

PREPARE FOR TOMORROW – 6 of 7
One Word That Will Change Your Life
May 24, 2026

INTRODUCTION If you could choose a one-word goal to achieve in life, what one word would you choose? One word that would represent your character, nature, and summarize what you stand for in life.

Three of the more common words people said they would like to summarize their life, were good words.

Some of the words was ①**successful**, ②**influential**, and ③**happy**. God does make people successful. I hope you're successful in all you do.

The word influential is good. We're called to be salt and light ambassadors. Making a difference in this world. Influential is a good word. Some people say they want to be happy. Another word for that is to be blessed or to be fulfilled in life. Those are some good words.

But I believe that there is one word in God's eyes that stands above all the rest. When we get to heaven, if we live a life that pleases God, He won't say well done my good and ①**successful**, or ②**influential servant**, or ③**happy servant**.

But what He will say to us is **well done my good and faithful servant**. If there is one word that should stand above the rest, I believe we should strive to be **faithful**. The title of today's message is **One Word That Will Change Your Life**.

We're in a message series and we're talking about the power of our decisions because we know that,

THE QUALITY OF YOUR DECISIONS DETERMINES THE QUALITY OF YOUR LIFE.

The problem is that many of us are not very good decision makers. So instead of waiting for the heat of the moment, when we're faced with different situations, we're asking God to help us pre-decide what we'll do in certain situations. We're saying,

When we're faced with some particular scenario, we've already decided to take a very specific action.

We're letting the Word of God, the power of God, lead us to make decisions that would actually please God, we're pre-deciding.

And there are six specific areas that we're focusing on in this message series to determine who we are going to be.

❶ I AM READY. ❷ I AM CONSISTENT. ❸ I AM DEVOTED, ❹ I AM GENEROUS. ❺ I AM FAITHFUL. ❻ I AM A FINISHER.

Today, we're going to look at the theme of faithfulness. And the reason we're pre-deciding to be faithful is because we're never accidentally going to be consistently faithful.

There is no way we will consistently be faithful without intentionality.

And the reason that we find it difficult to be faithful is because the trajectory of our life is toward what's easy and doing what is right, is rarely easy. It's often hard. It comes with a cost, but it's always worth it.

Look at God's Word from the prophet, Habakkuk in the Old Testament who said this in 2:4, *“Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked, ...”*

Do you know someone who is proud?

Look at the proud, what do they do? They trust in themselves and their lives are crooked. What do they do? They trust in their own wisdom, knowledge, righteousness, goodness, they trust in their own bank account.

They trust in their own abilities. They trust in themselves because they're proud and their lives are crooked.

“...but the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God.”

Unfortunately, I'm often the one who thinks I can do it on my own. I'm often the one who tries to be good enough. I'm often the one who tries to be self-sufficient.

So, I am intentionally deciding not to be proud, but to be righteous because the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God.

Now that raises a question. What does it mean to be faithful? How do we practically live that out?

When you look at how Jesus talked about faithfulness, he took a very different approach to faithfulness than what most of us would recognize.

In fact, if you do a word study on each time Jesus mentioned the word **faithful**. You will see that he had three different categories whenever he talked about faithfulness.

- ① He talked about faithfulness and **how you treat people**.
- ② He talked about faithfulness and **how you steward resources**.
- ③ And he talked about faithfulness and **how you respond to God**.

So, in response to the values of Jesus on faithfulness, if we are going to be faithful, we're going to pre-decide three things.

① PRE-DECIDE HOW YOU WILL TREAT PEOPLE - EVERY INTERACTION IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADD VALUE.

What does that mean? That means for you, wherever you go, every person you meet, everyone that you see is an opportunity to bless, to encourage, to be generous, for you to add value into their life.

We're going to pre-decide that every person we see is an opportunity for us to show the love of God in a way that brings value and blessing in their life.

And the reason, that we pre-decide is because we will never add value consistently, accidentally. And the reason we won't is because we are focused on ourselves. I can prove it to you.

All you have to do is look at a photo of eight people that you are in. Who is the first person you look at in the photo, and the answer is you. And if it's a good picture of

you, what kind of photo is it? It is a good photo. If you are blinking in the photo, it's a bad photo.

When you talk to people, what are you thinking in your mind? You're thinking, do they like me? When you walk away, you're analyzing, why did I say that? Did I embarrass myself?

What if, instead of saying, will they like me? You pre-decide every time you interact with someone, you say, **"I'm going to be a blessing to you in all that I do."** This is a form of faithfulness to God.

In fact, Ephesians 4:29 says, ***²⁹Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.***

To be faithful to God, you're going to add value to people. In other words, when you walk into a room, the climate improves. You're an encourager, a blessing.

When you tell the truth, you always tell the truth in love. The people are going to be better. They're going to have more faith. They're going to be more blessed because you were in there. You add value to people's lives.

And that is actually the faithfulness to God. When you look at what Jesus did and how he treated people, think about the words Jesus said, and think about what Jesus did. When the disciples were maybe worried, what did Jesus not say?

Jesus, didn't say, **"Well, you better worry because the world's going to hell. Have you read the news today? Things are bad and they're going to get worse."**

What did Jesus say? He said, **"Don't worry about what you're going to eat or drink or the clothes you're going to wear because your Heavenly Father cares about you so much. He cares about the birds and certainly cares about you."**

Today has enough to worry about just seek first, the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And then it'll add everything unto you."

Think about the woman who was caught in adultery. What did Jesus say to her? What did he do? He didn't say, **"Shame on you; you're a pathetic person,"** and turn his back on her. No, he knelt down and wrote something in the sand.

We don't know what it was, but the other self-righteous men walked away, and Jesus looked at the woman with love and said, **"Where are your accusers?"** And she said, **"There are none."**

And he said with love in his heart, **"Then neither do I accuse you. Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, don't sin anymore. Just go and be righteous and be free."**

When Peter denied Jesus, not once, not twice, but three times. What did Jesus do? He said, **"Do you still love me? Then go feed my sheep. Go do my will. Go show my love."** He forgave gracefully.

What did Jesus say? He said, **"I came to show the love of my Father. I'll never leave you; I'll never forsake. You can do greater things when I go away because I'm sending the Holy Spirit to be with you."**

Every interaction with anyone, you show the love of God, you build up, you show grace, you are a blessing. You have no idea how God might use a single word of encouragement to change someone's life. That is faithfulness to God.

One of the ways you can be faithful to God is by being a blessing to people. And you could do that today.

You have no idea how God might use a single word of encouragement to change someone's life. I am faithful. I pre-decide that every interaction with a person is an opportunity to show love, to be a blessing and to add value.

② **PRE-DECIDE HOW YOU WILL STEWARD RESOURCES - EVERY RESOURCE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MULTIPLY.**

In Matthew 25, Jesus told a parable about a man who went on a journey and trusted his wealth to his servants. He gave five bags of gold to one guy. Two bags of gold to another guy, and one bag of gold to another guy.

The man who had five bags and the man who had 2 bags doubled what they were given.

And it says in verse 21, ²¹*“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. ...’”*

They had multiplied what they were given and in the Kingdom of God, that is faithfulness. In fact, the Greek word **pistos**. means persons who show themselves faithful in the transactions of business, the execution of commands or the discharge of official duties, is people that are faithful in business.

How about this? One of the ways you can be faithful to God is simply by caring for what God gives you, by multiplying it. God gives you an ugly yard and you make it a better yard. That's faithfulness.

God gives you a clunker of a car, and you have the cleanest clunker on the road. God gives you a body and you take care of your body. That's faithfulness to God.

Being good in business is one of the most God honoring things you can do. To create something that adds value to bless someone else, to being a good leader, to leading with integrity. Business owners take a risk and multiply it and make more and create more jobs and be a person of integrity who treats people well.

Listen, you can fast, pray, be a missionary, read the Bible, teach three-year-olds the Bible, and you can be a God honoring businessperson. It is faithfulness to God when you multiply your resources.

We truly believe it's more blessed to give than receive giving to local missions and giving to global missions.

It's God honoring to multiply and steward what he's given you. And Jesus says that is faithful. Then there was the one guy with the one bag who was afraid.

And I actually feel for that guy because there've been times when I've been afraid to make a mistake but watch what the master says to him.

Matthew 25:25-26 says, ²⁵“*So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.*” ²⁶His master replied, ‘*You wicked, lazy servant! ...*’”

To the one who multiplied what was given the master said, you are faithful. To the one who buried it, he wasn't just lazy, scripture says he was wicked. We're going to choose to be faithful.

Every interaction is an opportunity to add value. Every resource is an opportunity to multiply, and every prompting is an opportunity to obey God.

③ PRE-DECIDE HOW YOU WILL RESPOND TO GOD - EVERY PROMPTING IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO OBEY GOD.

In Acts chapter 20:22 Paul was really happy where he was. I think it was in Ephesus and he had this emotional farewell and he was compelled by the spirit.

Acts 20:22 says, ²²“*And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.*”

He is being compelled by the spirit. He said, I'm going to Jerusalem not knowing what will happen to me there. I can't explain it. I don't understand it. I don't know the details. I just know that I'm being drawn.

When you follow Jesus, he will prompt you. He will compel you and faithfulness is responding, even when you don't know what will happen.

The spiritual principle is this:

OBEDIENCE IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY. THE OUTCOME IS GOD'S RESPONSIBILITY.

This is faithfulness. Sometimes you'll see the reason and other times you won't, but we're going to pre-decide to be faithful.

God is going to put someone or something on your heart and you're not going to be sure why, but you're going to say, **“I think I'm supposed to tell you,**

or I think I was supposed to text you, or I think I was supposed to give this to you, or I think I was supposed to bless you with this.” Right?

You're going to pre-decide because of the faithfulness of God, I want to be faithful to Him. I'm faithful to add value.

I'm faithful to multiply and steward what God has given me. I'm faithful to obey, why? Because the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God.

You will overestimate what you can do in the short run, but you'll vastly underestimate what God can do through a lifetime of faithfulness.

I don't know who this is for, but I want you to hear it, as God's speaking to you.

You'll overestimate what you can get done in this season, how you can change your marriage in this season, how you can make an impact in this season, how you can improve financially in this season, how you can grow spiritually.

You'll overestimate what you can do in the short run, but you will vastly, every single time, underestimate what God can do through a lifetime of faithfulness.

When you're faithful with a little, God will trust you with much. And so, if you want to be successful, influential, happy, what are you? You're faithful in the small things. And God trusts you with more.

You're faithful with those around you. And he gives you more influence. You're faithful to make a difference in the world. And suddenly you are fulfilled and blessed and full of joy because he's trusting you with more.

The righteous will live by their faithfulness to God.

Every interaction is an opportunity to add value. Every resource is an opportunity to multiply, to steward and every prompting is an opportunity to obey.

When God prompts you just say yes, because obedience is your responsibility and outcome is God's. And my promise to you is this.

You will overestimate what you can get done in the short run, but you'll vastly underestimate what God can do through a lifetime of faithfulness.

CONCLUSION Laura and her parents spent years going to Lay Witness Missions. Back in the 60's and 70's Christians joined teams of other Christians who would spend a weekend at a church sharing their faith with that church.

You would have a Lay Witness Mission at your church and then you would want to share your faith with others. I was also involved with these weekends.

Laura's family had friends in North Alabama, and they joined a team there. There was a family on their team from Ashland, Alabama who had a daughter close to Laura's age and they became friends.

When Laura and I were dating that family was staying with Laura's family and when they went home, they took Laura with them. Then I drove up from Montgomery and got Laura, and we took youth to church camp.

Laura's friend married a man from North Alabama, and his father was a Methodist minister. I knew his father because I had met him through other minister friends.

His father's name was Elvis North, and he served a small church in North Alabama, but he also helped churches in our Conference with financial campaigns.

Over the years I had spent time with Elvis and his wife Betty on several occasions. He even visited previous ministers here at Woodlawn.

Last weekend Laura and I were in Birmingham to watch our granddaughter Collins in her dance recital. But we soon learned that God also had a divine appointment scheduled for us!

Laura saw on Facebook that Elvis and Betty North were in a bad wreck on Mother's Day afternoon. Betty was killed and Elvis was in the hospital at UAB.

Laura and I knew we needed to go visit him. Collins' recital was at 2:30 Saturday afternoon and it was held downtown at the BJCC which stands for Birmingham Jefferson Civic Center.

UAB Hospital is only about a mile from the Civic Center and it's on the way. So, Laura and I left early and went by the hospital first. We made our way to the room, but we didn't know what condition Elvis would be in.

When we went into Elvis' room, he opened his eyes and smiled. He's 91 years old now. He was doing surprisingly well, and he knew that Betty had died.

Elvis told us he was ready to go be with Betty whenever the Lord was ready for him. He will be going to rehab soon. Laura and I went to cheer Elvis up, but he cheered us up! I prayed for him and then he prayed for us.

After we left his room, it was lunchtime, so we went to the Fish Market by the hospital. While we were having lunch we talked about our visit. We had been prompted by God to go see Elvis and we were glad to be faithful.

But we also talked about the years of faithfulness Elvis and Betty North have given to the Lord. We could just imagine the Lord saying to both of them,

“Well done good and faithful servants! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's happiness!” And we were thankful we have known them! Only God could have coordinated all that!

PRAYER So father make us faithful. God, I desire to honor you, to be faithful, to be a blessing, to be a steward, to be obedient.

Heavenly Father, forgive all my sins. Jesus, save me. Change me, make me new. My life belongs to you. Thank you for new life. Help me be faithful in all I do in Jesus' name. I pray. Amen.

THE END