

STUDY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

WHY LOYALTY MATTERS is filled with ideas about how each of us shapes not just our own lives, but also the communities in which we live. It is designed to help us think about what we can do to enrich our lives, and to enrich the lives of those to whom we come in contact. More importantly, the ultimate goal of **WHY LOYALTY MATTERS** is to motivate us to act.

This study guide will help you to reflect and personalize what it means to be loyal. You can use it individually, or as part of a group to help improve your own happiness, and impact the world around you.

CHAPTER 1: THE WHY OF LOYALTY

Chapter 1 is about recognizing the decline in loyalty that we witness all around us, and to see the interconnectedness of our loyalties.

1. What does it mean to be loyal?
2. What are the ramifications of a decline in loyalty to the world in which we live?

What the Bible Says

The Bible indicates that God evaluates our hearts based upon our loyalty to one another. Loyalty to God demands that we be loyal to our fellow man.

1 John 4:20 (New Century Version)

If people say, "I love God," but hate their brothers or sisters, they are liars. Those who do not love their brothers and sisters, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have never seen.

Mark 12:28-34 (New Century Version)

28. One of the teachers of the law came and heard Jesus arguing with the Sadducees. Seeing that Jesus gave good answers to their questions, he asked Jesus, "Which of the commands is most important?"

29. Jesus answered, "The most important command is this: 'Listen, people of Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord.

30. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.'

31. The second command is this: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' There are no commands more important than these."

32. The man answered, "That was a good answer, Teacher. You were right when you said God is the only Lord and there is no other God besides him.

33. One must love God with all his heart, all his mind, and all his strength. And one must love his neighbor as he loves himself. These commands are more important than all the animals and sacrifices we offer to God."

34. When Jesus saw that the man answered him wisely, Jesus said to him, "You are close to the kingdom of God." And after that, no one was brave enough to ask Jesus any more questions.

John 15:12-14 (King James Version)

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Questions for Reflection

1. Do you agree that God gauges our heart and loyalty to Him by our loyalty to one another?
2. Do you know people that are loyal, who maintain bonds regardless of circumstances? Why them, and not others?
3. What determines our loyalty?

CHAPTERS 2 & 3: KNOW YOURSELF & BUILDING LOYAL RELATIONSHIPS

Chapter 2 is about seeing ourselves as others see us. It is about recognizing how we relate to others, and recognizing that we can all be better than we are.

The most common problem in improving loyalty is our failure to see it as our problem. We tend to see ourselves as being much more loyal than others see us. And no one fixes a problem that they don't think they have!

Chapter 3 is about reaching out, and demonstrating our loyalty to others. It is about recognizing and reinforcing the bonds that our relationships with others entail. And it is about recognizing that our friends will sometimes fail us—just as we will sometimes fail our friends—so we must be able to forgive.

What the Bible Says

The Bible indicates that understanding yourself is critical, and that when ignored and passed over, it defeats the purpose of learning anything else. We *can* and *must* know ourselves better. It will help us gain perspective on those bonds we that nourish our spirits. It will make those relationships all the richer. Even when others fail us, understanding yourself helps you to embrace forgiveness, as it is what you would wish of your closest friends when you fail them.

Fix Yourself First

Luke 6: 41-42 (New Century Version)

41. "Why do you notice the little piece of dust in your friend's eye, but you don't notice the big piece of wood in your own eye?"

42. How can you say to your friend, 'Friend, let me take that little piece of dust out of your eye' when you cannot see that big piece of wood in your own eye! You hypocrite! First, take the wood out of your own eye. Then you will see clearly to take the dust out of your friend's eye.

We All Fail

Matthew 26: 31-35, 57-58, 69-75 (Contemporary English Version)

31. Jesus said to his disciples, "During this very night, all of you will reject me, as the Scriptures say, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'"

32. But after I am raised to life, I will go to Galilee ahead of you."

33. Peter spoke up, "Even if all the others reject you, I never will!"

34. Jesus replied, "I promise you that before a rooster crows tonight, you will say three times that you don't know me."

35. But Peter said, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never say I don't know you." All the others said the same thing.

57. After Jesus had been arrested, he was led off to the house of Caiaphas the high priest. The nation's leaders and the teachers of the Law of Moses were meeting there.

58. But Peter followed along at a distance and came to the courtyard of the high priest's palace. He went in and sat down with the guards to see what was going to happen.

69. While Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, a servant girl came up to him and said, "You were with Jesus from Galilee."

70. But in front of everyone Peter said, "That isn't so! I don't know what you are talking about!"

71. When Peter had gone out to the gate, another servant girl saw him and said to some people there, "This man was with Jesus from Nazareth."

72. Again Peter denied it, and this time he swore, "I don't even know that man!"

73. A little while later some people standing there walked over to Peter and said, "We know that you are one of them. We can tell it because you talk like someone from Galilee."

74. Peter began to curse and swear, "I don't know that man!" Right then a rooster crowed,

75. and Peter remembered that Jesus had said, "Before a rooster crows, you will say three times that you don't know me." Then Peter went out and cried hard.

Forgiveness Is Divine

Genesis 50:16-17 (New International Version)

16. So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died:

17. 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

Luke 23:34 (Contemporary English Version)

34. Jesus said, "Father, forgive these people! They don't know what they're doing." While the crowd stood there watching Jesus, the soldiers gambled for his clothes.

Questions for Reflection

1. Think of a time when your own actions were perhaps too hasty and you hurt someone. In particular, think of a time when you have terribly misjudged another. How did you misjudge them? Why? What did you learn from that experience?
2. How does the misjudgment of others relate to how we see ourselves? Do we see all others through our own eyes only? Should we?
3. How do you react when a close friend fails you? How should we approach our friends and our family when we are let down?

CHAPTER 4: THE ECONOMICS OF LOYALTY

Chapter 4 is about understanding how an economically-based society functions, and how it can impact our connections with others. But Chapter 4 is also very much about how we ought to see the economy, in particular its role in serving us, and not the other way around. We are not machines. Not everything has a price-tag on it. Those who seek to put the dollar before the people in their lives will find that they are quickly deprived of both.

People cannot be treated like machines or the sum of a bank's equation. Doing so will cause businesses to suffer, but more importantly it will cause *people* to suffer.

What the Bible Says

The Bible says that the love of money can become an obsession that blinds people to the true value of those things that mean the most to our happiness. Of course, we need money to survive, but greed is never good. In the end, nothing is more valuable than our connections with one another. Investing in the lives of others is a reward that cannot be matched.

Our Economic Lives

Ecclesiastes 5:9-11 (New Century Version)

10. Whoever loves money will never have enough money; Whoever loves wealth will not be satisfied with it. This is also useless.

11. The more wealth people have, the more friends they have to help spend it. So what do people really gain? They gain nothing except to look at their riches.

1 Timothy 6:9-11 (New Century Version)

9. Those who want to become rich bring temptation to themselves and are caught in a trap. They want many foolish and harmful things that ruin and destroy people.

10. The love of money causes all kinds of evil. Some people have left the faith, because they wanted to get more money, but they have caused themselves much sorrow.

11. But you, man of God, run away from all those things. Instead, live in the right way, serve God, have faith, love, patience, and gentleness.

Honest Work

2 Kings 12:10-16 (New Century Version)

10. Each time the priests saw that the box was full of money, the king's royal secretary and the high priest came. They counted the money that had been brought to the Temple of the Lord, and they put it into bags.

11. Next they weighed the money and gave it to the people in charge of the work on the Temple. With it they paid the carpenters and the builders who worked on the Temple of the Lord,

12. as well as the bricklayers and stonecutters. They also used the money to buy timber and cut stone to repair the damage of the Temple of the Lord. It paid for everything.

13. The money brought into the Temple of the Lord was not used to make silver cups, wick trimmers, bowls, trumpets, or gold or silver vessels.

14. They paid the money to the workers, who used it to repair the Temple of the Lord.
15. They did not demand to know how the money was spent, because the workers were honest.

Questions for Reflection

1. Have you ever chosen something over someone you cared about, or someone who needed you?
2. How does the economy figure into how you see your life? Are you or someone you know defined by what they do for a living? Do you know someone who constantly chooses work over other things in their life?
3. How does charity play into your view of economic life? Your personal life?
4. Exodus 21:35 says "If a man's bull injures the bull of another and it dies, they are to sell the live one and divide both the money and the dead animal equally." Does this idea have any place in the modern world? How so?

CHAPTER 5: TOXIC LOYALTY

Chapter 5 is about recognizing being loyal to the wrong things, to people or to groups that often inflict harm upon us. God places the responsibility for our actions squarely upon us, so we must never allow ourselves to do what we believe to be morally wrong in the name of loyalty. When it comes to giving our loyalty, we must remember:

1. Loyalty to any group or cause that has as a primary and intended outcome an obvious evil is loyalty to the dark side no matter how it is cloaked.
2. Never, ever ignore your moral compass! Understand for yourself what is right or wrong and lead a principled life by standing up for what you know to be right.

What the Bible Says

Most often, our loyalty is toxic when we are forced to choose between competing loyalties and we simply make the wrong choice. At the trial of Jesus, the chief priests made the issue one of loyalty. Was Pilate loyal to Caesar or to Jesus? While Pilate had resisted other justifications as to why Jesus should be killed, when it became an issue of loyalty, for him there was no question. He was with Caesar.

John 19:12-16 (New Century Version)

12. After this, Pilate tried to let Jesus go. But some in the crowd cried out, "Anyone who makes himself king is against Caesar. If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar."
13. When Pilate heard what they were saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at the place called The Stone Pavement.
14. It was about noon on Preparation Day of Passover week. Pilate said to the crowd, "Here is your king!"
15. They shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Do you want me to crucify your king?" The leading priests answered, "The only king we have is Caesar."
16. So Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.

Questions for Reflection

1. Who is having the greatest influence on our thinking?
 - a. Are these people we want to be like?
 - b. Are they a positive or negative influence in our life?
2. Is our loyalty based upon our values, or do we side with a person/institution regardless of the values the person or institution represents?

CHAPTER 6: FAITH AND LOYALTY

Chapter 6 is about the interconnectedness of faith and loyalty. It is about living the importance of living our faith in a way that allows others to see the power of God through us while respecting the rights of all, even those who choose not to believe.

What the Bible Says

For the faithful, faith in God is the ultimate manifestation of our loyalty. In fact, the words faithful and loyal are synonymous. It is this loyalty that is required for us to connect with God. And it is this faithfulness that makes us whole.

Only the Loyal Can Have Connection with God

Psalm 15:1-4 (Contemporary English Version)

1. Who may stay in God's temple or live on the holy mountain of the LORD?
2. Only those who obey God and do as they should. They speak the truth
3. and don't spread gossip; they treat others fairly and don't say cruel things.
4. They hate worthless people, but show respect for all who worship the LORD. And they keep their promises, no matter what the cost.

Faith Makes Us Whole

Matthew 9:21-22 (King James Version)

20. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment
21. For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.
22. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

Mark 10:51-52 (King James Version)

51. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.
52. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

Luke 17:10-20 (King James Version)

11. And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.
12. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:
13. And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.
14. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.
15. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,
19. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

Questions for Reflection

1. What does it mean to be loyal to God? How do you demonstrate this loyalty?
2. The Bible says that Jesus could have used His power to save Himself, but instead He willingly allowed Himself to be crucified without a struggle when arrested and condemned by those who did not see Him as divine. Does this have a message for us in terms of how we should behave in a world where many do not share our beliefs?

CHAPTER 7: TEACHING LOYALTY

Chapter 7 is about how we pass on the principles we have gained in our life experience, how we reach out and integrate that which has served us well into the life experience of another, whether it be peer, family member, neighbor, or child.

Loyalty is about behaving differently. It is about behaving persistently in a *committed* way to those people, institutions, and ideals that deserve our greatest efforts. But none of us are born loyal—we learn to be loyal. And this requires that we teach and practice the art of loyalty.

What the Bible Says

The Bible teaches us that it is our obligation to instill the history and values of our forefathers in the hearts and minds of our children so that they may better understand the impact of what the Bible teaches them, and to gain the wisdom of those who have passed before us.

Luke 6:40 (New Century Version)

A student is not better than the teacher, but the student who has been fully trained will be like the teacher.

Deuteronomy 4:9 (Contemporary English Version)

You must be very careful not to forget the things you have seen God do for you. Keep reminding yourselves, and tell your children and grandchildren as well.

Proverbs 22:6 (New Century Version)

Train children to live the right way, and when they are old, they will not stray from it.

Questions for Reflection

1. In what ways, if any, have you taken a proactive role in teaching others?
2. How important would you say that a strong ability to teach others is essential to living a good Christian life? How do you go about fostering these abilities?
3. How has the lessening of teaching loyalty and other virtues today had an adverse effect on the community (and on our country)? In what realms can these effects be seen?

CHAPTER 8: A LOYAL SOCIETY

Chapter 8 is about putting the teachings of both our faith and our loyalty into the world in a much broader sense. We must not confine our talents only to those within our family, our group of friends, our neighborhood, or our religion. We must extend ourselves outside of these boundaries and have concern for everyone's well-being.

It is the seed from our efforts that blossom into a local society that is cohesive, safe and happy. But this only happens when we plant this seed.

What the Bible Says

The Bible warns specifically about the result of a morally threadbare society and the scorn it breeds on all who inhabit it. A disloyal society is a cruel and loveless place where even the tightest of bonds are constituted by deceit and bile.

Therefore, we should seek to embrace one another in a society so that we may share not only in the necessities we each require, but also in the joy and security that trust and honest relationships will foster within ourselves.

A Disloyal Society

Micah 7:1-3 (New Century Version)

1. Poor me! I am like a hungry man, and all the summer fruit has been picked—there are no grapes left to eat, none of the early figs I love.
2. All of the faithful people are gone; there is not one good person left in this country. Everyone is waiting to kill someone; everyone is trying to trap someone else.
3. With both hands they are doing evil. Rulers ask for money, and judges' decisions are bought for a price. Rich people tell what they want, and they get it.
4. Even the best of them is like a thorn-bush; the most honest of them is worse than a prickly plant. The day that your watchmen warned you about has come. Now they will be confused.
5. Don't believe your neighbor or trust a friend. Don't say anything, even to your wife.
6. A son will not honor his father, a daughter will turn against her mother, and a daughter-in-law will be against her mother-in-law; a person's enemies will be members of his own family.

Committing to Loyalty

Psalms 78:7-9 (New Century Version)

7. So they would all trust God and would not forget what he had done but would obey his commands.
8. They would not be like their ancestors who were stubborn and disobedient. Their hearts were not loyal to God, and they were not true to him.

Deuteronomy 4:4-8 (Contemporary English Version)

4. But all of you that were faithful to the LORD your God are still alive today.

5-8. No other nation has laws that are as fair as the ones the Lord my God told me to give you. If you faithfully obey them when you enter the land, you will show other nations how wise you are. In fact, everyone that hears about your laws will say, "That great nation certainly is wise!" And what makes us greater than other nations? We have a God who is close to us and answers our prayers.

1 Timothy 2:1-5 (New Century Version)

1. First, I tell you to pray for all people, asking God for what they need and being thankful to him.
2. Pray for rulers and for all who have authority so that we can have quiet and peaceful lives full of worship and respect for God.
3. This is good, and it pleases God our Savior

Questions for Reflection

1. Why is it imperative for us as Christians to actively involve ourselves in our communities?
2. What issues or causes particularly concern you? How can you or have you become involved?
3. How can we as Christians find ways to disagree with others in our communities who may honestly disagree with our view without becoming disagreeable?

CHAPTER 9: ENLIGHTENED LOYALTY

Chapter 9 is about putting together all of the pieces to the puzzle. Throughout the book we have examined almost every facet of modern life and tried to put it into a context that demonstrates why loyalty matters. In many ways, it is another articulation of the Golden Rule—Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

What the Bible Says

The Bible speaks of the importance of compassion. Consideration for others is paramount to pursuing the right path. The enlightening wisdom of the Bible teaches us quite simply to let go of our ego and selfish pursuits, to love our enemies, to treat those who disagree with us with respect, and to help those we can. Ultimately, this is what it means to be loyal to God's will.

Ephesians 4:32 (New Century Version)

Be kind and loving to each other, and forgive each other just as God forgave you in Christ.

Matthew 5: 43-48 (New Century Version)

43. You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemies.'

44. But I say to you, love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you.

45. If you do this, you will be true children of your Father in heaven. He causes the sun to rise on good people and on evil people, and he sends rain to those who do right and to those who do wrong.

46. If you love only the people who love you, you will get no reward. Even the tax collectors do that.

47. And if you are nice only to your friends, you are no better than other people. Even those who don't know God are nice to their friends.

48. So you must be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Philippians 4:5-7 (Contemporary English Version)

5. Always be gentle with others. The Lord will soon be here.

6. Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God.

7. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.

2 Timothy 2:13 (New Century Version)

If we are not faithful, he will still be faithful, because he must be true to who he is.

Questions for Reflection

1. It is not easy to love those who do not love us. Why would God expect this of us? How can we do this without being constantly hurt?
2. How can we balance all of the demands that life places on us so that we can maintain our connection with God, and live a life of Christian service to others?
3. Jesus asked that we demonstrate his love to others through the way we live our lives. In what ways do others see God through what you do?