

LOYALTY TO GOD

Sharing

1. Most of us consider loyalty to be faithfulness or commitment to a person, our family or an organization.
 - What is your definition of loyalty? _____
2. Animals also can demonstrate great loyalty. Have you ever had an extremely loyal, or disloyal pet?
 - Explain: _____
3. Many things can effect the extent of our loyalty. Circle the things below that might effect your loyalty to a best friend: 1. Didn't repay a loan; 2. Broke a confidence; 3. Didn't keep an appointment; 4. Refused my advice; Other: _____
4. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: "I cannot work with people who are disloyal to me."
 - Explain: _____
5. To what extent do I owe loyalty to God? Explain: _____

Studying

6. As created beings, we owe our greatest loyalty to our Creator-God. God knows that when we are loyal to Him He is able to bless us in return. He longs to bless us! However, just as we have difficulty associating with disloyal friends, family members or even pets, so also does God have difficulty blessing His people who are disloyal to Him.
 - God sadly spoke of ancient Israel's disloyalty in Isaiah 1:3 "The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner's manger, but Israel does not know, My _____ do not understand."
7. The Bible teaches that God always rewards the loyalty of those who love Him. A wonderful story of loyalty rewarded is found in Daniel 3. It is the familiar story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego who lived 600 years before Christ in the Babylonian court of King Nebuchadnezzar. These young men had been captured during the fatal siege of Jerusalem in 587 BC and brought back to Babylon to serve as slaves.
8. Even though the three men were slaves, they were loyal to the true God of the Hebrews. The true God was unknown in the pagan city of Babylon. As we study this story consider that:
 - God also is unknown to most of the world surrounding Christians today.
 - God often permits His people to experience trials in order to demonstrate His ability to save and, therefore, win many to His kingdom.
9. Although loyal to God, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego faced a most difficult trial. In fact, their lives were at stake when King Nebuchadnezzar had a golden image constructed and required every person in Babylon to bow down and worship it.
 - Read Daniel 3:1,2 "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an _____ of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up."

10. The golden statute that Nebuchadnezzar constructed was about 90 feet high and about 9 feet wide. The day to bow down and worship this image must have taken weeks to plan. Everyone who was of importance was commanded to be present. There was a great program of music and, most likely, flattering speeches prepared, to honor the great King Nebuchadnezzar.
11. History tells us that Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego would have been in their early 30s as the day for celebration of the great image drew near. There also is historical evidence of political unrest and murmurings of rebellion in the kingdom. So, this event was to be a test of loyalty to King Nebuchadnezzar. Anyone who did not demonstrate their loyalty to him by bowing down to the image would be killed.
12. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego understood their lives were in jeopardy if they appeared to be disloyal to King Nebuchadnezzar. However, their first loyalty was to their God and they were committed to obedience to His law.
 - Read Exodus 20:3,4 “You shall have no other _____ before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God”
13. Finally the day of dedication of the great golden image arrived:
 - Read Daniel 3:3 “So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and the _____ before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.”
 - Read Daniel 3:4-6 “Then a herald cried aloud: To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, _____ shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”
14. Thousands of people were present on the plain of Dura outside the city of Babylon on this occasion. When the music played, every knee bowed while Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego stood quietly. As the only men standing in a vast throng of kneeling people they immediately drew the attention of Nebuchadnezzar’s guards. They knew the penalty for not bowing down. They had made their choice. They had decided to be obedient and loyal to God rather than follow the command of a king.
 - To jeopardize their lives over such a simple command might seem foolish to many but loyalty cannot be compromised. Read Matthew 6:24 “No one can serve _____ masters.”
 - Many might reason that, under the circumstances, it would have been expedient to do whatever was necessary to ensure their immediate survival. Our circumstances cannot dictate our loyalty. God is greater than our circumstances when we are loyal to Him.
15. The story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego provides, for Christians, insight into the fundamental principle of public accountability. When we claim to believe in God, it’s important that our actions—*witnessed behavior*—demonstrate that we trust Him. When we acknowledge God’s presence in every action He will fill us with Godly courage to carry out His will.
 - Read 1 Chronicles 28:20 “Be strong and courageous and do the work. Do not be _____ or discouraged, for the Lord God...is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you”
 - Read Proverb 3:5,6 “Trust in the Lord with all your _____ and lean not on your own understanding. In all your way acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.”

16. Since Satan's jealous rebellion in heaven (see lesson 3) he continuously tries to divert men and women from worship of his enemy, our creator God. Satan would like to have us believe that God desires our worship to satisfy His ego. That is one of Satan's lies.
 - God created us and loves us as parents love their children. God wants us to worship Him because worship is an expression of our reciprocal love and devotion.
 - God created us with a desire to worship. He knows that our ultimate happiness depends on our relationship with Him and that relationship is best developed through worship. As we worship Him it opens our hearts to communication with His Holy Spirit who is able to speak God-thoughts into our minds. Because He seeks our happiness, he seeks out worship.
 - God wants us to worship Him because He then can reveal Himself through us to others; through our witness, God's kingdom on earth is enlarged!
 - God knows that we are transformed into whatever we worship or devote ourselves to. He desires that we become transformed into His image. Read 1 Corinthians 3:18 "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being _____ into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."
17. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego refused to bow down and worship the image of gold, certain Chaldeans told King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:8-12). The king, in a rage and fury, commanded that the men be brought to him. He decided to give them a second chance so that he wouldn't have to kill them in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:13-15).
18. King Nebuchadnezzar was focused on the honor he believed was his due. He was so prideful that he not only sinned against God, but also caused others to sin by commanding that they worship his image. As the men stood before him he asked, "And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands" (Daniel 3:15).
19. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego didn't have to think it over. They immediately answered the king.
 - Read Daniel 3:16-18 "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to _____ us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."
20. These brave young men of God exhibited faith in its full view! The full view of faith has two sides.
 - The first side of faith is, "God is able to . . ." Faith says that, "My God can deliver me." God can do anything. He is almighty, all powerful, all wise, all knowing, all healing, all everything! Our faith is completely invested in His mighty power.
 - The second side of faith is, "But, if not . . ." Faith is knowing that God can do it, but if He doesn't do as I ask I will still serve Him. If He doesn't 'come through' as I expect, I will still follow Him and I will be faithful to Him as He has been to me and not even death will shake my faith in Him.
 - The two sides of Godly faith enables us to face difficulty, danger, pain, suffering and death without fear. For example, if we ask God to heal a dying loved one and they die anyway, should that alter our faith? No! If God is good, and we know He is, and if God answers prayer, and we know He does, and yet, in spite of prayer, our loved one dies, we know by faith that our loved one will sleep until the resurrection and then we will see them again. We trust, by faith, that God knew more about the future of our loved one than we did, so we leave the burden with Him.
 - Faith is saying, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15).

21. Loyalty to God is about our love for him. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego made a courageous decision. They chose to obey God rather than man and now they were going to be thrown into a blazingly hot furnace. It took strong faith to make this difficult choice. Read the following verses:

- Daniel 3:19,21 “He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven _____ more than it was usually heated. . . Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.”
- Daniel 3:22 “Therefore, because the king’s command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire _____ those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego.”
- Daniel 3:23,24 “And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast _____ men bound into the midst of the fire?”
- Daniel 3:25 “Look,” he answered, “I see _____ men loose, walking in the midst of the fire and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” The ropes that bound the men were burned off but their clothing remained unharmed as they walked around within the flames.
- Daniel 3:26,28 “Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke saying, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here.” Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. . . Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him.”

22. If we are faithful to God we can be assured that He will deliver us as He did the three young Hebrew men. When we are faithful in every aspect of our lives, as they were, we can expect mighty things of God. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego had a track record of being faithful in small things, such as refusing to eat the rich food of the king that had been sacrificed to idols. So, when faced with a big decision, like bowing down to a golden image, they didn’t even have to discuss their course of action. They automatically agreed that they would not break God’s commandment. When we are faithful in the little decisions of life we also will be faithful in the big decisions that face us.

- Luke 16:10 “He who is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.”

23. The result of their obedience and faith was that unbelievers were able to see God’s power to rescue and deliver His own people from danger. This caused God to be glorified throughout that pagan, heathen nation. Even King Nebuchadnezzar was forced to recognize God’s power and issued a decree that all men would speak well of the Most High God (Daniel 3:29).

24. We can count on God, all the time, to be present in our lives. He has promised to do for us what is in our best interest and to His honor and glory. No matter what happens He will be there for us.

- Isaiah 43:2 “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God.”

25. We should never be stressed or worry about future trials. We should always have faith in God.

- Luke 12:11,12 “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”

Applying this lesson

26. In this lesson an earthly king commanded that all people bow down to his image and worship him or be burned to death in the fiery furnace. He had no right to command worship. On the other hand, God, who created us, has the right to be worshiped. He also earned the right to be worshiped by dying for our sins on a cruel cross. But God doesn't want to command us to worship Him. He wants us to worship Him, and be loyal to Him, because we love Him.
- This lesson has shown me that worshiping God demonstrates my loyalty to Him. I worship Him out of love. I have learned that God's enemy, Satan, will do whatever he can to distract me from worshiping God.
 - A check mark at left indicates that I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.
27. I understand the two sides of faith. One side is, 'God is able.' The second side is, 'But, if He doesn't.' Satan will use the trials of life to tempt me to believe that God has forsaken me when God doesn't answer my prayer as I wish. I am confident that by faith God has said that He will never leave me or forsake me.
- No matter what happens in my life, I will trust that God is in control and has ordained the circumstances of trial I am enduring.
 - A check mark at left indicates that I will trust God no matter what happens in my life.
28. This lesson provided insight into the fundamental principle of public accountability that falls upon Christians who claim to believe in God. It is important that our actions, defined as '*witnessed behavior*' demonstrate that we trust Him.
- I understand that God permits trials to come upon Christians to demonstrate to unbelievers His power and that my unwavering faith in God in response to my can bring glory and honor to Him.
 - A check mark at left indicates that I will do all within my power to be a faithful vessel through whom God may work for the salvation of others.