

Bible verses to build your life on

Jesus said: “... whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock...” ~

Matthew 7:24

Snapshot of a Disciple Study

‘Misplaced Loyalties’

(part 1 of 2)

Hello brothers and sisters in Christ and friends,

Well, summer is basically over (for most in the northern hemisphere). School has started for many, and work is, well usual :). And holidays are just around the corner, so what a fitting time to do a foundational Bible study, right? Like a kind of - ‘let’s get back to our Biblical roots’ kind of study? ~ What do you say? Yes?! All right! :) Well the, let’s get right in. ~ :)

So, today - I’d like to talk about loyalty. What’s that? Did I just hear a clunk? Or was it the mouse moving to close the window... Wait! Before you go, please at least read this first paragraph, because I might not be saying what you think I’ll be saying :). I know, loyalty is not a topic I discuss much, but I feel we need to talk about it. And from what I’m seeing in this country right now, it seems there isn’t a better time than right now. Okay so far? Don’t worry, this won’t hurt - much... well, I hope it will challenge each of us (you and me),

because we do need to re-evaluate:

- > the loyalty we give,
- > how much,
- > to whom,
- and
- > what quality and qualifications define our loyalty to those around us,

including:

- * husband/wife - spouse
- * children and close family,
- * extended family
- * friends,
- * neighbors,
- * acquaintances
- >> and [*cue drum roll please*] <<
- * Bible teachers and religious leaders.

I hope I've now peaked your curiosity just enough that you'll stick around as we go through this direct, yet gentle, and necessary analysis. And, I intend to base all of my analysis here only on God's Word and nothing else? Okay, so far? Okay. Let's go then!

Let's start with 2nd Corinthians 10, because there in this passage, God tell us that we are supposed to bring captive all of our thoughts into submission to Jesus Christ and His Amazing Word (2nd Cor. 10:5). Our loyalties and how we treat/handle all of those around us will be included, yes? Oh, and here's that passage: **"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our spiritual warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of and obedience to God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and He is ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience level is complete mature."** (2nd Corinthians 10:3-5) Please notice the strong emphasis on the subject of us using self-control (i.e. controlling ourselves) and growing deeper in that, because that is a big theme in that passage, among a few others.

Ok, so the word 'loyalty'. What do you think of when that word comes to mind? If you are like many in US, who watch TV or entertainment news (etc) - like my family and I used to, you'd possibly think of the bond that two actors show for each other on screen, or the image of the family dog or pet wanting to be by their owner's side constantly. Now, at first glance, those probably look like good examples... but, they're not.

You see, the actors on TV do not care about each other much or at all, by God's definition. **"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."** (Philippians 2:3) And they certainly don't show the kind of love that will sacrifice itself for them - it's just an act. **"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."** (John 15:12-14) And, that self-centered love actually shows itself in the 'love' that is acted out in almost all TV, movies, and novels, etc. Their 'love' is not an ***'I love and care about you unconditionally because God does.'*** (- which is the agape love God shows us). No, their portrayal of 'love' is more the ***'I'm happy with you at this moment because I really like that you gave me that (fill in the blank), so I'm going to give you something back in return. And, I hope to top what you gave me, so that you owe me something else...'*** ~ and the cycle goes on and on, and on... Yet, as you can see, that isn't love at all! But, it is pretty much the only 'love' that is displayed in the media and it is the only love shown by those who are not followers of Christ. Why? Because they don't know anything else.

These next 3 passages show the natural love that overflows out of our rebellious hearts:

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that [is] in the world--the lust of the flesh,

the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.”
(1st John 2:15-17)

“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Spiritual adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’?”
(James 4:1-5) ~ Yes, you are correct, that is James having to correct followers of Christ who were acting just like the world.

Here is one more:

“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh...”
(Galatians 5:13-16) ~ This here is Paul having to rebuke followers of Christ not to act like the world in fighting for their selfish and self-centered desires and wants.

Okay. So, it’s sad, but because of the lack of display of agape righteous love around us, many in the gatherings of believers also seem to be copying the same hypocritical love, probably because they are only repeating what they see on TV and movies (which is so full of garbage and really needs to be thrown away). And, the lack of seeing God’s **‘agape’** (unconditional) love shown even in the churches, is a probably also a big reason why many followers of Christ also don’t know how to show un-hypocritical love. If that topic is new for you, I hope you’ll think on it. However, I assume many of those reading this are already aware of that problem, yet a little reminder didn’t hurt - because we all (me too) need them. :)

A verse we need to hide in our hearts is in Romans 12? **“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.”** (Romans 12:9) That kind of Biblical love does not waver and is not based on self-centered agendas, aims or emotional whims, but on truth and Biblical God-centered logic. It’s also a love that doesn’t change with every wind of false doctrine (Ephesians 4:14) - as in conforming to the world’s version and definition because a pastor says it’s okay to do so. And, again, God’s kind of Biblical love is a love that this world cannot show, because it’s a love that only God brings: **“We love Him because He first loved us.”** (1st John 4:9) That is the perfect love explained in 1st Corinthians 13 and other passages.

Okay, so I thought it was fitting to start with that refresher. Now, that’s one of two aspects I want to look at. As, we’ve just seen (in brief) what the world displays in ‘love’ is wrong. So, what does a right love look like? Consider this. I’d like to ask a

few thought-provoking questions that you and I can meditate and pray on, and let it challenge our hearts. I'm only listing 2, because I still want to get to the topic of loyalty.

* Do we care about those around us because of how they treat us, what they give us, or how they help us?

* Or, do we honestly care about them as a person (and an eternal soul)?

Those are fair questions and we need to remind ourselves of that kind of Biblical thinking as often as it takes to become part of our lives. That kind of Biblical thinking using Biblical definitions helps us to define if we genuinely love people or only show hypocritical love and appreciate them when they like us or make us feel good and/or we'll turn on them when they don't do that. The '*I'll turn on them when they don't...*' is the world's love. It's cold. It's heartless. It has the 'essence' of 'love', but it's not - not even close! Okay, so I felt we had to clarify our terms on that just a little to start with. Now, let's look at the next piece. ~~~ (continued in part 2)

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Snapshot of a Disciple Study

‘Misplaced Loyalties’

(part 2 of 2)

‘Blind loyalty and when to use it’

For just a second, I would like you to think on this question - When is it Biblical to show blind loyalty - as in loyalty despite actions, words, etc? In other words, when is there a Biblical reason to show complete compliance and ask no questions a non-thinking response, in which we don't offer any feedback in a relationship? ~ Is it Biblical to show loyalty? Yes. But, blind loyalty?... well, let's look at that in more detail. ~

So, I don't know what you came up with in those questions, but I don't believe there is a place for blind loyalty.

Marriage covenant:

Let's take the Biblical marriage relationship between a man and woman, first. Husbands and wives can't have blind loyalty to each other, while ignoring what each other is doing. Of course not, for if they do, they might be overlooking the steps that lead to an affair or a frivolous divorce because both spouses lost connection with each other and lost touch with God's Word. So, no, marriage cannot be a blind loyalty - it has to be nurtured on both sides. And when either one commits adultery, that spouse has severed the marriage covenant between them and God, and the other spouse is free to go, or if God shows them to, stay and rebuild if both work together. (Adultery, btw, is one of only 2 Biblical reasons for divorce - the other is the death of the spouse).

So, Biblical loyalty in marriage isn't blind loyalty. So, what is it? It's loyalty to God's Word, and therefore loyalty to each other based on God's Word. It's a partnership. It's a Biblical covenant relationship. “**And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”?** So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.’” (Matthew 19:4-6) Jesus here quoted what God's Word right after He created Eve (from one of his ribs) and brought her to Adam. God established this back

in Genesis, before the fall. This is why it's common in marriage vows (the '*I do*'s to hear something along the lines of : '*for better, for worse; in sickness, in health; till death do you part...*' God established that - not based on the whims of emotions, but on the solid rock of maintained and disciplined obedience to His Word. And this verse is also on topic: "... **And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive your offering with goodwill from your hands. Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence,' Says the LORD of hosts. 'Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.'**"

Marriage is a bond that is not held by emotion, but by those who passionately fight to keep their marriage blossoming and growing closer to Christ, so they can serve God together and grow in that till their last breath. And, it is a vital relationship to be kept above all other relationships with the same or opposite gender. Marriage must be both cherished and fought for. Those who commit to be single for life to please Christ don't have to worry about this category of loyalty, but those who are married need to pay attention to this detail closely, and check themselves as often as necessary to make sure they keep this in clear focus at all times.

Okay, so as you can see, Biblical loyalty here in the marriage-covenant relationship is not blind at all - it's not built on emotions. For there to be a Biblical unity in a marriage, there has to be both an active loyalty to Scripture and honest discussions, and a blending of each others' lives - between the couple to maintain their marriage covenant, and each of them dependent on and growing from their own personal studies in the Word of God - closer to God and closer to each other. And, this Biblical loyalty will be based on a growing obedience to God and His Word - pledged for life together: '*For better, for worse, in sickness and in health, till death do us part.*' Satan is always trying to tear this Biblical covenant apart, and therefore, those of us who are married (or get married one day) must fight to stay married and keep our unity grounded in God's Word, the husband leading in his very important role, and the wife working alongside him. That is a picture of Biblical unity, but in some ways, it only applies to Biblical marriage. So, what about other categories?

Children:

Okay, so what about loyalty to our children? Well, the world says, in essence, do whatever necessary to keep your kids happy and they'll stay loyal... There are 2 problems with that thinking - 1> kids are naturally born rebellious, only caring about their self-interests, and discipline and Biblical instruction is the only thing that will interrupt that cycle. "**Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.**" (Proverbs 22:15) And this passage is also very

important **“The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.”** (Proverbs 29:15)

So, that was one problem with the world's thinking and psychology. The other problem is that if you and I raise our kids with the pattern of giving them most or everything they want - their loyalty back to us will be most conditional on how much you continue to give them. **“The leech has two daughters--Give and Give!”** (Proverbs 30:15) - That's not a great verse for this, but it does show the problem, and I can't find the other one I was thinking of.

Also, You may remember that in His Word, God talks about parents investing in and training their children - that's far from blind loyalty, but it's a real-time analysis of how they are doing in obedience and looking for what to and how to teach them more. It's more like investing. As I like to say, children are a blessing and investment. I've seen this firsthand from how God helped Dad and Madre raise me and my bro and others like parents like them.

Anyway, I expect you can see, even with our children, our loyalty can't be based on what they give back (more or less), how we feel about them, or on the other side of the spectrum - blind loyalty to keep them happy, giving them everything they want. No, Ephesians 6 is just one of many passages in the Bible that tell parents how to handle their children, God's way. **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth. And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”** (Ephesians 6:1-4)) And, of course, it means saying 'No' sometimes and meaning 'No'. And, I think it's pretty obvious that if they don't learn that at home, they will have to learn that in life somewhere.

Extended family:

Okay, so what about loyalty to other family members - extended family, if you will? What level of loyalty do we show them? Well, they too have to be handled according to how seriously they take studying and applying God's Word and how they are treating the spouse and other family members. Again, blind loyalty doesn't work here. Remember Jesus' example? **“Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, ‘Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.’ But He answered them, saying, ‘Who is My mother, or My brothers?’ And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.’”** (Mark 3:31-35) - Jesus' own mother and brothers tried to stop Him from preaching the truth at a certain point, and Jesus reminded those around Him (and those who would take the message back to His family) that those who care and are growing in obeying God are His family - those who do not care about obeying God are not His family. - Here again, we see it's Biblical logic that has to be the basis of our loyalty and interactions with our extended family members.

Okay, so what about our loyalty to friends? Well, again our loyalty to them cannot be blind - it has to be based on and adjusted according the level of our fellowship on the Word of God, and how they are treating us and the rest of our family. So, again, blind loyalty doesn't fit here either. A few passages come to mind on this:

* **“The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.”** (Proverbs 29:25)

* **“Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”** (John 12:42-43)

* **“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”** (John 6:26)

Okay, so that last category covers neighbors, co-workers and acquaintances as well. So, now to the next category.

So there's one more big category here that I think gets overlooked, and that category is the main topic my thoughts are on. [*Haha! Yes, all of that was ground-work to get to here :)*] That category is: Bible teachers. Yep - nice easy topic, right? No, of course not. But, we still need to analyze it from a Biblical perspective.

Curious in all of the other categories: Husband/wife, children, extended family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and acquaintances - did you notice a common denominator? When we look at the Bible for wisdom on loyalty to each of the other categories, we notice that Biblical loyalty isn't (or mustn't be) based on our emotions. It isn't based on what we get back from the other person. but only on one solid thing - God's Word. Biblical unity and loyalty with everyone else around us must be based on the quality of our loyalty and unity on Scripture. All other reasons for loyalty will confuse us and cause us pain, trouble and heartache - here on Earth and even more in Heaven!

And, it is the same with our unity and loyalty with preachers - even more so, really. Our loyalty to Bible teachers needs to be based on how much they value and teach the literal Word of God, and nothing else. It cannot be based on how sweet they act when they are around crowds. It cannot be based on the funny stories they tell. It cannot be based on how they're always so encouraging. It cannot even be based on how much knowledge of the Bible or Biblical facts that have.

Yes, that includes me. :) ~ Biblical unity with pastors is the same as anything else - we have Biblical unity based on how much unity we have on the Word of God. When they start to drift from that, or they have an area that they teach on that is not in keeping with the Word of God, we have to step back from them - that is, if we are letting the Bible - God's Literal Living Word to us - be the basis and foundation of our lives, relationships, and interests. Our relationship, loyalty and unity with them (me

included) has to be based on facts and the literal teaching of the Word of God. It's really more of a caring and logical process, not blind loyalty at all.

Yet, this is the sad part. Do you realize how many people all across this country have blind loyalty to their pastor or favorite Bible teacher? It's one of the saddest things in today's society. And yet, it's not exclusive to Christianity - I read a rabbi's notes that showed that it happens with Jewish culture as well. And, of course, it happens with all the religions for that matter. Yet, does it work? Is it safe? No. It's spiritually and eternally dangerous. Because once we're blindly loyal to a Bible teacher, we stop double-checking them, and we can so easily be led wherever they want to lead us - even, like in Germany in the 1930s and 40s - to an early and unnecessary death, and eternal embarrassment, if not eternal losses or Hell forever.

Think about in Germany, if you will. I'm sorry, I know that may seem like a radical example. But I just finished reading 3 holocaust memoirs and so it's the example on my brain at the moment. And yet, I believe it's also a fitting one. So, I hope you'll follow me on this for a sec. At a certain point, when Hitler was taking over, he forced (by bribe or threat) all German pastors to either only teach German 'approved' sermons, or be murdered. It was an either or decision - no exceptions. So, many of these pastors let go of the truth they knew or somewhat believed and complied with the new rules - that was a very sad note for them.

But, even worse, do you know what the people did when they saw this all happening? Nothing. They just kept blindly following their 'pastor' or 'clergy'. Very few even asked any questions. They just went along with it... like sheep toward the slaughter. I don't know if you realize it, but many (or most) of the honorable German Christians were murdered along with the Jewish people in Germany. They lost their lives because they followed their false teacher rather than stand up to him - with Scripture as their foundation. So, the pastors fell, then many of those who followed him and also fell - and many of them were murdered, killed in war, or turned their backs on the Jewish people and lost track of other key truths they once held dear. So, how did they fall? Because they were fooled by their 'pastor' who was twisting God's Word to please Hitler and team.

Okay, so jump to today, in America, we're not under a dictator's threats, but we are continuing to see our country slide downhill, and for the most part, most Christians are going along with much of it. What many don't realize is that both the masons and IRS are constantly threatening pastors to say less and less. If you have a pastor who teaches God's Word literally, he needs 2 things from you:

1> support,
and

2> accountability to stay there and keep preaching. If, however, you find that those you have been listening to do not preach anything that brings every single time they preach, I would suggest that you put a big question mark on them, and ask God to either correct and inspire them to stand higher and preacher bolder, or ask God to raise up a way to remove and replace them.

Do you see the value of getting in your Bible every day? I know many of you do, and I'm hoping to be one who wakes others up, because this is a key time for us to awake, spend quality time in God's Word, regain clear testimonies, pure consciences, and expose those who don't love God's Word and teach it literally - calling them to repentance or replacing them. Thank you to those of you who already do that, and also to those of you who pray for those of us who do that!

I don't have time or space to discuss how to take the next steps here, but I want to end with another key verse that we need to hide in our hearts.

“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily [to find out] whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11) ~ We all need to be actively checking on and holding religious leaders accountable, and boldly yet graciously correcting them where we see they are teaching something that is wrong. Our country needs it. And we need you to be a part of it. Are you in? Will you pray tonight asking God's wisdom on where you are in this and how to step higher?

Thank you for reading this. If you appreciate it, it's free to share.

Let's keep growing in hunger for God's Word, humble obedience and loyalty to Him, and boldness in explaining and sharing His Word and truth to all who will listen!

Your brother/friend, and a growing servant/life-slave of Jesus, SH

P.S. If you have comments, I'd love to hear them! You can comment below or email me: Steven.H3(@)gmail.com [remove ()] ~ SH