

**"WILL YOU BE A FAITHFUL \_\_\_\_\_?"**  
Proverbs 25:13-19

I recently came upon the following news item that appeared in the *Nashville Banner* newspaper and it is dated June 19, 1956. Here is how it reads: (quote) "Porter, Okla. (Associated Press)—Mrs. Ella Craig, age 81, hasn't missed Sunday School attendance in 1,040 Sundays—a perfect record for 20 years. 1. Doesn't Mrs. Craig ever have company on Sunday to keep her away from church? 2. Doesn't she ever go away on Saturday night and get up tired on Sunday morning? 3. Doesn't she ever have headaches, colds, nervous spells, tired feelings, poor breakfast, sudden calls out of town, business trips, Sunday picnics, or any trouble of any kind? 4. Doesn't she have any friends at all—friends who invite her to a week end trip to the sea shore or mountains? 5. Doesn't she ever sleep late on Sunday mornings? 6. Doesn't it ever rain or snow on Sunday mornings? 7. Doesn't she ever get her feelings hurt by someone in church? 8. Doesn't she ever get mad at the preacher or Sunday School teacher?"

9. Doesn't she have a radio or television so she can listen to "some mighty good sermons from out of town?" What's the matter with Mrs. Craig?" (end quote) So what is the matter with Mrs. Craig? I mean, there has to be something wrong, right?

Does the date October 23, 1983 mean anything to you? It was a Sunday morning and at 6:22 a.m. a large delivery truck drove into the Beirut International Airport where the Marine Barracks was located. That day became one of the most tragic events during the Reagan Presidency when terrorists bombed those same Marine Barracks in which hundreds of Americans were killed or wounded as they slept. Maybe those who remember can recall the terrible scenes of the dazed survivors who worked to dig out their trapped brothers and sisters from beneath the rubble. A few days after the tragedy, an amazing story came out. Marine Corps Commandant Paul X. Kelly visited some of the wounded survivors then in a Frankfurt, Germany, hospital.

Among them was Corporal Jeffrey Lee Nashton, severely wounded in the incident. Nashton had so many tubes running in and out of his body that a witness said he looked more like a machine than a man; yet he survived. As Kelly neared him, Nashton, struggling to move and racked with pain, motioned for a piece of paper and pen. He wrote a brief note and passed it back to the Commandant. On the slip of paper were but two words—“Semper Fi” the Latin motto of the Marines meaning “forever faithful.” With those two simple words Nashton spoke for millions of Americans who have sacrificed body and limb and their lives for their country—those who have remained faithful. (J Dobson & Gary Bauer, Children at Risk, Word, 1990, pp. 187-188)

Faithfulness.... Wasn't that Mrs. Craig's problem as to why she had not missed Sunday School in 1,040 Sundays, in 20 years? Faithfulness.... It seems more and more that faithfulness is less and less. Where does “faithfulness” seem to be lagging today?

How about faithfulness in commitments made like marriage and family, faithfulness to the workplace, faithfulness on the part of employer to employee, faithfulness to friends, faithfulness to institutions and organizations- the Church of Jesus Christ being one of them. Maybe our lack of faithfulness is due to, Oh, I don't know to ... how busy we all are and when push comes to shove, well.... Maybe it is because we are so stressed out we can't fulfill what has been asked. Maybe it is because we have to pick and choose and, well.... Sometimes it would just be great if some people would be committed or faithful to something, anything because there are those people who do not seem to be committed to anything.

Today 11 people, 6 Elders and 5 Deacons answered in the affirmative, they said, YES, when the questions were asked, "Will you be a faithful elder..." or "will you be a faithful deacon...."

During the months of April and May, Rita Vincent and I held officer training meeting to bring these fine people that stood before you today, and the 3 others who will stand before you next Sunday "on board" and prepare them to serve in these two elected offices of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

In one of the books we use in the officer training, entitled, *The Ordination Vows*, listen to what it says in the section entitled, *Will You Be a Faithful Elder?* (quote) "Being faithful is the opposite of letting someone down.

Proverbs 25 gives us two pictures: A faithful messenger is like the cold of snow in the time of harvest to them who send him for he refreshes the spirit of his mater (v. 13); but trust in a faithless man in time of trouble is like a ...foot that slips (v. 19). **Faithfulness, or its opposite, reveals itself in**

**relationships**. The messenger stands in relationship to those who send the message and to those who are to receive it. Companions count on each other to help in times of trouble." (end quote)

Now that is something that could be said in a variety of relationships- a friendship, a marriage, a parent to a child and any other relationship that you care to name. Faithfulness does reveal itself in relationships, does it not? Just so you know what the Elders are reading as it relates to their responsibility as a church officer, the book goes on to say the following, (quote) "Elders work in relationships – with the pastor, with each other, with the congregation. When faithfulness marks performance, all these relationships flourish. At session meetings, the pastor draws encouragement if attendance is strong. Committee reports generate enthusiasm when work has been done and progress is evident. Good things happen when assignments are remembered and commitments kept. Cool, clean snow on a hot, dusty field during harvest conveys how refreshing it is when faithful service fulfills our expectations. Unfaithful service, 'a foot that slips,' produces the opposite effect. The absent elder, the 'no progress' committee report, the muffed assignment, the broken commitment—all these and other

marks of faithlessness can lame a whole church. Fulfilling our vows to be a faithful elder counters all that.” (end quote) And just so I mention the Deacons, let me read to you the first paragraph of the section that focuses on their question that begins, “Will you be a faithful deacon,...” that is entitled *Caring for the Community of Faith*, (quote) “The primary responsibility of the deacons is to build the ties of community within the church. Deacons are to provide the model and means for the church to respond to the needs of church members. It is through the care provided by deacons that members of the church experience that they belong to the community of faith. (end quote)

You see, this sermon is not only directed to those who are officers in the church but to anyone who has ever made a commitment to anyone or anything and just because a person maybe young doesn't mean that you haven't made a commitment to someone or something because if you live under the roof of a house and you have a Mom or Dad or guardian just by

virtue of the fact that you eat and sleep in that house, you have made a commitment all because of this one word- **RELATIONSHIP**. You are in relationship with those other people and so there needs to be faithfulness and commitment.

I know there are a host of problems with our schools today and I know firsthand, because I have a wife who is a teacher. But I wonder if problems could be cut in half if there were responsible parents or guardians who were faithful to their children, faithful to the educational process, faithful to being a responsible parent or guardian rather than blaming the school or the teacher or whomever they can lay the blame on instead of just being faithful and responsible parents or guardians. I wonder if more people would fulfill their spoken and unspoken vows or commitments that they have entered into, if we would see different attitudes, different behaviors, different outcomes all because people learned how to step up and be the man or woman God intended them to be?

I wonder if people would quit trying to do it on their own power and look to a “higher power” as the 12 step programs suggest (A.A. that started in Akron), but let me put a name to the higher power and His name is Jesus—what would happen if people would come to Christ, if families would come to Christ, if communities and cities, why, if nations would come to Christ; what would happen if people would have that personal relationship to Christ, what would it look like in our marriages, in our homes, in our families, in our schools, in our communities and cities, why, in our nation and the world? What would and could it look like? Folks, you know the answer to this.

The picture in Proverbs 25 is pretty self-explanatory—faithful service refreshes the spirit of the master; faithless or unfaithful service and the foot slips. So whether you are one of the 13 people who, between today and next Sunday, will be ordained and installed or installed as a church officer, or if you are alive and breathing today and involved in a relationship, any relationship, our faithfulness or faithlessness does reveal itself in that

relationship. So how can we be more faithful in those relationships that are part and parcel to who and what we are whether it is to a friend, spouse, child or children, organization or institution like the church; how about your relationship to Jesus Christ? Like the old Nike commercial- "Just Do It! It is all about priorities- giving of our time, energy, and love.

An elderly preacher was rebuked by one of his church leaders one Sunday morning before the service. "Pastor," said the man, "something must be wrong with your preaching and your work. There's been only one person added to the church in a whole year, and he's just a boy." The minister listened, his eyes moistening and his thin hand trembling." "I feel it all," he replied, "but God knows I've tried to do my duty." On that day the minister's heart was heavy as he stood before his flock. As he finished the message, he felt a strong inclination to resign. After everyone else had left, that one boy came to him and asked, "do you think if I worked hard for an education, I could become a preacher—perhaps a missionary?" Again tears

welled up in the minister's eyes. "Ah, this heals the ache I feel," he said.

"Robert, I see the Divine hand now. May God bless you, my boy. Yes, I think you will become a preacher." Many years later an aged missionary returned to London from Africa. His name was spoken with reverence.

Nobles invited him to their homes. He had added many souls to the church of Jesus Christ, reaching even some of Africa's most savage chiefs. His name was Robert Moffat, the same Robert who years before had spoken to the pastor that Sunday morning in that old Scottish Kirk [or church]. Lord, help us to be faithful. Then give us the grace to leave the results to you."

Source Unknown

"WILL YOU BE A FAITHFUL...? You fill in the blank. Amen.

**"WILL YOU BE A FAITHFUL \_\_\_\_\_?"**  
Proverbs 25:13-19

Introduction: A news item from the *Nashville Banner*- June 19, 1956  
So what is the matter with Mrs. Craig?

October 23, 1983- 6:22 a.m. at the Beirut International Airport

Faithfulness...

Why does "Faithfulness" seem to be lagging today?

"Will you be a faithful elder/deacon?"

Proverbs 25:13-19

Two pictures

**Faithfulness, or its opposite, reveals itself in \_\_\_\_\_**

This sermon is for anyone who has ever made a commitment to anyone or anything...

Proverbs 25

Faithful service refreshes the spirit of the master

Faithless or unfaithful service and the foot slips

Conclusion: Will you be a faithful \_\_\_\_\_? You fill in the blank