

Loyalty

Loyalty (as the quality or state of being “loyal”) is one of those words that most people understand, but may have a difficult time precisely defining. We seem to know what it means to be “loyal” when a dog is such to their primary human. Years ago I had a Blue Merle Australian Shepherd that loved to ride in the back of my truck. Once, I told “Baby” (she was already named when we got her) that she could go with us, and lowered the tailgate so she could hop in, which she eagerly did. But then I returned inside to retrieve something as Donna came outside. Not knowing that I had told Baby she could go, and seeing her in the bed of the truck, Donna proceeded to tell her she couldn’t go, and to get down out of the truck. Baby first turned her head away, and wouldn’t look at her. Then when Donna began to scold her, she dropped her head and slinked up toward the front of the truck bed as if to crawl under the toolbox out of Donna’s reach, but declined to obey. My father-in-law, who was watching all of this transpire, began to laugh and remarked, “Well I guess we know whose dog Baby is. Philip told her she could go and she’s not going to listen to you!” **Loyalty** (plus, Baby really wanted to go!).

Even without definitions or canine examples of such, we generally know what “loyalty” looks like in **friends**. It’s someone who is *reliable* and *always there* for us; someone who has always proven themselves to be *worthy* of our *trust*; someone who is *devoted* to us and our best interests, even if that means telling us uncomfortable or painful truths; and someone who will remain *steadfast* and will *not abandon* us despite our mistakes and failures. **Loyal**.

Likewise, we seem to understand “loyalty” in reference to **spouses**. A “loyal” spouse is *faithful*, not just regarding *intimacy*, but also in *devotion*. They are selflessly *devoted* to no one more than their mate. Additionally, a “loyal” spouse is one who can be *trusted* implicitly, not just in *words* but also in *deeds*. They never *say* anything “disloyal” to their mate, and they never *do* anything that could be construed as “disloyal” either. They can be *relied* upon to love their mate in all the ways Paul describes in [1Cor.13:4-8a](#); and to remain *true* and *faithful* in “sickness and health, poverty or wealth, good times or bad.” **Loyal**.

Loyalty also has **spiritual applications** and **implications**. We understand what “loyalty” is, and conversely what its counterparts and counterfeits look like, when we are the object, **but what about when we are supposed to be “loyal” to:**

- **God?** There is no question of His “loyalty” to us, but **are we “loyal” to Him?** Can He depend on our *reliability*, *trust-worthiness*, *devotion*, and *steadfastness*? Are we *constant* in our associations with Him, or only when such is *convenient* to or for us? He always tells us the truth (cf. [Rom.4:3](#); [Heb.6:18](#)), but are we “loyal” to always *speak truth* to Him? Or do we sometimes say things to Him that we know are not true- especially regarding *how much we love* and are *devoted* to Him? Can He *depend* on our *faithful steadfastness*? Are we “loyal” to the One on whom we so much depend?
- **Christ?** He is our *spiritual spouse*, cf. [Eph.5:22ff](#); [Matt.9:15](#). Are we “loyal” to Him as such? Or, like a *disloyal* spouse, do we merely feign *affection* while adulterously *loving the world*, [Rom.7:3](#)? Are we “loyally” *devoted* to Him, or are secretly *servicing another Master*, [Rom.6:16ff](#)? Are we a “loyally” *submissive wife*,

or one who willfully rebels at every chance (usually when we think we are no longer in His presence) to *be our own person and do what "I" want or "I" think is best?*

- **The Word?** We purport and sing of being "loyal" to the Word, but are we really as *faithfully devoted* to it as we claim? Do we *trust* it as *true* above all else? Or does *doubt* lead us into *distrust* and *disobedience*? Do we *depend* on it as an *ever-faithful* guide, or are we prone to substitute our own *thoughts* and *feelings* for it when the rubber of life meets the hard road of difficult circumstances? The Word is *true*, but are we "loyal" and *true* to it?

The long and the short of it is that while we may relish and even demand "loyalty" of *others* to ourselves, we are all-too-often not nearly as "loyal" as we might assume. But it doesn't have to be this way. When we come to realize the absolute **loyalty** of **God, Christ,** and the **Word to us,** we too can become truly "loyal" to them, as well as our friends and spouses... and perhaps even to our dogs. (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)