

Relational Intelligence 2.0: Developing Healthy Biblical Relationships

Loyalty & Covenant Relationship: Part 3

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SERMON DESCRIPTION

God is covenant-keeping in His relationships. In other words, God operates by contracts and promises that cannot be broken. Through this concept of covenant, a loyalty is birthed that overcomes adversity, circumstances, and situations. Make a decision to become a covenant-keeping person in an individual that is loyal, perhaps even to a fault.

SERMON QUESTIONS

1. What do they need to know?
 - God is in covenant relationship with His people.
2. Why do they need to know it?
 - God will never leave or forsake us.
3. How should we apply it?
 - We should emulate Christ and His relationship with us.

OPENING LINE

Most people think they are better at relationships than they actually are.

INTRODUCTION

Covenant-Keeping God

God is a covenant-keeping God when it comes to relationships. We see this principal displayed in the life of Abraham and then with Jacob and the nation of Israel. Throughout all of history and into the birth of the church; in the Book of Acts, the Lord demonstrates that His relationships are based on contractual agreement and promises that cannot be broken. The Lord is loyal, trustworthy, reliable, dependable, and He will never forsake His people. ***Therefore, loyalty, within Christian relationships, is birthed out of the idea of covenant.***

CENTRAL TRUTH

Because God is covenant-keeping, His relationship with people and even nations is based on contractual agreements and promises that cannot be broken. In relationships, God teaches His followers to be the same and to display incredible loyalty despite adversity.

MAIN PASSAGE

Ruth 1:1-5

Naomi Widowed

¹ Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. ² The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there. ³ Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. ⁴ Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years. ⁵ Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

Ruth 1:6-18

Ruth's Loyalty to Naomi

⁶ Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread. ⁷ Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. ⁸ And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹ The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." So she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. ¹⁰ And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people."

¹¹ But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? *Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?* ¹² Turn back, my daughters, go—for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, *if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons,* ¹³ would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!"

¹⁴ Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵ And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

¹⁶ But Ruth said:

"Entreat me not to leave you, *Or to turn back from following after you;* For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people *shall be* my people, And your God, my God.

¹⁷ Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If *anything but* death parts you and me."

¹⁸ When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.

1Chronicles 28:9

"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.

2Chronicles 16:9

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore, from now on you shall have wars."

TRANSITION STATEMENT

Have you ever considered that you might be in a covenant relationship with certain individuals that requires a higher level of loyalty?

God is so serious about His relationships that He writes contracts about them and His greatest contract is signed in the blood of His son Jesus.

The truth is that the closer and more intimate you become with people, your inner circle of relationships begins to shrink. Strictly speaking, you have an opportunity to be in covenant and display loyalty with a smaller group of people rather than with everyone at large.

MAIN POINTS

There are some critical lessons that we can draw from the story and the life of Ruth. This is a remarkable woman, that despite the grief, agony, and pain, she was able to demonstrate incredible loyalty to her mother-in-law even though she had nothing left to gain from this relationship. Ruth knew that her relationship with Naomi would be one of a servant. She had no idea how her future would change or even turn around. There was no indication that her future days would be any different than what she was experiencing at the moment. In fact, all evidence pointed to the fact that circumstances might become even worse and that she would be left in a nation that she did not even know. Ruth not only promised to serve her mother-in-law, but she accepted her God, the nation of Israel and the people of God.

Definition: Webster's Dictionary:

Loyal - "a sense of duty or of devoted attachment to something or someone".

Covenant – as a noun = agreement / verb = agreed by lease deed or other legal contract

Observations About Ruth

- Ruth is a Moabite
- Ruth eventually becomes the great grandmother of King David
- She was a young widow
- Ruth had every right to leave her mother-in-law under the circumstances
- Naomi released Ruth outright, she refused to leave Naomi—Ruth remained of her own free will.

1. The Kingdom of God is governed by a CULTURE of loyalty

- a. There is no question that loyalty is something that is celebrated within the Kingdom of God. It is expressed throughout the Bible and we see it operate between the Lord and the nation of Israel and of course the Body of Christ in the New Testament. It is a core value of the Trinity that emulates and creates a positive and healthy culture.
- b. The idea of loyalty even moves beyond faithfulness because it is a matter of the heart, and it is not superficial. Loyalty is expressed to others while faithfulness can be done to a function or even an organization. In fact, you can be faithful and not be loyal at all. This means that you are motivated by other factors and not by an individual.
 - Loyalty should become a cultural norm so that disloyalty becomes uncool and unacceptable
 - Loyalty to the crown vs the leader - some people are devoted to the crown and not the leader
 - The highest form of affection is loyalty
 - God is both faithful and loyal, He is trustworthy and dependable, He can be relied upon, He is solid ground and steadfast, He is Stallworth and resilient, He is immovable.

2. Loyalty must be tested and proven

- a. Most people, most likely, overrate their relationships and their function within them. That is, if you were to survey most people, they would tell you that they have healthy, functioning relationships and that they are the primary reason why.
- b. You will never know if there is true loyalty within a relationship until it is tested, until it is tried and proven. Every relationship must be put in the fire in order to determine what it is actually made of. This is where offences can tear apart what looks to be strong relationships on the surface.

i. Loyalty is tested even above faithfulness

- God's people are often faithful but not necessarily loyal. Particularly, they can be faithful to a ministry, to a function, even to a workplace without even being loyal to the leader or the organization as a whole. In some ways they are loyal to themselves and then they wrap it in religious garb to justify their disloyalty.
- This is in very stark contrast to the people that came to King David in the wilderness. They indicated that they belonged to him, specifically, that they would be loyal even before they had an opportunity to display that they were faithful.
- Loyalty must precede faithfulness.
- Leaders should not have to prove themselves in order for you to be loyal - it is something that you decide to do and not based on the actions of others.
- Illustration: David even remained loyal to King Saul despite the fact that Saul was trying to kill him.

ii. Loyalty is tested with no strings attached

- NO STRINGS ATTACHED – loyalty does not make room for excuses and sub clauses and reasons to get out.

iii. Loyalty is tested in the absence of others

- Loyalty is revealed in the absence of leaders or when they are not present/around – it is tested when the boss is not around
 - We see this great lesson demonstrated in the Parable of the Talents. The wicked servant lacked loyalty because his master had departed and was not around to supervise him.

iv. Loyalty is tested when better opportunities come along – the exception is when God opens the door

- **“Genuine loyalty can only be realized when there is an opportunity for disloyalty” ~Tony Soldano**

v. Loyalty is tested by offense – you must be able to overcome it/them

- Every relationship is tested when there is:
 - Misunderstandings
 - Stress and hardships
 - Unmet expectations
 - Difference of opinion, direction or even vision.

3. Christian principles of loyalty must govern relationships

- a. Unless the principles and the culture of the Kingdom define and govern our relationships, they are simply not Christian to begin with. If we are to be Christ followers we must submit to His laws, commands, and His definition of what a Christian relationship is to look like and how it should operate. We find these principles within the word of God, particularly in the New Testament and they are clearly defined within the early church as well as the writings of Paul.
- b. Kingdom relationships operate in three directions
 - **Upward** - we are loyal to God
 - **Downward** - God is in covenant, and He is loyal to us as His people and His children
 - **Horizontally** - we are loyal to individuals within the body of Christ.
- c. Loyalty is part of a covenant relationship and it is perhaps the highest level of relationship within Christianity. This being said, you are probably not going to be loyal to every single person you know, but rather to a small group of people within an inner circle that you are in deep relationship with. These relationships have been formulated overtime, they have been tested, they are proven and true. These Kingdom principles must always be in place within our interpersonal connections.
- d. When our relationships are governed by Kingdom principles, we recognize the following aspects:
 - We are vulnerable to the imperfections of the person that we are in relationship/intimacy with
 - **Must be courageous when it comes to relationships**
“Lack of loyalty is an expression of being a coward because it takes COURAGE to be loyal” ~Pastor Darius Daniels
 - Loyalty requires choice – you cannot be a friend to two enemies at the same time
 - Loyalty should become a cultural norm so that disloyalty becomes uncool and unacceptable
 - Loyalty to the crown vs the leader
 - Some people are devoted to the crown and not the leader
 - Loyalty is not dependant on the ability of another person to bless you
 - **“The kindest form of management is the truth” ~Jack Welsh**
 - 1Corinthians 13 - Love – gifts won't do – This is passage is more about people and interpersonal skills versus what people are able to bring to the table:
 - **Agape love is the best transportation system for loyalty and relationships because they are based on sincerity and genuineness**
 - Most relationships are gift-oriented and resource-oriented or even position-oriented rather than focussed on the individual. This is why when circumstances change usually the relationship ends. People must be the priority, they must be considered greater than the gifts and resources that they bring into the relationship; therefore, love is the greater transportation system.

QUOTES

God takes His relationship with you so seriously that He wrote a contract about it and rather than using blue ink He signed it in the blood of His son Jesus Christ.

Covenant relationship is eternal.

Faithfulness is more than a commitment to task or duty; good performance does not mean that loyalty is genuine.

You will never know the depth of a relationship until it's tested.

When you enter into a relationship with God, you enter into a covenant.

You can be faithful and not be loyal.

Ruth's loyalty resulted in her being the great-grandmother of King David.

The kingdom of God is governed by a culture of loyalty.

Loyalty is given to people not what you benefit from people.

Judas was faithful but not loyal.

Loyalty should come before faithfulness.

True loyalty is found when there's an opportunity to be disloyal.

SERMON CONCLUSION

Make a decision before God today that you will be a person of covenant and that you will be loyal despite circumstances and situations.

DISCUSSION & QUESTIONS

1. Describe how loyalty is realized in everyday relationships.
2. How is loyalty lacking in the Parable of the Talents with the lazy servant? Provide at least five examples.
3. What is a covenant relationship? Why does God work according to this principle?
4. Read and discuss the Book of Philemon. Consider how Paul communicates loyalty within this letter and restores a broken relationship.
5. What kind of covenant did God create with Moses, Abraham, Jacob, and ultimately with Jesus Christ?
6. What is the Ark of the Covenant? Why does it have this name and what does it mean to the people of God? What was God demonstrating and communicating through this ark?
7. Dive deeper into the statement that, "Some people are loyal to the crown but not necessarily to the leader."
8. Why is agape love the best transportation system for loyalty within relationships?