

## Striving for Greater Faithfulness in 2023

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Throughout the year, we have considered the theme “Striving for Greater Faithfulness.” We have considered lessons that encouraged our commitment to Christ and one another. Do you remember the sermons?

1. The Parable of the Talents
2. Are You a Spectator or Participant?
3. The Faithfulness of God
4. Faithfulness to the Church
5. Faithfulness to the Gospel
6. Committed to Good Works
7. Commitment Boosters
8. After We Believe...
9. Faithful Families

Of course, sermons alone cannot effect change in our lives. We must use what we hear in our lives. If we are going to grow in our faithfulness to Christ, we must take action. Have you taken any action this year? Did you do anything differently this year to increase your involvement with the congregation?

“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test.” (2 Cor. 13:5-6).

### Ordinary Faithfulness

Remember the story of Naaman? He was a commander in the Syrian army. He had leprosy. A young, Israeli servant girl told him to go see Elisha to be healed. Elisha told Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan River and he would be cleansed. Naaman was offended by the instruction. Thankfully, one of Naaman’s servants was able to reason with him. The servant said if Elisha had asked Naaman to do some great thing, he would have done it. Why not do the small thing and be healed?

God has not called on us to do some great thing. He does not demand a grand gesture of loyalty. Instead, He asks for ordinary faithfulness.

**1). Ordinary is extraordinary.** God did something extraordinary for Naaman in an ordinary way. This is consistent with the nature of God. God can accomplish extraordinary feats through ordinary people. Paul wrote, “For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God” (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

**2). Small things matter, too.** We tend to diminish our ability to effect positive change. We do not believe that a small kind deed may cheer another. When Paul described how we are members of the body of Christ, he wrote, “...the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable...” (1 Cor. 12:22).

Sometimes we think we are insignificant. We are not. Each Christian has a gift to contribute to the greater cause of Christ. Everyone has something to offer that is indispensable. There is no substitute for what you have to give. Small things matter, too!

In the Parable of the Talents, we usually focus on the one talent man. He was overcome by faithless, mediocrity. We do not want to be like him. But, what about the other men? Most do not see themselves as the five-talent man. What was wrong with the two-talent man? Nothing. He was ordinary. He was faithful. He was told, “...Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:23).

**3). Persevere in ordinary life.** Striving for greater faithfulness is about persevering in ordinary, daily life. Remember Tabitha? She was a saint beloved by all who knew her. The Bible simply says that she was full of good works and acts of charity (Acts 9:36). She used her gift to serve. When she died, she was greatly missed.

The daily routine of life can be draining. Hardships and setbacks can make us cynical. We must not allow the world to harden our hearts. Paul encouraged, “Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” (Gal. 6:9).

**4). Examples of ordinary faithfulness.** What small, ordinary acts of service can we do to strive for greater faithfulness? Consider the following and see if you can add to the list.

- Challenge yourself to serve
- Bring your kids to church
- Make a new friend
- Give financially
- Show up for someone
- Be hospitable
- Teach a Bible class
- Take a meal to someone

## **Conclusion**

Never underestimate your God-given gift to be useful. Ordinary faithfulness will produce extraordinary results!