

## Victory of the Lamb – June 30, 2019 – Fueled Series – Fraction or Faithful

### Lamentations 3:22,23 – Pastor Bill Limmer

Truett Cathy, the founder of Chick Fil A restaurants, maybe you have heard of those before ☺, believed that one of the keys to success was **focusing on what never changes**. As a result, his restaurants have always observed a “Closed on Sundays” rule. While the decision to keep the doors closed on Sundays gives Chick-fil-A team members a welcome day off, the policy is rooted in Truett Cathy’s commitment to honor the Lord’s Day. It was a part of who he was, and he refused to compromise. It stands out doesn’t it. It stands out even more today because today is Sunday and if we you want a Chick Fil A chicken sandwich, salad, or peach shake. It is not happening because they are not open. It stands out today because we live in a culture of convenience over conviction. And because we live in that kind of culture of convenience we often change our minds and that can lead to unfaithfulness: unfaithfulness in marriages, business dealings, friendships. People fail, falter, forget, forsake their commitment on a regular basis.

Today we are continuing our series Fueled as we look at the fruit of the Spirit. Our foundational verses again are, and this would be a good passage for you to learn if you haven’t already, Galatians 5:22,23 **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**, Today we are going to look at faithfulness. How are you doing with faithfulness?

\*Faithfulness is being constant, consistent, full of integrity, holding on to the truth, loyal, never failing.

\*Apart from the Holy Spirit we struggle with faithfulness because of pressure. Can you think of a time you gave into pressure? Maybe it was a time in grade school when one of your friends was being spoken of poorly by the group you were hanging out with but you didn’t say a word. Or maybe it was in high school when you had studied hard for a test but your mind drew a blank on a question and your eyes went from your paper to a classmates paper searching the for the answer. Maybe it was in college and you were carrying around a fake ID so you could go bar hopping with friends. Maybe you needed to do a work project over the weekend but you ended up binging The Office on Netflix for like the fifth time. Or maybe social media or was calling you and so you spent countless and mindless hours scrolling. Maybe it was at work where we stepped on some people who either weren’t going anywhere or who were trying to go where we wanted to go so we could make it up the company ladder. Maybe it was when the tenth car passed you that you thought it was ok to go faster than the faster than the speed limit you were already driving. Or Satan lied to you that the strip club or a few scenes of pornography weren’t going to hurt you or anyone else.

\*Apart from the Holy Spirit we struggle in faithfulness because we aren’t clear on who we are. Culture, tells us we need to define ourselves. Labels are powerful. What label have you defined yourself with? What labels have been given to you? Some of our labels are that of mom, dad, married, single, retired, runner. But some of the labels that we have given ourselves or that others have given to us trigger feelings of guilt and shame and inadequacy and so become depressed, anxious, despondent. Some people aren’t here today or aren’t watching online today because they feel guilty because of a label. Maybe you are struggling with a label – hold on – good news is coming.

\*Apart from the Holy Spirit we struggle with faithfulness because we try to do it on our own. We don’t lean in on God, his Word and baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and prayer.

\*Apart from the Holy Spirit we struggle with faithfulness because faithfulness is about obedience and not convenience. So we have come up with what I call fractional faithfulness. Understand fractional faithfulness is broken faithfulness, in other words it is unfaithfulness. It often sounds like “I may have done this but at least I didn’t do that.” Fractional faithfulness is so often why people on the outside of Christianity look at us on the inside of Christianity and say we are judgmental. And they are right. God is not looking for fractional faithfulness. Revelation **2:10 Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.** That is pretty tough to hear isn’t it. Even though we haven’t been fully faithful there is still hope. Here is why. . .

**\*In spite of our struggles with faithfulness God is always faithful.** Deuteronomy 7:9 **Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God.** Here are some other ways that God is faithful: God is faithful over all creation. Psalms **36:5 Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.** He is faithful to his word. His word will never fail. Numbers 23:19 **God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?** God is faithful to provide a way out when temptation comes knocking. 1 Corinthians 10:13 **And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.** He is faithful to forgive us even when we missed the way out of temptation, even when we went ahead and sinned, even when we gave in, even when we tried to rely on ourselves instead of him. 1 John 1:8-9 **If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

All of this because he is faithful, keeping his covenant of love. A covenant is another word for contract. Like when you go to take out a loan for a car. The bank says, I will give you this amount of money and you will pay it off monthly. Only God’s covenant isn’t a two-sided covenant. It is one-sided. He says to you and me, I will take care of it all. So this love God sent his Son Jesus who didn’t live a fractionally faithful life. He lived a holy and wholly perfect faithful life in our place. When he went to the cross he didn’t almost die. He died. He didn’t just want to rise from the dead he actually rose from the dead. All of this because God is faithful to his covenant of love. Lamentations 3:22,23 **Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. <sup>23</sup> They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.**

\*In his faithfulness God sends his Holy Spirit. We don’t get the Holy Spirit by striving. We get the Holy Spirit by receiving. God sends the Holy Spirit to us so we can be fueled by the Holy Spirit and be defined by God. Romans 8:15,16 **The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. <sup>[a]</sup> And by him we cry, “Abba, <sup>[b]</sup> Father.” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.** Instead of taking on the labels we give ourselves or the labels that others give. We have the label that God gives us. Ephesians 2:10 tells us we are God’s handiwork, his masterpiece. We are his, he made us and redeemed us. He has eternal plans for us. You know why it is hard, sometimes discouraging to determine who you are because you have been fragmented for so long, trying to be this thing, that thing, and everything but a child of God.

\*In his faithfulness defines our purpose, Matthew 22:37-39 **Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ . . . <sup>39</sup> and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.** He defines our responsibilities, John 8:31 **“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Or 2 Timothy 3:16,17 **All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God <sup>[a]</sup> may be thoroughly equipped****

**for every good work.** He defines our callings.' Matthew 28:19-20 **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.** Love, obey, and make disciples. Those three things everyday.

God is faithful. It is clear God is faithful. Here are reasons why we doubt that. Other people have let us down and we make God to be just like us and others. We try to make god human. And here is another reason: We think that God is supposed to listen to us. And if we don't get what we want we think God isn't paying attention to us instead accepting that God is wiser than we are. We try to make ourselves God. The third reason we struggle with God being faithful is: We think faithfulness means right now. We think that because we can order an ice cold coca cola from Chick Fil A and get in less than a minute that we can pray to God and get what we pray for in less than a minute or he is not faithful. Just because it doesn't happen right away doesn't mean that God is unfaithful. Consider this: It was getting late on Thursday night June 20. The NBA draft was nearing its completion as Jordon Bone's NBA draft party was all but fizzled out. The University of Tennessee guard had anticipated that he would be selected in the draft but with only three picks to go his brother grabbed up a microphone to thank the guests for coming as Jordan sat dejected and disappointed in the background. As the speech went on suddenly Jordan's name appeared on the screen. He had been drafted. 57 out of 60. The party went wild. Now Jordan has a long way to go yet, in fact he will likely be traded this week but that is what he said on Twitter: "God doesn't always come when you want but he ALWAYS comes at the perfect timing!" God is faithful. God is faithful.

**The Holy Spirit leads us to receive Jesus' faithfulness as our own** and then you know what happens: We are no longer under the weight and burden of do this or don't do that. We are fueled by the Spirit. We live with the power of the Holy Spirit. And that looks like a lot of things. Here is some of what that looks like: sharing God with others, taking care of the poor without excuse, walking with the outcast, giving up something so someone can have something better, it looks like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

We get the Holy Spirt not by striving but by receiving. Open your heart and receive the Holy Spirit that God is pouring out on you.