

Lutheran Women in Mission

Fruit of the Spirit-Faithfulness

by Marge Franzen

Opening

Sing "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" (*HS 899* or *The Other Song Book 55*) or "O God, My Faithful God" (*LW 371, TLH 395, LBW 504*).

Fruit Salad

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).



This is one of the most memorized lists in the New Testament. We rattle our way through each item on the list, toss them into a fruit salad, and admire the range of colors contained in the bowl. Today let's focus on one particular fruit and savor its specific flavor. Let's savor the whole aspect of faithfulness.

Fruit Grows on the Vine

- What illustration does Jesus use in **John 15:5** to describe our relationship to Him?
- According to this verse, what is necessary for us to bear fruit?

The branches are nourished by the vine, not by eating the fruit. That could be why Paul calls faithfulness a fruit of the Spirit, not fruit of believers. Rather than trying to understand faithfulness by examining ourselves, let's go to a true, rooted example: God Himself. If we want to know about the faithfulness the Spirit will grow in us, let's look at the faithfulness of God.

Read **Psalm 89:1-19**

The dictionary defines faithful as "trustworthy in the performance of duty, the fulfillment of promises or obligations, constant, loyal."

- How does this compare with the description of God in the Psalm?
- What evidence does the Psalmist cite for God's faithfulness?
- What promises has God given to you?
- How has God proven himself dependable in your life?

Loving the Unfaithful

God is certainly "worthy of belief and confidence," which is another definition of faithful. The prophet Hosea vividly contrasts God's faithfulness and our unfaithfulness. Hosea lives out a metaphor of our relationship with God as he marries and appears to deeply love a woman who is completely unfaithful. Hosea "preaches" the anguish of his life to Israel and says "Hear the word of the Lord"

Read **Hosea 4:1-3**

- List things that Hosea cites as evidence of the people's unfaithfulness.
- Where have you run into the list of verse 2 before? (See **Exodus 20:1-17**)
- Which parts of this list have you experienced first hand as someone's unfaithfulness toward you?
- Which parts of this list do you recognize as descriptions of your own unfaithfulness?
- Discuss **Hosea 4:3** in light of Jesus' vine/branch/fruit image. How damaging can unfaithfulness be to life?

When we're living in a drought created by unfaithfulness, the Good News is that God is the one who is faithful. Hosea tracks down his wandering wife. He even pays to get her out of the slavery she's gotten herself into.

Read God's promise to Israel in **Hosea 14:3-4**.

God loves us freely! This unfailing love is the core of God's faithfulness.

What relationship is drawn between God's faithfulness and our fruitfulness?

Now add **John 15:8** to your consideration of the question.

Stop right here and pray a few words of thanksgiving for God's unfailing love!

Faithfully Fruitful

Now let's get back to that faithfulness fruit the Spirit causes to hang from our branches. Our faithfulness is a direct result of God's faithfulness. The constancy of our representation of God's grace blooms from the grace He constantly gives us. There will be a resemblance!

What situation in your life is in need of a bushel of this fruit? Consider:

- promises you've made
- duties you hold
- those who need your loyalty

Apply these considerations to all the layers of your life:

- your family
- your friends
- your workplace
- your church

Make a list of specific actions you can take to demonstrate faithfulness. Start this exercise together and then continue it later with private reflection. Let the Holy Spirit move you to work out the details. Attachment to the vine is what makes the fruit grow, so take your list to our Lord in prayer and invite others to pray with you.

As you nurture your attachment to the vine through regular worship and the Lord's Supper, remember that God's faithfulness to us is rooted in His love for us. Pray that the Holy Spirit would grow such love in your heart where faithfulness is needed.

Closing

Sing "Love Divine, All Love Excelling" (*LW* 286, *TLH* 351, *LBW* 315).

Marge Franzen gets excited about leading people through God's Word and writing devotional material. She and her husband Dennis praise God for blessings and service at Trinity Lutheran Church, Lisle, Illinois.

[Home](#) || [News](#) || [Quarterly](#) || [Bible Study](#) || [Mission](#) || [Outreach](#) || [Catalog](#) || [Contact the LWML](#) || Updated 08/30/04
[BJS](#)