

FAITHFULNESS – THE KOKO FACTOR

INTRODUCTION

Tell a story – 15-year old, exams, joined first YWAM team in England
2 years later, aged 17 – SOE here! [pic]

Another story – 20 years ago there was a bed on this spot, couple spent the first few days of their honeymoon here [pic]

28 years involvement with YWAM – learned lots, much has changed, much the same

- YWAM still involved in world mission, seeking to be culturally relevant [cartoon]
- YWAMmers still taking gospel to far-flung places [cartoon]
- Still trying to make gospel interesting and relevant [cartoon]

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED IN 28 YEARS?

Are you impressed? God is not impressed by long years of service. He asks where am I today, am I still remaining true to him and to the vision he has given me. Manna must be collected fresh each day, man lives by every word that constantly pours out of God's mouth.

Luke 18:1-8 God is looking for **faithfulness** – will he find it?

Matthew 10:22/24:13 He who **endures to the end** will be saved
hupomeno = remain secure under pressure

Habakkuk 2:4 The righteous shall live by his **faithfulness**
emunah = stability due to firm foundations & supports

Hebrews 10:35-39 we need **endurance**, not to **shrink back**
hupostello = hide under

WHAT IS FAITHFULNESS?

Dictionary definitions : 1. Consistently reliable
2. Remaining true, constant or loyal

3 reasons why people remain faithful (to friends, in marriage, to God) :

1. Human nature – some people find it easy to be loyal, in their character.
Belbin character types : completer-finisher
2. It's sometimes the easy option – change is costly & difficult, often easier to carry on. Can lead to religion, tradition, duty ...
3. Best reason – in response to God's own faithfulness – we stay faithful to him because he has won our love, loyalty, commitment.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Deut 7:9 “Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations ...”

Faithfulness is in his nature – he is unchanging

How does this affect us?

The NT mentions several areas where he is faithful towards us, where we need his constant unchanging nature every day :

- I Cor 1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- I Cor 10:13 God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (hupophero = carry from underneath).
- I Thess 5:23-24 May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful and he will do it.
- II Thess 3:3 But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.
- I John 1:9 If we confess our sins he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

These are all things that we need him to keep on doing!
If he stopped, we would be in trouble!

One other important result of God's faithfulness – see Lamentations 3:1-24

Read parts of it – this person had problems! Read v 16-18.

Verse 21 – BUT this I call to mind and therefore I have hope ...

WHAT ??

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning, great is thy faithfulness.

We can have hope for the future, regardless of the present, because God is faithful.

He will never let us down!

WHY IS GOD FAITHFUL?

Because he loves us.

See Hosea 11:1-4 God as a parent

Taught to walk – carried and healed when fell

Led with walking-reins of compassion & love

Undid the chin-strap, bent down and fed

See also Psalm 103:13 “As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him” – Hebrew raham = cuddles!

How does he love us?

See Hosea 11:8

Can't give us up – will never forsake or destroy

The thought of losing us makes his heart turn over = feelings in a turmoil
constricts his breathing (“my compassion grows warm”) = deeply affected

See also Jeremiah 31:20 “my heart yearns for him” = literally “my bowels are troubled”! = emotionally moved

God loves us with heart-stopping, breath-taking, stomach-churning passion!!!

He is faithful because he loves us passionately!

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

The only response to a God like this is to return his love, to respond with our own love, passion, commitment and faithfulness.

Habakkuk 2:4 “The righteous shall live by his faithfulness” should be translated “The right way to live is to be consistently reliable, remaining constantly true & loyal”

But how??

Our family motto = KOKO = Keep On Keeping On.

In Philippians 3:12-16 Paul uses the picture of a race :

Forget the past, strain towards the finishing line

Katy's sports day ...

No-one wanted to run the 1500m!

Katy offered, knowing she would be last, in order to win a point for her team.

As a result of her point, her team won the trophy!

3 secrets for Katy's success :

1. Focus on the goal – it will be over eventually! Remember the point – for the prize.
2. Take it one step at a time. Set small achievable goals – the next bend, the next tree
3. Take a friend!

These apply to us too

We need “bi-focal vision”

– long-distance to see the goal, and short-focus to see the next step

We need to work together, supporting & encouraging one another on the way

CONCLUSION

Did you know that God feels passionate about you?

How will you respond ?

Be prepared for the long race – determine to remain faithful to him, no matter what life brings. He will be faithful to you – when Jesus returns, will he find faithfulness in you and me??