

Where's Your Loyalty?

[1 Kings 18:17-39](#)

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Loyalty. We all know about loyalty. We all know what it means, being loyal to someone or something. When we're loyal we're faithful, true, committed.

When we're loyal it's important not just to talk about it but to actually do it. We have to **be** loyal. If we're loyal to the New Bremen basketball team, we don't just say we're loyal. We act loyal. We go to the games, we cheer them on. If we're loyal to our company, our employer, we show it. We do our job faithfully. We tell others about it. If we're loyal to our country, we act like it. We vote, we pay our taxes, we follow the law.

Loyalty – to a person, entity, institution – isn't what we say. It's what we do.

Loyalty is the issue facing the Israelites. Elijah brings them to Mt Carmel and asks, where's your loyalty? Whose your God – the Lord, or Baal? Pick one because you can't serve both. Elijah tells the people to make a decision, get off the fence, fish or cut bait. And then, he challenges the prophets of Baal to a contest.

Elijah manages the contest well. He brings everyone to a hilltop which is where you go to talk to the gods. If you want to talk to the gods, you climb a hill. That's how it's done.

He also decides the offering is going to be two bulls. The bull was Baal's symbol. It was the preferred sacrifice to Baal. Finally, he lets the other team go first. Even though it's 450 of them to his 1, he lets the other side start.

The Baal prophets sacrifice their bull and begin praying. All morning they pray. Nothing happens. Lunchtime comes and still, nothing happens.

Elijah starts talking smack. “Louder, louder. Maybe he’s asleep. Maybe he’s taking a nap. Maybe he’s ‘wandered off’.” That was a euphemism. ‘Wandered off’ means ‘relieving himself.’ “Pray louder. Maybe he’s in the Men’s Room.” But nothing happens.

The prophets are desperate. They start shouting, cutting themselves, dancing themselves into a frenzy, but still nothing happens.

By now it’s evening. It’s time for the evening oblation, the evening offering. This is the loyalty offering. The offering you make to show your loyalty. Where’s your loyalty, Israel? Who you gonna serve?

Elijah fixes the altar. He lays the bull on the wood. Pours water over it again, and again, and again. And then he offers a simple prayer. No dancing, no knives, no hysterics.

And God answers. God answers. God answers with lightning, fire. God’s fire consumes the offering, the wood, the water, the stones. All is consumed in God’s blazing inferno. This is the power of God. This is the power of God and Israel knows where their loyalty must lie.

Friends, where does our loyalty lie? Where’s our loyalty? Loyalty to God is more than what we say. Loyalty to God is more than a Bible on a shelf. It’s more than Christian jewelry and WWJD bumper stickers. Those are good. Nothing wrong with them. But that’s not loyalty.

Loyalty is how we act. It’s what we do. It’s how we live, putting God first above all the Baal’s all around us. Is the big game more important than worship? Where’s our loyalty? Is Saturday night more important than Sunday morning? Where’s our loyalty?

We're asked to volunteer or take part in one of our ministries and we say, "Gosh, I'm so busy. I have this and this and this and this." OK. Fine. But where's our loyalty?

We don't have any problem signing a mortgage to buy a house. We don't have any problem signing a loan to buy a car. Oh, but we don't want to sign a pledge card. We can't commit to that. OK. Fine. But where's our loyalty?

Speaking of money, where's our money going? Next time the credit card or bank statement shows up, look it over. Where's our money going? Where's our loyalty?

Many years ago, when I lived in VA, there was a man at our church who gave more money every year to the University of Virginia than to any kind of Christian ministry. It wasn't a secret. The whole congregation knew. I don't know if anyone ever asked him, but it would have been a good question. Where's your loyalty?

Beloved, God is loyal to us. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus we see God's loyalty to us. Jesus is the ultimate, eternal symbol of eternal loyalty.

In Jesus, God frees us from our enslavement to sin. In Jesus, God pours rain into the drought of our lives. Even when we wander away, serving who knows how many masters, God is loyal to us. In Jesus, God promises to love us loyally not only in this world but even in the next. By God's actions, God is loyal to us.

By our actions, are we loyal to God? By our actions, are we loyal to God or are we limping along, trying to serve more than one master? Amen.