

Prayer Ask God to bless the group's reading of His word, and that He will open the heart of every group member to receive spiritual insight that will change their lives. Pray that our lives will become living examples of the God of kept promises.

II. Read 2 Timothy 2:11-13 Spend time in quiet reflection on this passage. Select three readers to read the text out loud slowly, with a minute or two of silence between each reading. It would be best if the readers used different translations, but this isn't necessary. This is a great way to invite your group to "live in the text."

After the third reading, use the following questions as a guide for discussion.

1. What does this text say about the character of God?

If our faithfulness caused us to die with Christ, then what does it look like for us to faithfully live with Him as well?

2. Many scholars believe this text was an early Christian hymn.

What songs do we sing today in worship that proclaim the same truths about the God that we serve?

Which one of these songs is your favorite? Why?

3. Read Hosea Chapter 1.

Why do you think God had Hosea marry the prostitute Gomer?

What does this story say about the faithfulness of God?

III. Special topic: Faithfulness and Marriage

The people of God are faithful like God when they make promises and keep those promises because we worship the God of kept promises. Kenneson provides a compelling example with the vows of marriage. He writes, "For too long my unfaithfulness remained cloaked by our culture's tendency to equate 'being unfaithful' with 'having an affair.'...But for Christians who have been called to embody in their own relationships a reflection of God's other-

directedness, faithfulness and unfaithfulness cannot be reduced to matters of sexuality. When I stood before God and the church and made my vows, I promised to do a great deal more than not sleep around. For starters, I pledged to love and cherish her."

4. Describe the differences between the world's definition of unfaithfulness and our definition of unfaithfulness.

According to Kenneson's definition, what are ways that we are unfaithful to our spouses?

How do we grow when we choose to remain with and love our spouse, even when he or she fails to love us perfectly?

What are behaviors that we can do on a daily basis to faithfully love and cherish our husband or wife?

In what ways does the biblical teaching on faithfulness apply to singles?

IV. Cultivating faithfulness Practical suggestions and reflections to help participants connect the discussion to their daily lives. Challenge each person to try at least one of these each week.

Make a list of all the people to whom you have made promises or commitments in the last few months. Spend a few minutes 5 times this week praying that you will keep those promises you have made.

Make another list of those people whom you believe you could rely to be there for you regardless of the circumstances. Ask yourself if you would be a name on someone else's list.

Devote time to reflecting on your relationships, both past and present, that you believe were and are marked by the willingness to tell each other the truth. Can you think of examples from your own life of the connection between faithfulness and truth-telling?

Many of us have seen the movie *Liar Liar*. Try to spend an entire day where you tell the truth at all times. Spend times charting if it was easier or more difficult than you thought it would be.

Make a list of your 3 closest friends. Come up with two ways for each person that you could be more faithful and selfless in your friendship.

V. Other Resources

The point—God faithfully binds himself to people. Our faithfulness to God is shown in the ways that we faithfully and selflessly honor others. It is impossible to fully love God and not be faithful to the people that He loves.

Prayer

- ✓ Ask God to bless the marriages within your group, and that He will give you the love and courage to selflessly honor and cherish your husband or wife on a daily basis.
- ✓ Pray for all of us to be faithful, just as God is faithful.
- ✓ Pray 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24:
May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Kid-friendly activity

An activity designed to help kids and adults connect the scripture to their lives. Works best when adults participate in the activity with the kids.

- ❖ Bring a seven day calendar that is blank. Buy some stickers to place on every day of the week. Give the children one task that they can do every day of the week. For example, they can say the same prayer every day and then mark it on the calendar. The task can be anything, but marking it on the calendar is a way to teach faithfulness.
- ❖ The old “trust fall” drill might be good. Have the children stand on a table and fall into the arms of the adults.

Life on the vine: Faithfulness

Small group guide based on

Life on the Vine, by Philip Kenneson (IVP, 1999. ISBN 0830822194)

www.saltandlightresources.com

By John Grant, Jon Camp, Trey Finley, and Ben Siburt

Theme: Does our faithfulness to God and to each other demonstrate to the world the faithfulness of the Lord God?

Psalm 100: 5 proclaims, “For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” Philip Kenneson writes in *Life on the Vine*, “Like each of the fruit, the Spirit’s fruit of faithfulness has its roots in the very character of God. When we allow the Spirit to do its work in our lives, we do not simply become more human; we also become more like God, in whose image we were created. That image is slowly but most assuredly being restored by the work of Christ through his Spirit.”

This discussion guide will invite participants to consider how the fruit of faithfulness functions in their lives.

Leadership tip: There are three segments of your group meeting when you need to have your “shepherd’s hat” on. First, there is the gathering, which begins the minute the first person arrives. Be sure to greet each person warmly and check how they are doing. Next is the main meeting, where you are facilitating a discussion. Finally, the “meeting-after-the-meeting” may be the most important because people are available to chat. Snacks make the third segment much better. All three parts are important opportunities for you to encourage spiritual growth.

I. Relate *Use a few of these to introduce the theme and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage individuals through these questions.*

- ❖ Describe the most trustworthy person you have known in your life. Give the best example that illustrates their trustworthiness.
- ❖ Describe how you feel when someone breaks your trust.
- ❖ What is your definition of faithfulness? How do you think the world around us defines faithfulness?