

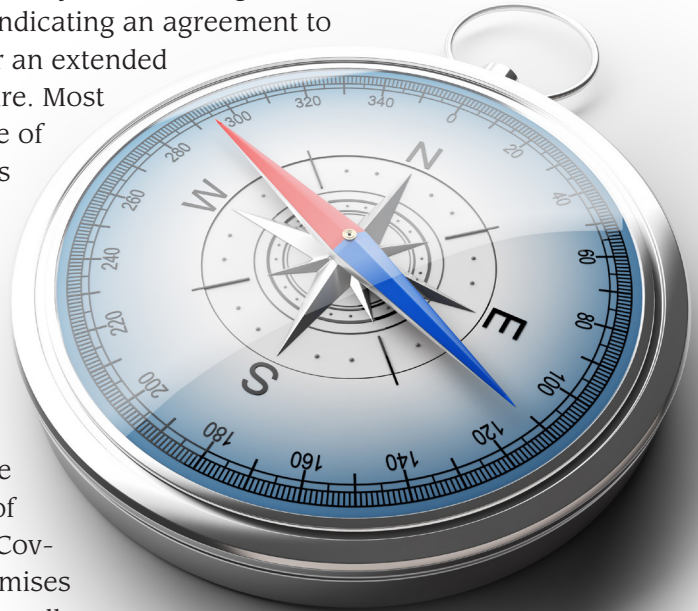
OVERWHELMING

Faithfulness

It is an unimaginable realization to humanity when we consider God's overwhelming faithfulness that He has demonstrated down through the ages. Our importance is of no value compared to His greatness and power as the Almighty Ruler of the universe. It is humbling to know God loves us regardless of who we are and His faithfulness is verified throughout the Word of God.

Several familiar terms found in Scripture illustrate the foundation of God's faithfulness. One of the most prevalent terms found 277 times is *covenant*. Secondly, the term or terms found 109 times in various forms is *faithful*, *faithfully*, and *faithfulness*. Thirdly, the word *promise* is accounted for 53 times. It is amazing how these three terms relate to our personal lives.

The term covenant and promise are very similar in their definitions. Generally, they are used as guarantees or commitments indicating an agreement to be fulfilled after an extended time in the future. Most often, the usage of these two terms are in the marriage ceremony between a husband and wife signifying their promise to one another during the covenant part of the ceremony. Covenants and promises represent an overall



business agreement which can be broken if one party does not see the need to fulfill their part of the responsibility.

These words seem to be associated with knowledge of an agreement rooted in the mind and carried out in action through the heart of fulfillment. For example, a couple enters into marriage through a covenant, a promise, but years later the agreement is broken because of a failure to keep their vows. The word faithfulness is centered in the heart of a couple during their marriage vows or covenant and should be forever established in their mind for a lifetime of fidelity and loyalty. Marriage vows take on an entirely new meaning as the couple faces hardships and setbacks living a life together and maintaining faithfulness under the every day pressures.

God made His promise of faithfulness in His heart with all humanity. God will not break the covenant He made for us. God's faithfulness to a lost and dying world to be saved from sin implies a long-continued devotion of loyalty and steadfast fidelity. God has promised us forever reliability.

Use a dictionary to write the definitions for the words: covenant, promise, and faithfulness.

How do these three words correlate?



Faithfulness Determined

Traveling back to the Old Testament establishes how God fulfilled His faithfulness to the Jewish people. Deuteronomy 7:9 states, "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that

love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.” There are four main covenants in the Old Testament. The first covenant is the one God made with Noah to save him and his family through the flood (Genesis 6:17-18, 9:9-17). The second covenant God made with Abraham to make him the father of a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3, 17:1-10, Genesis 22:17-18). God’s third covenant was with Moses to be faithful to the Children of Israel if they would obey Him (Exodus 19:5). God made a fourth covenant with King David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13 when He established David and his kingdom to be the royal heir to the throne of the nation of Israel.

An important fulfillment of God’s faithfulness to Abraham and the land covenant was evidenced in the formation of the Jews becoming a nation in May 1948 after being dispersed for centuries (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Zechariah 8:7-8).

The existence of God is established through the many prophecies fulfilled from the beginning of the Old Testament through the New Testament and into present times.

List the four main Old Testament Covenants.

Was God faithful in fulfilling these covenants?



Faithfulness Demonstrated

God’s fulfillment of His faithfulness to those who believe in Him can be compared to a roadmap throughout Scripture as a demonstration of His almighty existence and power. We can see how the hand of God directed the lives of those with whom He

made covenants, and we can base our daily walk on the fact that God will direct our lives as we follow Him through the promises He has made to us in His Word.

God's promise of faithfulness to a lost and dying world is seen in the New Testament. He sent His only begotten Son to die on a cruel rugged cross for the sins of mankind (John 3:16). Even though this promise was prophesied in the Old Testament, total fulfillment did not come to fruition until the birth, death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ as told in the New Testament.

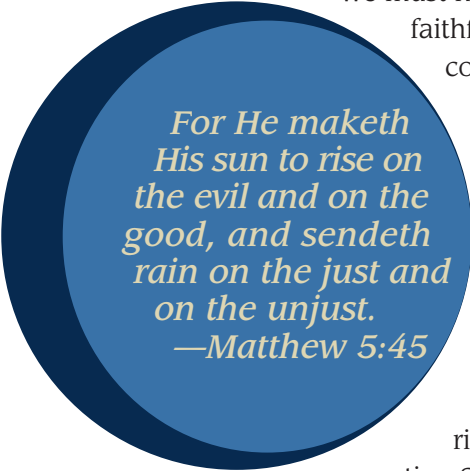
The faithfulness of God to His children is ever unfolding. He forgives our sins and removes our transgressions on a continual basis as we seek Him and His will for our lives. He promises to remove our sins, "As far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12a).

We must not lose sight of God's watchful care of faithfulness over us when trials and tests

come our way. He remains true to us as He continually guides and protects us through this sinful world (Matthew 5:45b). Many believers have suffered greatly and may have questioned where the hand of God was amid an unforeseen tragedy, an untimely sickness, or an unexpected death. Sometimes it is so easy to counsel a brother or sister in Christ who is experiencing deep, long-lasting hardship by quoting Scripture or reminding them of God's

faithfulness from His Word for them particularly.

I know from first-hand experience how truths from Isaiah 41:10 can comfort. A hurting person may not pay attention to our words until they see we are transparent and admit we have been where they are. They may know Scripture, but they may need to know we have hurt, as they are hurting, we have grieved, as they are grieving. The ears, heart, and mind of a person experiencing such pain will be much more attentive when they realize someone else can relate to their hurt. It is not negating their pain; it is just demonstrating the hope for survival through the faithfulness of God's work in our own lives. God wants to use our story to encourage



*For He maketh
His sun to rise on
the evil and on the
good, and sendeth
rain on the just and
on the unjust.
—Matthew 5:45*

hurting individuals. It is called empathy. Empathy is putting their hurt in our heart (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Through Gates of Splendor is a biography written by Elisabeth Elliot detailing the tragic deaths of her husband and four other missionaries killed while attempting to share the gospel with the Auca Indians in Ecuador, South America. Can you imagine what would have happened to this story if she had stayed in her own world of grief and became embittered with those that killed her beloved husband and friends? Instead, she returned to Ecuador and became a missionary to the very tribe responsible for their deaths.

One of her famous quotes based on Isaiah 43:2 is "Suffering is never for nothing." She took her grief and pain and returned to finish the course her husband had started. She knew all too well the promises of God's faithfulness to His children. Elisabeth Elliot did not become a recluse from those she could help through her own personal tragedy. Instead, she stayed true to the call God had placed in their hearts to share the Good News. She shared the promises of God's faithfulness and lived out Isaiah 41:10 and 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 to the Auca Indians. She demonstrated John 3:16.

What part of your story can God use to encourage someone else?

How can you take your experiences and demonstrate John 3:16?

The poem, "Footprints in the Sand" comes to mind during times of sadness, sickness, and sorrow the poem. God never forgets a promise He has made to us, we just lose sight of His footprints. He remains forever faithful.

Footprints in the Sand

One night I dreamed a dream. As I was walking along the beach with my Lord. Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand. One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me. I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that at many times along the path of my life, especially at the very lowest and saddest times, there was only one set of footprints. This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it,

“Lord, you said once I decided to follow you, You’d walk with me all the way, But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints. I don’t understand why, when I needed you the most, You would leave me.”

He whispered, “My precious child, I love you and will never leave you never, ever, during your trials and testings. When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.”

(Author Unknown)

About the Writer: Pam Hackett taught school for almost 30 years. She is coordinator for South Carolina WAC and Beaver Creek District WAC. She serves as missions study chairman in her local group and has been a WNAC board member since 2009. Her husband, Tim, pastors Fairview Free Will Baptist Church.