

10/30/11

Six Words Every Relationship Needs #3 - Loyalty

- When I was in junior high school, our family moved from Gary where I grew up to the town of Merrillville...
- Even though it was a move of only about 6 miles or so...it was a dramatic difference in the kind of kids I was growing up around...
- and I realize all facts are interpreted facts and I'm sure my assessment involved a lot more than just the actual events I was experiencing...but from my perspective, the kids in my new neighborhood were just a lot different than what I was used to...
- the homes there were nicer and the folks were a bit higher up the economic ladder, so all of a sudden I'm learning to play sports like golf and hockey which was OK I suppose...it was different...more highfalutin, you might say...
 - but what I really noticed was the way the kids treated each other...
 - and the best way I know to describe it was that when a group of us got together, everyone seemed to tear down whoever was not there at the time...
 - but then as I observed that over a period of several months, I saw that it didn't really matter who was present, it came down to whoever was absent was going to get torn apart..
 - and it didn't take me long to figure out – if they treat one another that way and most of them have grown up together, I would be crazy to believe that wasn't happening to me on the days I'm not around...
- in the providence of God, early in high school I became more connected with kids in our church's youth group along with several other churches in our community and the local Christian high school...
 - and I started spending more time with them...
 - in most cases, they didn't have the same amount of money...they didn't dress as well or strut around as much...
 - but what was different was the way they treated one another...
 - they stuck up for each other regardless of who happened to be present at the time...
 - there was genuineness to those relationships and a desire to support everyone involved...
 - you also didn't have to do everything just right...or be an established part of the club or the clique...there was always room for one more and it was almost like they took special delight in including the person who didn't quite fit in naturally...
 - they also wanted to build one another up – and sure there was all kinds of friendly bantering – I'm not suggesting they were a bunch of choir boys...(no offense to choir boys)...
 - but tearing the person down who didn't happen to be present in order to build yourself up would have been viewed as an act of betrayal among those kids...
 - and it gave you great security because you were pretty certain that if necessary, they would stand up for you even if you didn't happen to be around at the time...
- that tendency was actually what the Lord used to redirect my life into pursuing those friendships more and eventually coming to Christ as a result...
- and while at the time I'm not sure I would have used this particular term...what I'm describing to you this morning is certainly one of the
 - **Six Words Every Relationship Needs**
 - it's the word...**Loyalty**...and I'd like to talk to you about that today...
- with those thoughts in mind, please open your Bible first to 2 Samuel chapter 22...
 - that's on page 245 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...

- we're going to be looking at several different passages of Scripture this morning, all in the neighborhood of 2 Samuel 22...
- I realize that might be a challenge for some folks here because you may seldom if ever had a Bible open before...
- that's OK – we're glad you're here – the short version is that the Bible has 66 books and is divided into 2 parts the Old Testament with 39 of the books and the NT with 27 books...
- so 2 Samuel is one of those 66 books...in this case, actually one of the 39 books of the OT...
- if you've found page 245 of the front section...you'll see at the top of the page it says 2 Samuel 22...you'll also see on the left hand side of the page about a third of the way down a big number 22...
 - that's where the chapter actually starts...
 - there's also smaller numbers – those are the actual verses...that should help you as we travel around the Bible today – because we really believe this is the Word of God so our teaching times are all about understanding Scripture...and what God's Word would say about contemporary life...
- the reason we're in 2 Samuel 22 is because this morning we're going to look at a great example of loyalty – it's a group of people called David's mighty band of men...and they were fiercely loyal to him, and he to them...
- and we're actually going to look at the end of the story first, and then we're going to go to the beginning and ask...how did this kind of loyalty develop?...
 - and along the way we're going to ask...is this true of your relationships?...
 - are your friends loyal to you, and you to them?...
 - are you loyal to your spouse and your spouse to you?...
 - are you loyal to your kids....are they loyal to their parents?...
 - would loyalty describe your relationships at work and in the community?...
 - are you loyal to the people in this church and they to you?...
 - the word **loyalty** means...**unswerving in allegiance, faithful to a person, cause, institution or ideal to whom fidelity is due,**
 - would that describe the way you relate to others, and the way others relate to you?...loyalty...
- now here's what you need to know in order to understand this story...
- David was the second king of God's chosen nation...the first was a man named Saul...
- part of the challenge of their relationship was that there was a significant period of time between when God revealed to David and his family and the prophet Samuel that He was going to replace Saul because of Saul's disobedience...and when that transition was actually finalized...some Bible teachers believe it was as long as 15 years...
- but all that time God's hand of blessing was clearly on David...which is why he was able to slay Goliath the giant...which is why his life prospered in so many ways...to the point that Saul became jealous...and actually started trying to kill David in a variety of different ways and on a variety of different occasions...
- during several of those events, David actually had the opportunity to kill Saul and end the problem...but David wouldn't do it – he told his men that he wouldn't touch God's anointed king...which is one of many examples of David's loyalty...
 - he wasn't a perfect person by any stretch of the imagination...but he was a man after God's own heart...
 - in 2 Samuel we're at the end of the story...and David writes a great Psalm of deliverance, and in the very next chapter...there's an explanation of part of the means God used to

provide this deliverance...through a group of people who chose to be to David...incredibly loyal...

- we're going to read the description...then back up and talk about the process...and when we're all done, hopefully have found...**5 principles to building loyalty in relationships**

- read 2 Samuel 22:1-4

- if you've studied the Bible you know that David was a songwriter...a significant percentage of the Psalms we have in our Bibles were written by him...and if you just glance down through the rest of the chapter you'll see verses very similar to the ones we just read...where David is taking time to thank God for the deliverance He has provided...waiting until things worked out God's way was better than taking matters into his own hands...
- but here's what I'd like you to notice at this point...the very next topic of discussion is the summary of David's mighty men...let's just read a sampling of the verses...

- read 2 Samuel 23:8-17

- now if you're wondering if it was right for world David to pour the flask of water out after these guys risked their lives to get it...my answer would be...I have no idea...
 - you may remember what we said a few weeks ago regarding the story of the apostle Paul and his friend Barnabus parting ways because of their disagreement about John Mark – we don't know who was right because the Scripture doesn't say – so our view of the inspiration of the Bible isn't that every that is reported about a character in the Bible was a right one – it's just that the events were accurately reported...sometimes we're left to draw our own conclusions because that's not the reason the story is in the Bible to begin with...
 - but we can say with assurance from what we've read so far is this...

I. God Often Uses Loyal Friends as Part of His Deliverance in Your Life

A. David's situation

- we saw it at the beginning...
- **2 Samuel 22:1 - The LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.**
- imagine going for years having received a promise from God that you would be the next king...yet being on the run for your very life because the man who is the current king is trying to kill you in all sorts of bizarre ways...
- and the logic of the text is...the instrument of deliverance on many occasions was...

B. David's mighty band of men.

- **22:8 – These are the names of the mighty men whom David had...**

- I imagine there are a number of people here this morning who would say – I understand that completely...
- perhaps you were going through a hard divorce and what got you through it humanly speaking was a some individuals who rallied around you and were loyal friends, or loyal family members during that potentially devastating time...that person stood up for you when a lot of others were tearing you down or gossiping behind your back...
- or maybe you were being bullied at school and someone stepped up and said to the bully, enough is enough...

- and maybe you had a situation at work with a difficult boss or co-worker...but someone stood up for you, even at great personal risk to themselves...because they were loyal...
- and God delivered you with similar means he used for David...a mighty band of people who were intensely loyal...
- you might also say – PV, I’ve also been privileged to be on the other side of that equation...
 - where someone was being trashed, or abused, or picked on...and by God’s grace, I chose to be loyal to them...and yes it was a risk...but now that I look back on it...I’m glad I did...you’re right, one of the six words every relationship needs is loyalty...

- now let’s go backwards, and see how these delightful relationships were developed...look at 1 Samuel 22...where did these come from?...
- and while you’re turning there – maybe David hand-picked them because they were successful and faithful and dependable on the front end of their lives...is that the way this group came together?...
- read **1 Samuel 22:1-2**

- don’t you love that? – it almost sounds like the engraving at the bottom of the Statue of Liberty...
- and what’s the principle?...

II. Sometimes the Most Loyal Friends are those Who were Formerly Downtrodden.

A. David’s mighty men.

1 Samuel 22:2 - Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him.

- and you might think – what is ever going to be accomplished with a group like that?...
- the answer is – a lot...
 - because David accepted them, and befriended them, and taught them, and trained them, and confronted them, and looked for opportunities to stand up for them...
 - that’s how you get to 2 Samuel 22...when you better be careful about even mentioning you’d like a cup of water from territory held by the enemy, lest the next thing you know, 3 of your best guys are busting through enemy lines to get it for you...

- now, let’s broaden that out to the NT...

B. This is very similar to the way Jesus announced His public ministry.

- do you remember this passage in the book of Luke, when Jesus had to decide which passage from the OT to use to explain His coming ministry to the people in His hometown...
 - **Luke 4:16-21 - And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.” And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”**

- and we see that theme throughout Christ's public ministry...he didn't call those who thought they were well to repentance (because they would see no need) – He called the sick to repentance...
- blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...blessed are those mourn, for they shall be comforted (the first two beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5)...
- and the reason is – that's what generates loyalty...
 - those were the kind of people who chose to be loyal to David...and those are the kind of people, spiritually speaking, who will choose to be loyal to Christ...
- now, here's a few upshots of this...

C. Sometimes the reason people don't have loyal individuals in their life is because they've only had time for the beautiful people in their world.

- if you pick and choose the people you're going to love and reach out to based on what you think you will get from them – that kind of selfishness may come back around some day...
- but on the other hand – we've all seen people who were just loving to whatever person God brought across their path at the time...and they didn't do that in order to eventually get something in return...but on the day they had a need...loyal people were pouring out of the woodwork to help, or to stand up for them...why?...
 - because that loyalty had been earned...
- that's true of a church...

D. The difference between "country club church" and "misfit church" is enormous.

- see, some churches are growing very rapidly today by trying to attract all the beautiful people from other churches...
- so they get a good show going and everyone goes flocking over there...but the church didn't have to do the hard work of winning those people to Christ...and getting their hands dirty with unpacking all the baggage they brought into the Christian life...
- they just stole those people from some other church that did the hard work...
- and that approach works fine...until somebody else starts a better thing...and then all the beautiful people go flocking over there – why?...because there was no loyalty...
- loyalty is earned over time...
- which is why – if a church chooses to attract a group like David's mighty men...or more importantly, like Jesus' target audience...
 - it will be a lot messier...and a lot more work...
 - but over time, there will be a fierce loyalty...because oftentimes the most loyal friends (and church members) are those who were formerly downtrodden...
- that's our strategy at Faith West...
 - review the giving chart...
 - how did we get there?...it's because we're trying to fund an attempt to locate in West Lafayette and start meeting needs there...
 - and since that is the way so many people in this congregation were won to Christ – it's easy for people to get behind doing that in another part of town...the loyalty was earned over a long period of time by a lot of hard-working people...

E. Understanding your bankrupt spiritual condition is essential in becoming a loyal follower of Christ.

- the gospel always begins with an understanding of the enormity of our sin...

- we were like David's mighty band of men...we were in Jesus' target group, whether we understand that or not...
- and if you've never really understood the need to personally confess your sin and place your faith and trust in Christ as Savior and Lord, you'll never be motivated to truly repent and believe...and you'll always be around the edges of the family of God but you'll never be a loyal follower of Christ...
- there's also a parenting principle here as well...do you know why some young people are so cold and apathetic to the things of God?
- it's because they've never really seen their bankrupt condition and consequently have never appreciated what Jesus did for them on the cross...
- and I'm thankful for the young people growing up around here who get that...and who love the cross, and are impacted by the empty tomb...
 - but for those who are essentially spoiled brats who have been coddled to at every turn – they'll grow up and walk away from the things of God as soon as they have an opportunity to do so because there was never any loyalty in them.
- that's another reason why—if you have children at home – I would encourage you to complete your Faith West commitment form as a family...
 - and try to convey to your children that you love the message of the cross...and you want them to have a flag to follow, a cause for which to stand...to find a valiant leader who could their will command...
 - and you may recognize that as words to a great old hymn which goes on to say...
 - I found them all in Jesus, the life, the truth, the way...
 - beneath His flag I'll take my stand and follow Him today...
 - and I would encourage you to say to your kids – we love the message of the cross so much that we're going to sacrifice to help proclaim that message as we live life together as a church family...
 - and tell them – that's more important than designer sneakers...
 - it's more important than a new car or a trip to Disneyworld...
 - and they may fuss about it now – but often that's exactly what's involved in training the heart of a person who will eventually be loyal to the things of God...
 - because they eventually understood their formerly bankrupt condition and all that was required to bring them to Christ...
- now, the Scripture teaches us another important principle about all of this...and it's that...

III. The Best Loyalty is Developed by a Common Commitment to Following God's Word.

- look at **1 Samuel 23:1** – read

A. The dilemma.

- Keilah was a Jewish city, so the Philistines were attacking his people...
- and even though David wasn't king yet, he was still loyal to the people of God...

B. David's approach

- read **verse 2**
- so it's all cut and dry until the next verse...

C. The team's fear.

- read **v. 3**
- so what does David do?...
- he could have ridiculed them or cut them off...but look at the approach...**read verse 4**

D. David's response.

- he went to the Lord once more...he wasn't asking for loyalty beyond the authority of God's Word...and when they received confirmation...

E. The team's action.

- read v. 5

- so David and his men went to Keilah
- we're certainly not talking about blind loyalty this morning – this is joint fidelity to the Word of God...

- now here's another example...we can just touch on it because we actually have one more to go after this...but look at chapter 30...
- here's what happens...while they're away...the Philistines come to their camp...a place called Ziklag...and take all the women and children and animals...everything...
- so in other words...David's men have been following him...and they've lost everything...
- and they were mad for sure...and David seeks the Lord and is told to pursue the Philistines and they will be able recapture everyone and everything...
- but look at this...**read vv. 9-10...**
- the Bible goes on to tell us that David and 400 of his men pursue the Philistines, overtake them, and free their wives and children and receive an incredible amount of goods as well...
- then it's time to go back and divide the spoils of war...and some of the men say – the 200 who stayed behind shouldn't get anything...
- listen to this...**read 1 Sam. 30:21-24**

- here's the principle...

IV. Loyalty is a Two Way Street

A. David's treatment of others eventually became the way others treated him.

- and that's not surprising, right?...we reap what we sow...which leads to the obvious question this am...

B. What about you and the matter of loyalty?

- when it comes to your friends, do they know you have their back?...
 - do they know you'll be loyal?...
 - and that doesn't always mean you're going to side with them, or agree with them?...sometimes the most loyal thing you can do is confront someone...
 - but on the other hand, love covers a multitude of sins...
 - loyal people stand up for their friends...and support their friends...and build up their friends...
- is that true in your marriage?...
 - some spouses take the position of resident critic...
 - and every dream is sliced apart and ridiculed...
 - and there's no hesitancy to criticize that person behind his/her back...
 - and they find ways to get side-ways with their spouses' family...
 - there' s just no loyalty...
 - on the other hand – there are some spouses who look for ways to support their partner's ideas...they position themselves as an encourager and a cheerleader...they are committed to the 4P principle – always presenting their partner perfect in public...
 - they treat their spouse, and their neighbors, and their co-workers, and their friends at church...in a way that's loyal...
 - it's a word every relationship needs...

- in fact, if you're going to make a mistake....err on the side of being too loyal...which brings me to my all-time favorite story about David and one of his mighty men...

- **2 Samuel 16:9 - Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over now and cut off his head."**

2 Samuel 16:10 - But the king said, "What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah? If he curses, and if the LORD has told him, 'Curse David,' then who shall say, 'Why have you done so?' "

- the principle is:

V. Unbalanced Loyalty is Better than No Loyalty at All

- if you're going to make a mistake – it's better to be like Abishai than an unfaithful person like many people in our culture...