

A RARE SIGN OF LOYALTY WAS DISPLAYED

A quality that I often saw displayed when I was growing up was loyalty. I would see it being displayed:

- in places of work between employers and employees,
- in pro sports between athletes and owners,
- in friendships, families, and other relationships,
- in commitments and promises made to one another.

It is a quality that I admired so much that I have always tried to pattern and embrace it in my own life. Sadly, we have seen a decline in this admirable attribute over time. One person attributed the start of this decline in the sports world to the time when Wayne Gretzky was traded from the Edmonton Oilers to the Los Angeles Kings. When this decline with respect to displaying loyalty began to occur in other aspects of life is harder to put an exact finger on.

Loyalty may not be as common today as it once was, but I did see a sign of it last week. I was contacted by a player of another basketball team who was inquiring whether there might be the possibility of my players coming over to their organization. This player shared how she has played for the same coach for five years and how much she respects and admires him. She is hoping that she can play one more year for him, but the challenge is they only have three players at the moment. My first impression as I read her e-mail was how proud this other coach would be to see the loyalty and respect she has developed for him over the past five years. I admired this person's loyalty and I shared that with her when I responded by e-mail. I was touched and encouraged to see her loyalty, especially when I find it lacking so much in these days and times.

Perhaps many of you have had the same observation over the years that loyalty is becoming more of a rarity. As we reflect upon this change, we may want to take time to consider if we have fallen into this trend when it comes to our relationship with our Heavenly Father. One thing that Jesus makes very clear to us in His teachings in the Sermon on the Mount is how our Father examines our heart to see if our loyalty toward Him has changed. This teaching comes out in Matthew 6:33:

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.

To seek the Kingdom of God above all else ***means we are to put our loyalty to Him first and foremost in our lives above everything else.*** The way in which we can consistently maintain our loyalty toward God is by filling our thoughts with His desires rather than our own, by being Christ-like in our pattern of living, and by serving and obeying Him in all that we do. All of these things reveal to God our true feelings and loyalty toward Him. The challenge for us when it comes to our loyalty towards God is there are so many other things and desires that compete for this priority such as people, possessions, and goals. Just as society as a whole has drifted away from showing loyalty, maybe we have gone in this same direction when it comes to expressing it toward God. If this is the case, the best way we can reverse this is by following the psalmist's words in **Psalm 51:10:**

***Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Renew a loyal spirit within me.***

Asking God to cleanse us from within and to renew the spirit of loyalty within our hearts is the key for us to once again make our relationship with the Father our main priority. We may not see loyalty as much on display in these days and times, but let's ensure we do not lose this wonderful attribute in our relationship with God.

A smile came across my face when I saw the loyalty displayed by this basketball player for her coach. I imagine God's smile is even bigger when we show this same loyalty toward Him.

Keep Safe and God Bless,

Pastor Dean