

# Faithful and True

## A One Week Devotional by Dayna Schoonmaker

This one week Bible study invites you into the presence of God who is faithful and true. As you move through the devotionals below, you will be invited to participate in practices designed to help you deepen your faith as you explore the trustworthiness of God throughout history. You will then be able to read through brief passages of scripture and reflect on questions designed to help you embrace each day's theme as you continue to develop your life in Christ.

### Devotionals

**Day 1:: God's Law** - God is worthy of worship because of the laws God created to keep us aligned with God's will and in right relationship with one another. These laws govern us not as mere legal enforcements but rather as the gentle discipline of a parent who wants what is best for their child. God is not standing in harsh judgment of us but approaches us with compassion, grace, and love. This is the faithful testimony of God - love toward us.

Have you ever written out the ten commandments like Moses was asked to do in Exodus 20? Take some time today to write out each of the ten commandments. Leave a space between each law. After you have finished writing them, take time to express how these laws have helped to shape, direct, or correct your behavior and inform your faith.

### Scripture Reading:

*So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the Lord had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation." Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped. Exodus 34:4-8*

### Questions

1. God did not originally intend for us to be governed by laws, but by a relationship. Do you think the law seeks to *preserve* relational obedience to God or *change* it?
2. God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness. This is not a testimony of someone's personal experience. God says this directly. How does the fact that these words are attributed to God impact your understanding of God and the text?

**Day 2:: God's Care** - God is worthy of worship because God shows care to people regardless of whether they are worthy of receiving it. God cares so deeply for humanity that God continues to be present with us and intervene for us throughout history. God not only cares, but is nurturing toward us like a protective parent shielding her young.

One of the best ways to understand God's care for us is to emulate it by extending care to others. While social distancing may make it harder to extend care in familiar ways, we are still able to care for one another in meaningful ways. Search for one way you can extend care to someone today and then follow through with your plan. This could include anything from making a phone call, to providing a meal, to making a utility payment on someone's behalf. Care can be expressed in multiple forms.

### **Scripture Reading:**

*I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he. They are corrupt and not his children; to their shame they are a warped and crooked generation. Is this the way you repay the Lord, you foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you? ...In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft. Deuteronomy 32:3-6, 10-11*

### **Questions**

1. God's ways are perfect, but sometimes we don't understand, so we question them. Why do you think it is difficult to trust that God's way is perfect and intended for our good?
2. There is crookedness in every generation and ours is no different. Are there any ways in which you need to straighten out your theological perspective? You may not have an answer to this question. Perhaps it is just one you begin asking, seeking God's direction as you look for an answer.
3. The nurturing nature of God is intended for our care and well-being. How can you embrace the invitation to shelter under God's care rather than solely relying on your own ability to care for yourself?

**Day 3:: God's Provision** - God is worthy of worship because of the provision God makes for us. God chooses to include us in the plan for loving, serving, and redeeming the world. In order to do this, we are each given gifts that can be used to serve God and one another. These gifts differ from person to person and are best used within God's community of diversely gifted people, who each bring something unique to the table. There is bounty in the blessing of God's community sharing their gifts with one another.

Consider what spiritual gifts you've been equipped with. Perhaps you have a strong gift for hospitality. Or perhaps you have a gift for stewardship, teaching, or service. How can you purpose or re-purpose your specific gifts to serve God? Now is a great time to re-evaluate your gifts and how you are using them. If you haven't taken a spiritual gifts inventory before, or if you haven't taken one in a while, there are several free options available online. Investigate how God might be leading you to use your gifts during this season of life. You might need to get creative, but lean into it. We serve a creative God.

### **Scripture Reading:**

*I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge—God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Corinthians 1:4-9*

### **Questions**

1. The gifts you need to serve God are already available to you. Is there anything holding you back from reaching out to receive them?
2. God promises to be faithful as we utilize the gifts provided, yet sometimes we are hesitant to exercise those same gifts. With this promise in place, do you find that you remain tentative or are more empowered to use your gifts?
3. Sometimes we carry on with the "work" of God, utilizing our gifts, but neglect our relationship with Christ. Are there ways in which you can re-connect with Jesus? Taking time to strengthen your relationship with Jesus enhances your ability to be effective in ministry.

**Day 4:: God's Sacrifice** - God is worthy of worship because of the sacrifice made on our behalf through Jesus Christ. When God decided to send Jesus, the only begotten son of God, to us, we were given a gift more valuable than we can even comprehend. Jesus not only lived for us, modeled perfect discipleship for us, provided healing and teaching to us, but he also died on our behalf. We cannot make up for the sins we commit and we cannot carry out a perfectly sinless life. But Jesus did, bridging the gap between us and God, in order for us to stand in God's presence as co-heirs of eternity with Jesus. Through his death, Jesus bore the sins of the entire world, atoning for our sins. When Jesus rose three days after his death, it was not just a resurrection of a man from death, it was the resurrection of humanity to life.

We have the opportunity each day to honor Jesus' sacrifice by gratefully embracing the life we've been given. It's easy to get mired down by the hardships of life, but the very air we breath into our lungs each day is a gift. Spend some time today focusing on the way you want to live your life as an expression of gratitude for Jesus's suffering on your behalf. You may want to write out your gratitude, or share with a family member or friend how Jesus's sacrifice has impacted you, or even commit to adopting a whole new mindset toward how you live your life.

#### **Scripture Reading:**

*The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Timothy 1:14-17*

#### **Questions**

1. Jesus came to save sinners. This is a trustworthy saying. Paul, in 1 Timothy, counts himself as the worst of sinners. Conceiving of yourself as among the worst of sinners frees you from comparative justification of sins. Are there any areas where you have been lax in your discipleship because, by comparison, those behaviors 'aren't so bad?'
2. We have been shown great mercy. As an extension of the mercy we've been shown, we can extend mercy to others. Are there people in your life who need to be shown mercy?
3. Jesus has "immense patience" which is an example for us. Identify ways in which Jesus was patient with individuals in scripture, or ways in which Jesus has been patient with you. Use these examples as patterns you can follow as you work to show patience to others.

**Day 5:: God's Creation** - God is worthy of worship if for no other reason than because God created everything on earth and in heaven. Many consider the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf as the greatest reason God is worthy of praise. While Jesus is the reason we are able to approach God in worship, God didn't need to do or say or prove anything to be found worthy. From the very dawn of creation God was worthy of praise. God continues to be worthy of worship regardless of our status or condition. While we are immensely blessed with the gift of salvation and the assurance of eternal life with God, it is not our salvation, but God's character, that should be the foundation of our worship.

There are miracles of creation around us every single day. Throughout the spring, new life unfolds from the ground regardless of the circumstances facing humanity. The stars appear each night without fail and without concern as to whether or not they can be seen. New rains water the earth and rivers continue to flow to the sea. God's perfect creation continues even when we feel as if the whole world is at a standstill. Take time today to view and admire at least one aspect of creation with fresh eyes.

### **Scripture Reading:**

*Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. ...For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. Psalm 33: 1, 4-9*

### **Questions**

1. It is always fitting to praise the Lord. How does it make you feel when you offer praise to the Lord?
2. When we regularly practice praising the Lord, we are more aware of the ways in which the earth is full of God's unfailing grace and love. How do you see God's love expressed around you today?
3. There is power in the voice of God. When God speaks, things happen. Take time to listen for a word from the Lord today. If you hear something specific, take note. If your senses perceive something distinctive, take note. If you are more aware of something in particular, take note. God uses multiple means to communicate with us. We just need to be open and receptive.