as you grow and change. Ask God to show you how to celebrate jobs done well as a family.

Paul: God's Faithful Messenger

Week 2

Read

Have you ever known someone in your school or on your team that you didn't like? See if you can name someone that has been hard for you to get along with. Why has it been hard? Do you think that God could change that person, turning them from someone you don't like to someone who would be a great friend? Is God really powerful enough to change people's hearts?

In our story this week we will see how God totally changed a man. The man's heart was changed so dramatically that God even changed his name from Saul to Paul. From the very first time we meet Saul he is a leader, an important man that people respected and listened to. Paul was **faithful**, but for the wrong thing. In fact, his **faithfulness** to what he thought was the truth, led him to arrest Christ-followers and even have them put to death. He thought he was being **faithful** to God, but God wanted to totally change his heart and direction.

Let's look together at some verses from God's Word today that tell Saul's story of how he became Paul the Apostle and how God changed him from someone who hated and hurt Christians to someone who became **God's Faithful Messenger**.

Explore

(suggested answers are in italics)

1. When we first meet Saul, what kind of man was he and what was he doing? Acts 8:1-3, 9:1,2
He was being mean to Christians and wanted to destroy the Church and those who were following Jesus.
2. On one of Saul's trips, to the city of Damascus, to arrest and imprison Christians, something amazing happened. What was it? Acts 9:3-9
Jesus appeared to Saul, spoke to him and caused blindness
3. God was totally changing Saul's heart and purpose, so he sent a messenger to Saul, named Ananias. What was Ananias to tell Saul and what did God do? Acts 9:15-19
"Jesus has chosen you as His messenger." The Holy Spirit came to live in Saul and his eyesight was restored.
4. What was the first thing Saul did after God saved him? Acts 9:20-25
He began preaching that Jesus is the Messiah, Savior!

For the rest of his life Saul, whose name God changed to Paul (Acts 13:9) travelled the world preaching the Gospel of Jesus. He led many people to trust Christ as Savior and started many churches. God used him to speak His message and also to write his message. Listed below are the books of the Bible that Paul wrote. Count them. How many are there?

Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus, Philemon. 13

At the end of his life Paul was in prison for preaching about Jesus. He was ready to die and go to be with Jesus in Heaven. He had lived a life of obedience to Jesus his Savior as a **faithful** messenger. Read II Timothy 4:6-8. Had Paul been faithful? What was he looking forward to?

Yes, he had been faithful to serve Jesus with his life. A crown of righteousness for faithfulness.

Apply

Experiment Time—

Equipment needed: One bottle of Diet Coke and a package of Mentos

How it works: Go outside. Set the bottle on a hard surface and as quickly as you open the bottle pour all the Mentos in and run! The chemical reaction of the two will make the Diet Coke go shooting out of the bottle like a geyser.

This is a good illustration of the transformation spiritually that took place in Paul's life. His life was never the same after He believed Jesus was who He said He was. The Holy spirit transformed him from the inside out. His life affected many others.

Our lives should evidence this same kind of transformation. We need to trust Jesus as our Lord and Savior. As we daily yield to God's Spirit His fruit, like love, joy, peace and **faithfulness** will spill out and affect others. Others can't help but notice when we bubble up from God's presence in our lives. It can become a chain reaction. Our love for Jesus should be explosive, like we can't contain it. We should be sharing Him with everyone we know just like Paul did, and teaching others to share Jesus as well.

Key verse to memorize:

Matthew 25:23 (NLT)

The master said, "Well done, my good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful in handling this small amount,

so now, I will give you many more responsibilities.

Let's celebrate together!"

Pray

Take some time to review your prayer journal. Look back at the names of the people you had added because they need Jesus to transform their lives. Whether they are family, neighbors, friends or enemies. Continue to pray for Jesus to transform lives. The Christians of 34 A.D. would never have believed God could do what He did in transforming the 'Jesus hater' Saul into the **faithful** messenger Paul. Look back in your journal at the things you thought would be impossible for God. Has he answered any of those prayers. Don't give up. "Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!" John 20:27b.

Epaphroditus: A Faithful Co-worker

Week 3

Read

So, what are some of your friends names? Colten, Brock, Justin or Ashley, Brooke or Hailey? Does anyone in your family have a friend named Epaphroditus (pronounced E-paf-row-dye-tus)? Anyone? I didn't think so! Well, his name means "lovely" and he is only mentioned two times in the whole Bible, both in the book of Philippians.

Although you don't have a friend by the name Epaphroditus, you know people just like him. People who are plain, ordinary people. Not superstars or superheroes. Not popular or extra smart or even good looking. Just normal people. But, what makes them special is that they are **faithful**. They do the job that they have with a smile on their face, a song on their lips and a great attitude. They are servants, people who serve others **faithfully**. Take a few minutes as a family and see if you can think of anyone like that from school, church, or your family and friends.

Last week we saw how Paul was a **Faithful Messenger**. God used him to take the gospel to many nations, but he did not do it alone. He had many helpers, co-workers. They were not famous or well-known like Paul, but they were **faithful**. Epaphroditus was one of those men, one of Paul's co-workers. Let's read together what God's Word tells about this **faithful** man in Philippians 2:25-30.

Explore

(suggested answers are in italics)

1. Paul was writing this letter to the church in Philippi from prison. He was there for preaching the Gospel, that Jesus was the Savior of the World. When a person was in prison at this time in history his family and friends had to provide food and other things they needed. So the church at Philippi sent food and supplies to Paul. Who took these things to Paul? 4:18

Epaphroditus did. He traveled from Philippi to Rome, 815 miles to deliver these gifts from the church

2. Paul was very thankful for the generous gifts that Epaphroditus brought, but Paul was sending him back to Philippi. Why? 2:25-28

So he could see his friends in the church and so they could see him and find out from him how Paul was doing.

3. According to 2:26,27 what had happened to Epaphroditus while he was visiting Paul in Rome?

He had gotten very sick and almost died.

4. What did Paul say the people in the church were to do when Epaphroditus got back home to Philippi? Why? 2:29,30

Welcome him and honor him. Because he risked his life for Paul and the Gospel of Jesus.

5. What might have happened to Paul if Epaphroditus had not brought him the food and supplies that he needed in prison?

Paul could have died by starving to death..

6. Was Epaphroditus **faithful**? How do you know from what Paul says?

Yes! Paul told the people that Epaphroditus was a faithful co-worker and a courageous man.

This is all the Bible tells us about this man, but God thought he was such a great example of **faithfulness** that God led Paul to record it in the Word of God, the Bible!

Apply

“Name that Snack” Time-

This is a fun game for all ages. This will take cooperation and trust on every one's part. First, get clean large handkerchiefs or long socks to use as blindfolds. Draw numbers so each family member can take a turn. When it is your turn you proceed to the kitchen to find a snack food. With everyone else blindfolded you proceed to put one small piece of the chosen snack on everyone's tongue. While you count out loud to 10 allowing everyone enough time to taste and think about what they would guess the snack may be. When you get to 10 each person raises their hands and you choose who to call on first for the answer. If they are right they get one point. The next person continues with the same process. Let everyone have at least two turns or until you have a winner. The winner gets to choose the snack for the evening.

As you snack together talk about how you had to cooperate and trust one another. These are often qualities of a person who is known as a **faithful** co-worker. Epaphroditus was known for these qualities. Do you remember what his name means? Perhaps Epaphroditus brought Paul some unique snacks to eat in prison. I wonder what kind of snacks were available back in those Bible times?

Key verse to memorize:

Matthew 25:23 (NLT)

The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful in handling this small amount,

so now, I will give you many more responsibilities.

Let's celebrate together!"

Pray

We began this lesson talking about friends names. Each of you say out loud the name of one of your friends or co-workers. Ask your family if they think that person would consider you a **faithful** friend or co worker? Would you bring them something like food or supplies if their family couldn't? Would you still be their friend if they were in the hospital or even put in prison? What if they got in trouble at school or misunderstood at home. Would you be a **faithful** friend? Would you pray for them? If you prayed and God led you to action, to do something for them, would you obey? Pray for one another and each of your friends. Add their names to your prayer journal.

Nehemiah: A Faithful Leader and Builder

Week 4

Have you ever wondered if God asked you to do something really hard if you would obey Him? God asks some people to leave their families and go to another country to preach the Gospel. God asks others to learn from suffering with cancer or other diseases. Others God asks to do impossible tasks that require great faith.

This week we are going to meet a man who was faithful to do what God asked of him. His name is Nehemiah. He was a Jewish man, living in the foreign country of Persia. Many of God's people, the Jews, had been taken there when the Babylonian army defeated their army and carried them away as slaves. God blessed Nehemiah with a very important job in Babylon. He was the cupbearer to the King. This meant he would very carefully examine and taste all the King's food first to make sure it was safe to eat. The King's life depended on Nehemiah doing his job well.

But then everything changed. God gave Nehemiah a new burden and then a new job, but you will have to discover what that was by reading from the book that is named after this **faithful** man, Nehemiah.

Move on to **EXPLORE** to learn more about Nehemiah and the task he was given by God.

Explore

(suggested answers are in italics)

Nehemiah's Burden

1. Nehemiah never forgot his homeland of Israel. Some men returned from Jerusalem to Persia and he asked them how things were there. What did they tell him? Nehemiah 1:2,3
The people are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down and the gates burned..
2. How did Nehemiah react to this bad news? vs. 4
He sat down and wept, then he mourned and fasted and prayed.

Nehemiah's Prayer to God and Request to the King

3. Nehemiah spent a lot of time talking to God in prayer about this burden, then he asked God for something very specific. What was it? v. 11
Hear my prayer and grant me success by the King being favorable toward me.
4. Next he went to the King and asked something very specific of him. What was it? 2:1-6
Send me to Judah to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah's Faithfulness

5. So, Nehemiah traveled back to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall of the city. He looked at what needed to be done and then gathered the city officials together. What did he challenge them to do and how did they respond? 2:16-18 *Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem! Yes, let's rebuild the wall!*
6. Because of Nehemiah's **faithful** leadership the wall was rebuilt. There had been a lot of problems and people against them, but God used Nehemiah to accomplish it. Read 6:15-16 When was the wall finished and how long did it take? *On October 2nd, in 52 days!*
What did the enemies think? *They were scared and realized the work had been done with God's help.*

Apply

Building Faithfulness a block at a time:

Have your family work together to create a simple obstacle course in your home. Your course might consist of crawling under a table, walking around a chair and jumping over several toys. Let the children determine how simple or elaborate this will be. When the course has been completed, have each family member make a "practice run" through the course. Time each person, children and parents, and record their times. In this game, we're all going to be racing against our own time. Don't worry if you are slower than another family member. As we go through the course again, see if you can match or beat your own time.

This time make it a bit more challenging. Give each person two building blocks. Explain that these must be carried while going through the course. Have everyone go through the course again, making note of each person's time. Then add to the challenge by giving everyone two more blocks. Go through the course again and again, each time adding two more blocks to each person's load. (See if children begin to think of creative ways to carry the blocks, such as tucking them into their pockets.)

Continue with this as long as family members are having fun, or until you run out of blocks! Gather together again for discussion. Look over your time records. Did you feel like giving up? Which runs demonstrated **faithfulness**? Every time you add more things to carry in life you have to decide how to handle those responsibilities.

(This game idea is from the book, "Heritage Builders: Family Night Tool Chest", book 1)

Key verse to memorize:

Matthew 25:23 (NLT)

The master said, "Well done, my good and faithful servant.
You have been faithful in handling this small amount,
so now, I will give you many more responsibilities.
Let's celebrate together!"

Pray

Get out your prayer journal and write down ways you have seen **faithfulness** demonstrated in your family this last week. First spend time in Thanksgiving and Praise to God. Now spend time praying for wisdom in the choices you make this next week. If God asked you to help rebuild a wall like He asked Nehemiah would those around you find you **faithful** to that task? What is God asking your family to do. Are you **faithful** in praying together as a family?