

Stick Close By

Stand Firmly With the Lord

Our family is a dog family. No judgment against any cat lovers out there, but among their many other redeeming qualities, dogs — for the most part — actually *like* their human companions. Think about how the 1960s classic TV show 'Lassie' would have played out with a cat rather than a collie as the star. Timmy would have fallen in the well — again — and *if* the cat even noticed, it would have left the boy to die down there. In good times or trouble, our K-9 companions stick close by. And while loyalty is an essential quality in our pets, have you ever thought about what it means to be loyal to Jesus through thick and thin?

Let's continue our [Cross Training](#) journey, looking at faith, which encompasses our belief, trust, loyalty, and willingness to share our faith. This week, let's talk about our loyalty to Christ.

What You Need to Know

What if there was an English word that could mean belief, trust, or faithfulness ... or all three at the same time? That's what's happening with the Bible words for faith. The Bible word translated faith in some places is translated faithfulness in others. The two are linked and if we don't get that, we'll have an incomplete view of faith.

God is always faithful. So we, too, must offer our loyalty to him. Habakkuk 2:4 says, "*the righteous will live by faith.*" But the Hebrew word for "faith" mainly means firmness, fidelity, and faithfulness. In Galatians, the same Greek word is translated faith (Gal. 5:6) and faithfulness (Gal. 5:22) in the same chapter.

What these three ideas have in common is the firm foundation they create for any relationship. Marriages don't survive without both trust in each other and faithfulness to each other. Friendships are built on belief, trust, and faithfulness (Prov. 18:24), like Ruth's devotion to Naomi (Ruth 1:16-17) and Jonathan's loyalty to David (1 Sam. 24:6-10). But it's much more true for our relationship with our Lord. He is worthy of our wholehearted trust and devotion.

John's gospel emphasizes believing in Jesus, but to believe in him is to *receive* him as Christ the Lord (John 1:11; 11:27; 20:28-31). It's not just believing an idea, it's choosing to stand with him as your King.

What You Need to Do

Like Samuel's statement, "*speak, for your servant hears*" (1 Sam. 3:10), we stand available to God, always ready for our orders. When you see an opportunity to serve others in the name of Christ or to expand his kingdom, jump at the chance. Keep the approval of your master in mind. Can you dare to imagine — as a hymn says — "the smile of the blessed Giver" as he looks in joy upon the faithful deeds of his redeemed servant? Remember the words Jesus used to describe a master's approval:

"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).

Overcome evil in your life by looking to him in faith and faithfulness. Every temptation tests our loyalty to God. When Joseph was a slave in Potiphar's house, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. He was not only loyal to her husband, but more importantly, he saw any sin as an affront against God. He told her of the confidence her husband had placed in him, then asked, *"How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"* (Gen. 39:9). Resolve not to break trust with God and damage that relationship.

Remember *who* you serve and *why* you're able to serve him. Paul thanked Jesus for judging him faithful and appointing him — a former persecutor — to his service (1 Tim. 1:12-14). He said, *"For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised"* (2 Cor. 5:14-15). So live for him who is forever worthy of your utmost devotion.

Through the Week

- **Read** — John 19:16-31; Luke 9:57-62; Josh. 24:14-15; 1 Kings 8:57-61; 2 Tim. 4:10-18
- **Reflect** — Ask yourself, *"What gives Jesus joy?"*
- **Request** — Pray, *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer"* (Psalm 19:14).
- **Respond** — Repeat the phrase, *"I stand with Jesus,"* when temptations come throughout the week.
- **Reach Out** — Ask yourself, *"What situations have tested your loyalty to Christ?"*