



CHAPTER 11

Loyalty

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("Rafe")

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LOYALTY

The full appreciation and understanding of the unity in marriage is foundational to there being genuine **loyalty in the relationship**. The verbal attack on your spouse is a verbal attack on your joint being and therefore an attack on yourself. It is the same for a physical attack, a failure to nurture, a failure to please, etc. The positive corollary is that a **CHOICE** to keep your mouth shut when tempted to say something against your spouse is a protection of your joint being and therefore a benefit to yourself. Furthermore the deliberate pleasuring, benefiting and delighting of your spouse will benefit your joint being and therefore it will ultimately also benefit you. Those reasons provide a logical and practical basis for **loyalty**, but there is much more.

Add to those realities the **CHOICE** to love your spouse and the **CHOICE** to obey the Lord's commands for speech, behavior, attitude, roles and responsibilities in marriage and you have an irrefutable case for absolute **loyalty**. Loyalty is a very, very big matter. Indeed, loyalty is a major component in a very successful, healthy, happy and God-honoring marriage.

Your commitment to your spouse must include a commitment to be **loyal** in the following ways: (1) physical/sexual fidelity to your spouse; (2) romantic affections solely for your spouse; (3) emotional dependence only upon your spouse; (4) keeping your confidences and private matters absolutely confidential and private; (5) always and immediately defending the person, character and reputation of your spouse; (6) always honoring your spouse and refusing to put down or demean your spouse; (7) always being united with your spouse in all communications with your children and in disciplining your children; (8) keeping your spouse, rather than anyone else, as your confidante; (9) assisting, encouraging and promoting your spouse to reach his or her full potential.

(1) Loyalty: physical/sexual fidelity to your spouse

This is obvious in light of the clear Scriptural commands not to commit adultery (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18; Leviticus 20:10; Matthew 15:19; Romans 7:2-3; James 2:11; II Peter 2:14). The serious Christian will do well to study and re-study the instruction of Jesus in Matthew 5:28 wherein Christ declared the truth that if a man lusts after a woman he has committed adultery in his heart. There is no room for messing around in this area. It is a huge tragedy if a Christian neglects the daily maintenance of a fresh walk with the Lord. Such neglect results in a dulling to the Holy Spirit's warnings. This is really dangerous. It can lead to hitting the top of the slippery slope of entertaining lust, which can lead to what is wrongly perceived to be innocent advances, which is but a sinful choice away from diving down into the cesspool of adultery itself (Proverbs 21:16). I remember an expression that I heard back before I became a Christian. Someone said, "It does not matter where you get your appetite as long as you eat at home." Nothing could be farther from the truth!

The God who created sex, sexual needs, sexual responses, hormones, and all of that, is the Righteous Judge who wisely instructed and warned repeatedly about sexual sins and their consequences. We are to **flee** from youthful lusts (I Corinthians 6:18). There are countless Christians littering the roadside of history who fell into sexual sin despite the fact that at one

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time previously they had a close and vibrant walk with the Lord and they had even at some point resolved to the Lord and to their spouse that they would never, never commit adultery.

There is only one safe area when it comes to physical matters. You must recognize that the old man and the old sinful nature are still in there waiting to raise their ugly heads. (Romans 5:6, 10; 6:6, 19-20; 7:14-25; 8:5-11; Galatians 5:1, 16-21; Titus 1:15; 3:3; James 4:1-2; I John 2:16; I Peter 3:3; II Peter 2:18-19). Today and every day you must spend quality time in the Word of God and in prayer to acknowledge afresh your utter dependence upon the Lord to walk righteously. But be encouraged, if you **CHOOSE** to walk in God's light and to obey God's Word, you will have victory! (I Corinthians 2:16b; 3:16; 5:17; Galatians 5:16, 22-25; 6:16; Ephesians 2:1-4; Colossians 3:8-11; Romans 8:9-11). You need to obtain from the Lord a fresh touch to be strong in recognizing and resisting temptation and in recognizing and taking the ways of escape which the Lord faithfully provides. (Romans 8:6; I Corinthians 10:12-13; 15:34; II Corinthians 10:4-5; Galatians 5:16, 22-25; Ephesians 6:10-18; Philippians 4:8; Titus 2:11-12; James 3:17; I Peter 1:13-16; 2:11) In other words, stay close to the Lord and stay as far away as possible from anything that would be even the slightest step either to the right or to the left from utter and absolute faithfulness and fidelity to your spouse. You should assume that you are too weak in your own strength to allow yourself to ever be in the midst of some erotic or stimulating situation outside of the marriage bedroom. You must **flee** youthful lusts (II Timothy 2:22). You must never try to see how close you can go to the edge of the cliff by wandering off the straight and strict centerline. Keep a close grip on the center line rope and resolve that the only way you can finish the race honoring your spouse and honoring the Lord is to stay right on the center beam depending on the Lord every step of the way.

Every time I hear that another Christian leader has flunked out morally I am reminded about how weak I am in and of myself. Jesus said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). This is true about all things. When you add the wildcards of sexual impulses and sexual desires to the sinful nature and the tendency to wander, it makes me shutter. We need to daily commit this matter to the Lord, and we need to daily affirm our absolute love, fidelity and loyalty to our spouse. Again we are in areas of **CHOICES**. I do not use the word "balance" in this area at all. There is nothing to balance. You must obey God, and you must be on your guard daily. Everything is weighed totally and absolutely on the side of staying as far away as possible from any deviation from the purity of your exclusive sexual and physical relationship with your spouse.

I want to discuss a related matter. It has to do with physical touching. I recognize that in the Bible we read of greeting one another with a "holy kiss" (Romans 16:16; I Corinthians 10:20; II Corinthians 13:12; I Thessalonians 5:26; I Peter 5:14). There is certainly a place for a Christian hug. I simply say that this is an area where you must be very careful. To the extent you can minimize physical touching among Christians you are staying in a safer zone. I like to reserve my Christian hugs of females for a very controlled and decent hug of the wonderful older ladies in church.

Shortly after I became a Christian I was among some wonderful people who made a practice of giving robust hugs at church. Whenever this happened with a female I would immediately notice that her breast were against me. I could not help but have conscious perceptions about the

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pressing of her breasts to my body. At that time I decided that I simply did not want thoughts about the breasts of other ladies to even go through my brain.

I started using a technique which I recommend to others. If it is appropriate and helpful to give a Christian hug to a female, I employ a very deliberate technique to keep things very decent and honorable. The man should make sure that he controls the situation so that he can make contact with the inside of his elbow area against the shoulders of the lady. Then he squeezes the sides of her shoulders and can thereby give a very strong hug without there ever being contact between his chest and the upper body of the woman. (Frankly, when my lovely daughters began to develop physically I started hugging them this way as a tangible statement to them that their father would continue to generously give them physical hugs, while honoring them and the purity of our relationship by not making any contact with their chests, even while hugging). What this all means is that my sweet Pamela is the only woman I pull tightly against me in a way that her breasts are going to make contact with me.

The woman needs to take special care in this matter of physical contact as well. Because men are excited so easily and quickly, women should not be making physical contact with men. To ladies I strongly suggest that if you make a practice of hugging men in the context of “the Christian hug,” remember that you are potentially creating a stumbling block for that man. I am telling you that the man you hug will perceive and know the nature and extent of your contact. Do not do something that will cause that man to feel your breasts against him which in turn will mean that he will at least for that instant be thinking about your breasts. So **CHOOSE** not to do it. I think that is a pretty simple rule.

Another area of caution has to do with simple touching with your hand. The husband should not touch another woman even as simply as putting his hand on the shoulder, arm or hand of any woman besides his wife (I'm not talking now about touching between parents and children). In the same vein the wife should not so touch a man. God wired us to notice and react to touching.

These things can be so easily misunderstood and you do not want someone of the opposite sex to think that you are making some kind of a flirtation, signal, or amorous contact with him or her. I suggest that you just avoid such touching altogether.

When there is a total loyalty between husband and wife in the area of physical and sexual contact, there is such sweet and abiding security. My darling Pamela has always been faithful to me with the highest degree of fidelity, and I have always been that faithful to her. I am happy that we can say that. With that purity in the relationship there is the freedom of knowing that whether present or absent your spouse is keeping himself or herself truly and solely for you.

(2) Loyalty: romantic affections solely for your spouse

In the preceding category I briefly mentioned lust. Suffice it to say that you must never entertain desires and plans for sex with anyone besides your spouse. Forget the trash that the world promotes about “fantasies.” God would not have commanded us to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5) if He had not given us the wherewithal to obey that command in dependence upon Him. Simply do not visualize, think about, or desire in you mind any kind of physical or sexual contact with any person other than your spouse.

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You need to control your heart as well as your hormones. In order to be loyal to your spouse you must be very careful that you will never direct your **affections** toward anyone besides your spouse. I knew a couple that developed very serious marital problems when one spouse allowed her amorous feelings and affections for her husband to grow cold, while at the same time directing those feelings toward a different man. This was a Christian couple and the woman rationalized that since she never had sexual contact or sexual activity with that other man and since she was resolved to remain married to her husband, then there was no sin. In other words, she made the **CHOICE** to withdraw her affections from her husband and to direct those affections toward another man. **That was an act of great disloyalty.** You are the one who makes the **CHOICE** about where you direct your affections. You **CHOOSE** whether you will release and freely give your affections fully toward your spouse or whether you will withhold those affections. Do not withhold your affections from you spouse, and by all means make the **CHOICE** that you will not for one second direct any amorous feelings, thoughts or affections toward anyone besides your spouse.

I suggest that the best way to remain loyal in this area is for you every day to consciously and affirmatively plan how to give your full affections to your spouse. We regularly employ common sense when we plan what we need to buy before going to the store. We prepare our shopping list before going to the grocery store. Before we visit the hardware store to get materials for a project we figure out what all we need to buy. Similarly, we consider it to be good organization to plan through a prioritized “to-do” list for the day. Yet we often fail to affirmatively pray for, plan for and prioritize things pertaining to the family, including how we can give our unrestricted affection today to our spouse. Why not start such prayerful daily planning right now.

(3) Loyalty: emotional dependence only upon your spouse

When God put husbands and wives together to create a married unit, God made the place where the defensive walls can be let down and where there is the freedom to let your spouse know your innermost feelings, hurts, needs, desires, and goals. The strongest marriages I know of are those wherein each spouse recognizes that he or she **needs** the other. It is not a sign of weakness that you need your spouse. Indeed it is in the recognition of your personal need for your spouse that your marriage unit becomes stronger.

Men, it is okay and in fact it is good, if you develop an emotional dependence upon your wife. Women, it is okay, and indeed good, if you develop an emotional dependence on your husband. I advise that you even tell each other regularly how much you need each other and how much you depend upon each other. It is an act of loyalty to restrict your emotional dependence to be upon your spouse. Certainly each person may have need of third persons, e.g. there may be the need of other counselors. Obviously at work there may be very significant needs for others to be participants. But do not allow those types of interrelationships to develop into an emotional dependence upon anyone besides your spouse.

The corollary is that it is an act of **disloyalty** for you to allow the development of an emotional dependence upon anyone besides your spouse. You are deluded if you think you can remain sexually pure in act and thought, and keep your affections totally toward your spouse while you

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allow some type of emotional dependence upon someone of the opposite gender to develop. The one who may at first be an understanding and compassionate friend will not remain only that. It does not work that way. For you to allow your emotions to get involved with that friendly advisor who provides such support is just one step away from allowing your affections to be directed toward that other woman or man and then on down the slippery slope it goes. Do not do it. It is dangerous indeed, and it is an act of disloyalty.

It is safest to make a practice of not being alone with a person of the opposite sex. Be careful to avoid working alone with or sharing free time or recreation with any person of the other sex other than your spouse. Be vigilant to **CHOOSE** to restrict your emotional dependence to your spouse.

(4) Loyalty: keeping your confidences and private matters absolutely confidential and private

Perhaps it should go without saying that you must keep confidential those things which your spouse requests that you keep confidential, and that you must keep confidential those things about your marriage and about your spouse which obviously you should keep confidential. Unfortunately, there are many Christians who do not keep such confidential and private matters totally between themselves and their spouse. Instead they blab it to some friend or some counselor or some prayer partner. Countless private, secret and confidential matters have been wrongly disclosed to someone other than a spouse in the name of sharing a “prayer request.” No matter how much you love, respect and trust some other third party, if you shared such confidential and private matters with that third party you have violated the trust of your spouse and you have been **disloyal**.

Here are some practical effects of such disloyalty. If you are willing to share confidential and private matters with a third party, then in the back of your mind you may be unable to have a certainty that your spouse will keep such matters truly private and confidential. If you allow private and confidential matters to go outside to a third party it is virtually inevitable that there will be violations by such third parties despite their “promises” not to tell. And with all certainty there will be a time when it will come back to your spouse and your spouse will discover that confidential and private matters have been shared to a third party by you. That is explosive.

There are laws and rules of ethical conduct that require confidentiality between certain types of persons, e.g. attorney-client, pastor-church member, etc. There are serious consequences if that confidentiality is breached. We would immediately recognize that such breach of confidentiality is unprofessional, unethical, and it will most certainly damage the relationship between those two. The marriage relationship is far more important. The need for trust in communication between spouses is ever so much higher than in those other said relationships. Guard those confidences, secrets and private matters with your life. It is that important. Do not rationalize an exception to such loyalty to your spouse.

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(5) Loyalty: always and immediately defending the person, character and reputation of your spouse

There will come times when someone may say or do something that constitutes a challenge to the person, character, honor, intelligence, or motives of your spouse. An example would be someone saying something or asking a question which clearly indicates that the person is attributing a sinful or bad motive for an action or decision by your spouse. (It is always a sad thing when such assumptions are made, particularly when it is a Christian who is willing to assume a bad motive about another Christian). In order to truly be loyal to your spouse you must immediately defend your spouse in those circumstances. Similarly if someone makes fun of or ridicules your spouse, your silence will not cut it. To be loyal to your spouse you must step in and put an immediate stop to it and refute such ridicule or jesting. If someone does something or says something that in any way communicates that they consider your spouse to be foolish or dumb, you must be ready to jump in and defend your spouse.

I suggest that you and your spouse should promise each other that in the presence of others you will absolutely stand with your spouse and defend your spouse. At the same time you need to have an agreement that if appropriate, when the two of you are alone there will be the freedom to re-visit the matter and to discuss it with all openness. There are sweet dividends to the relationship when spouses commit one to another to remain loyal in sticking up for and defending one another no matter what.

(6) Loyalty: always honoring your spouse and refusing to put down or demean your spouse

This was discussed at length in Chapter 7. I do want to emphasize the fact that this is also a part of loyalty. It most certainly is a destructive act of disloyalty if you put down your spouse or make your spouse the brunt of a joke or ridicule.

(7) Loyalty: always being united with your spouse in all communications with your children and in disciplining your children

This book relates to marriages, rather than parenting. I mention this aspect of loyalty because it really does impact the marriage. I consider a rightly ordered family to be a beautiful thing. I wish that more families in our churches were in order. Unfortunately I have witnessed disloyalty between some parents as they interrelate with their children and as they discipline their children.

Here are some examples of such problems. A child asks one parent about something but he receives an answer he does not like. That child then goes to ask the other parent and receives a different answer that he does like, so he chooses to follow the decision of the second parent. Then when this series of events is revealed, the second parent shrugs it off, or laughs about it, and lets the child get away with such manipulation. In other words, the second parent condones the practice of the child playing one parent off against the other, and the second parent does not support the first parent's decision.

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Another example is when one parent gets into an argument or disagreement with a child. Then the second parent either remains silent and lets the first parent and the child “duke it out,” or even worse, the second parent takes the side of the child in opposition to the first parent.

These examples of bad parenting represent **disloyalty** which is destructive to the marriage relationship. By contrast, when there is loyalty between spouses in parenting and in disciplining children, the relationship between the parents becomes closer and the trust between the two is heightened.

Here is my suggestion. You and your spouse should communicate openly and often about parenting. You should come to agreements about methods of parenting and rules to follow. All of this must be based on the Bible. My experience is that the most successful Christian parents are those who follow the clear and simple dictates set forth by God Himself in Scripture. Be sure that you and your spouse have an agreement for regular feedback and reevaluation of your parenting. Parenting is a learning process and hopefully parents will be learning and growing and becoming better parents step by step. When you and your spouse are loyal to each other in your parenting, you will avoid the frustrations and instability children suffer when they are not given boundaries or when they receive inconsistent parenting from their parents.

There should be an agreement between you and your spouse that you will present totally consistent rules, punishments and direction to your children. Promise to back each other up in communications with your children, whether or not you are both present. Honor your spouse in all communications with your children. Your children should be instructed that it is a very serious offense to even try to play one parent off of the other, and that if they attempt it, the child will not only fail in the attempt, but will be punished for it.

Faithfully carry out your agreement that when one parent has established a rule or has established a consequence for a violation of that rule, the second parent will support that rule and that decision without qualification in communications with or in front of the child. Agree that you will support your spouse in the presence of the child, no matter what. Remember, your children will learn the important principle of **loyalty** by observing the **loyalty** you and your spouse give to each other.

(8) Loyalty: keeping your spouse, rather than anyone else, as your confidante

One of the beauties of the marriage relationship is that your unity is indeed stronger than the sum of the two of you, as you put your heads together and you combine your strengths. No person is without blind spots. Because spouses know each other and have intimate relationship and communications, they are in the ideal position to be the confidante of the other.

Repeatedly God tells us the value of obtaining counsel (Proverbs 11:14; 12:15; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18; 27:9). The one who is in the best position to give you counsel is your spouse and vice versa. The one who should provide the most loving freedom for you to share your most inner thoughts, concerns, fears, dreams and goals, is your spouse.

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You are being **loyal** to your spouse when you make your spouse your confidante. You are being **disloyal** if some other person is your confidante to the exclusion of your spouse.

(9) Loyalty: assist, encourage and promote your spouse to reach his or her full potential

This matter is also touched on in Chapter 15, **Affirmation**. If your marriage relationship is rightly ordered according to Scriptural principles then you will not be threatened by the strengths, developments, and achievements of your spouse. Because the husband and the wife are a unity there is no room for competition or one-upmanship between them.

It is the end of the basketball game. There is no time left on the clock. The score is tied and your teammate is at the free throw line with the victory hanging in the balance. How do you think others would react or think about you if you went over and put your hand in front of your teammate's face just as he was about to complete the shooting stroke of that free throw? Or how do you think they would react if you would shout out, "I'm a better free throw shooter. I should be the one shooting the free throw and getting the glory for the game-winning points." You would be run out of the gym, and you would most certainly be disciplined by your coach.

We can see in that simple illustration the absurdity of one team member trying to do anything to stand in the way of his teammate doing his or her best and succeeding.

To follow through with that same illustration, one should expect that everyone on the team would be supporting and encouraging that free throw shooter to hit the shot and win the game. The result is that the **team** wins when that happens. When the one member succeeds, all the other team members succeed. In marriage your "team" wins when each spouse is doing everything in word, attitude, deed and even facial expressions to actually, and from the heart, encourage the other spouse to succeed, to achieve, to grow, to develop, to blossom, and to use and apply to the fullest and best extent possible all of the wonderful and beautiful talents, abilities, gifts, experiences and aptitudes that exist.

There may be some sacrifices along the way as that happens. One spouse may be taking additional classes or training which puts more of a load for that period on the other spouse. A spouse may need to help out in ways that previously were not necessary. So be it. It is for the team. Remember that when one spouse grows and achieves, the marriage unit grows and achieves. Also, when the two of you pull together and make **CHOICES** together about what steps are necessary to enhance, promote, assist and elevate each spouse, then competition and resentment will not develop.

You should be your spouse's best, most faithful and most enthusiastic **cheerleader**. If your spouse has an activity or presentation, then by all means **BE THERE** ! Even if you need to say "no" to or cancel some other activity. Be there. When you are there you share the experience. When you are there your spouse is encouraged by your presence. You provide very visible and tangible support that simply can never exist from a sincere "do your best, honey" as your spouse goes out the door. Even when your spouse says that it is not important for you to be there and it is okay for you not to be there, be there anyway. This is an aspect of loyalty.

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When you are there to “cheerlead” for your spouse, even when your spouse says that it is trivial and you don't need to be, you are putting in place, brick-by-brick, a pattern of showing that you want to be there with your spouse and that you will be there with your spouse. This then leads to an abiding knowledge that at times of very serious needs in the future, you and your spouse will be there for each other when needed.

Of course there is the additional benefit from being the faithful and enthusiastic cheerleader for your spouse. **YOU** will receive delight and enjoyment from being there. Because you have an intimate and warm relationship, what is important to your spouse is important to you. It is not just for show that you will be standing alongside and cheering for your spouse at all these times. It is because you **want** to be there and you will enjoy being there supporting, encouraging and cheering on your spouse. There is the delight of having those countless joint experiences which can be discussed and reviewed and laughed about throughout the years to come. When you have been there you will not be limited to receiving and trying to remember a verbal report about how it was, (if such a report would have even been given). You and your spouse will experience it **JOINTLY**.

CHOOSE to be loyal to your spouse in every way and always.