



LOVE PEOPLE

FAITHFULNESS

Spiritual Outcome Defined:

Willingly persist in loving people over the long-haul, staying committed to them through both the highs and lows of life.

Spiritual Outcome Described:

Proverbs offers a profound truth in this one simple statement: *As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another* (Proverbs 27:17). Iron on iron is not a pleasant description. The result is good, but the process is hard. When it comes to people, though, all too often, the moment the iron touches the iron, the people involved pull away from each other and the process, leaving the much needed sharpening incomplete.

For this reason and others, Scripture calls us to faithfulness.

Those who authentically follow Christ are not those who spin through one friendship after another, one group after another,

one marriage after another, or one church after another. They know the value and importance of faithfully walking with people through time. This will stretch us, but that's the point, at least one of them.

*"A blessed thing it is for any man or woman to have a friend, one human soul whom we can trust utterly, who knows the best and worst of us, and who loves us in spite of all our faults."
-- Charles Kingsley*

The faithful become more like Christ, because they stay in the process. Those who disengage from the process carry their unrefined wounds and barbs into the next relationship, and it's just a matter of time before they spin through that friendship as well. The importance of faithfulness is seen in all relationships, but a place where it is commonly challenged is with those seeking to make a difference in the lives of others. The idea of making a difference sounds both good and appealing. We all want to make a difference. Once the newness of the adventure wears off, though, we are often left face to face with the very real problems of the people we intended to serve. Like a doctor discovering the challenge of working with sick people, we discover the weight of engaging relationships that are neck-deep with spiritual, emotional, physical, and financial problems. This weight can be enough to cause us to react and pull away. But to do so misses the very opportunity we initially intended to address. *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick,"* Jesus said (Matthew 9:12).

A lack of faithfulness when people's challenges float to the surface will undermine our ability to truly bring health and healing. Those who authentically love people know and embrace the importance of staying engaged and relationally connected—faithful—when the real challenges make themselves known.

Evidence of this Spiritual Outcome in a Person's Life:

- Can name 2 or 3 people with whom they have had conflict but are now stronger friends than prior to the conflict.
- Does not have a pattern of spinning through friendships, jobs, churches, or marriages.
- Has 2 or 3 people with whom they relate who know each other's struggles, who encourage each other along, and who have been doing so for more than one year.
- Has displayed commitment to people struggling deeply by remaining relationally engaged to them despite the drain on time and energy.

Guidance

Read each passage multiple times. Then write your observations about the passage and any thoughts you have from the discernment question. What do you notice in the passage, and what does this reveal about your life?

Proverbs 20:6

Observations:

Discernment Question: In your most recent season of life, who have you loved and served who has required your perseverance?



Proverbs 25:19

Observations:

Discernment Question: Are you trustworthy as a friend?

Proverbs 27:17

Observations:

Discernment Question: Who sharpens you? Who do you sharpen?



1 Corinthians 13:1-8

Observations:

Discernment Question: Read the passage again but replace the word “love” with your name. Does this passage describe you?

1 Corinthians 15:58

Observations:

Discernment Question: Have you persevered in your ministry? Are you persevering today?



Galatians 6:9

Observations:

Discernment Question: Are you weary? If so, why? If not, what's keeping you strong?

Philippians 2:19-29

Observations:

Discernment Question: How would others describe your commitment to Christ and his service?



Next Steps

What are practical next steps you will do from what you have discovered in this survey of Scripture on faithfulness in relationships? Include insights offered from others in your group that could be applied in your own life as well.



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