

LOYALTY vs. INFIDELITY

THE LONG-TERM BONDING OF INDIVIDUALS IN SACRIFICIAL SUPPORT AND DEFENSE.

WHY IS LOYALTY SO IMPORTANT?

God established working relationships with key people throughout history based on this quality. Every marriage must be built on this quality or it will not survive. Every leader looks for this quality as a primary qualification for those to whom he delegates responsibility.

BIBLICAL CONCEPTS

The word “loyalty” is not contained in Scripture. The word faithfulness would at first appear to be the synonym. However, faithfulness and dependability relate to the work or service that a person performs, whereas loyalty involves a much deeper, long-term relationship. The Biblical terms that best describe loyalty are a blood covenant, a bondservant relationship, and marriage vows.

THE LOYALTY OF A BLOOD COVENANT

The Hebrew word “covenant” is “bereeth.” It means “a cutting” and involves a compact made by passing between pieces of flesh. God illustrates this word in the covenant that He made with Abraham. In this and other covenants, there are many rich symbolisms that describe the depth and meaning of loyalty.

1. A covenant is made with those of like spirit. God said to Abraham, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Genesis 17:1). Note: Jonathan made a blood covenant with David when his heart was knit together with him in love. (See I Samuel 18:1.)
2. A covenant requires an initiator who assumes the greater responsibility in maintaining the covenant. “I will make my covenant between me and thee” (Genesis 17:2).
3. A covenant involves a name change. “Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram” (Genesis 17:5). Note: A name change also occurs in a marriage as the wife takes on the husband’s name and in salvation as we take on Christ’s name.
4. The purpose of a covenant is to multiply benefits and fruitfulness. “I will make thee exceeding fruitful” (Genesis 17:6). Note: The same is true of physical children in a marriage covenant and spiritual children in the salvation covenant.
5. A covenant has relationships that last beyond the lifetime of the covenant makers. “Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations” (Genesis 17:9). Although the marriage does not continue after death, the relationships between the children and relatives do. Also, covenants with land continue with the land even under new ownership. The covenant of salvation continues beyond our lifetime. David honored his covenant with Jonathan after Jonathan died.
6. A covenant requires the shedding of blood. Every man child “must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh” (Genesis 17:13). When God made a covenant with Abraham, He took animals and divided them to walk between them to make a covenant. He also required circumcision as a part of the covenant. (See Genesis 15.)

JONATHAN AND DAVID'S COVENANT OF LOYALTY

One of the most powerful examples of loyalty in Scripture is the friendship and covenant that Jonathan made with David. The symbolism of this covenant is also rich with meaning.

1. The oneness of spirit “And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (I Samuel 18:1).
2. Outer garments are exchanged in a covenant. “And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that [was] upon him, and gave it to David” (I Samuel 18:4). Note: In salvation, Christ provides our robes of righteousness in exchange for our filthy rags.

3. Weapons are given, which symbolizes that when danger comes the covenant makers will protect each other even to their own death. "...even to his sword, and to his bow,"
4. Belts are exchanged. The belt symbolizes the strength of a person and in a covenant they pledge this to the one with whom they make the covenant. In salvation, God's strength is made available to us in exchange for our weakness. "...and to his girdle" (v4)

THE LOYALTY OF A BOND SERVANT

The long-term relationship of loyalty is also illustrated in the Biblical provisions of a bondservant deciding that he loves his master and wants to continue serving him for the rest of his life. These provisions are given in Exodus 21:1–6 and Deuteronomy 15:16–17.

1. The bondservant covenant is voluntary and based on love "And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free" (Exodus 21:5).
2. A covenant is confirmed legally "Then his master shall bring him unto the judges" (Exodus 21:6).
3. A public symbol is given to declare the new relationship. "He shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever" (Exodus 21:6).

THE COVENANT OF LOYALTY BETWEEN RUTH AND NAOMI

The loyalty that Ruth had to her mother-in-law, Naomi, is one of the most inspiring stories throughout history. After Ruth's husband died and hard times followed, Naomi told Ruth to return to her own people because there was nothing more she could do for her. Ruth's famous response was "And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:16–17).

THE LOYALTY OF MARRIAGE VOWS

Marriage is a blood covenant, not just a legal contract. All the rich symbolism of a Biblical blood covenant is contained in it. Beginning with the groom as the covenant initiator and therefore having the greater responsibility to maintain the marriage, the seriousness of marriage vows are emphasized in the following warning. "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for [he hath] no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Ecclesiastes 5:4–5).

THE LOYALTY OF THE COMMUNION TABLE

When Jesus established communion among His disciples, He was actually presenting it as a blood covenant. This is clear from the very words He used to describe it. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26–28).

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (I Corinthians 10:16). The word "communion" is the Greek word "koinania" which is a deep and bonding fellowship with one another. This is consistent with the many commands of Scripture to love one another because we are all members of the same body.

When we show disloyalty to other believers, we violate the blood covenant that is made at the communion table and receive the condemnation that accompanies the violation of a blood covenant. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (I Corinthians 11:29–30).