

# Character Matters: Loyalty

*Showing genuine commitment to relationships despite hardships*

## It Matters at Home

*Betrayal.* This one word carries with it perhaps the heaviest burden of pain, grief, and bitterness of all the thousands of words in the English language. It encapsulates the root issue behind divorce, teenage rebellion, marital unfaithfulness, gossip, war, and a host of other human woes. It breaks hearts, builds walls, kills joy, and breeds hatred. In a world filled with a selfish disregard for the duties that relationships demand, how can we remain true to the people in our lives?

The answer lies in two words: duty and love. Unfortunately, the concept of duty has fallen on hard times. It is derided by cynics as archaic and out-of-date. Why? Because duty tells us that we are responsible to act in certain ways, regardless of our own interests or feelings.

This goes against the grain of our own human natures. It is easy to act loving when we feel loving. To support someone when they are successful. To stand by someone when they show no signs of weakness. But the true test of loyalty comes when your friends hurt your feelings, when your children dash your hopes, and when your spouse fails your expectations. When we understand that we have a responsibility - a duty - to remain faithful, loving, and supportive to the flawed people in our lives, we will become loyal, faithful people.

But the concept of duty cannot stand alone. It has gotten its bad name partly because some have tried to divorce it from a heart of love. For example, imagine this scenario between a husband and wife: the husband arrives home from work and announces that he is taking his wife out for a romantic candlelight dinner. Over the course of the evening, he presents her with a beautiful diamond necklace and whispers sweet nothings into her ear as he twirls her over the dance floor. The next morning, the wife expresses her gratitude for her husband's expressions of love.

She realizes that he sacrificed a great deal of hard-earned money to give her such a lovely evening. "It was nothing, honey," he replies. "Just doing my duty."

"What?!" Suddenly the value and joy of the gift is diminished. Her thoughts whirl, "He did all that only because he felt that he *ought* to?"

A sense of duty can help us to stand by someone when it is unpleasant and difficult. But going through the motions of love without having a genuine motivation of love is not true loyalty.

While duty can help us to control our surface emotions of distaste or disappointment, it is love - deep-rooted love - that should be the driving reason *behind* our faithful performance of our duties.

Loyalty matters - because love is not just a feeling; it's an act of your will.



- ◆ Understand that relationships require sacrifice
- ◆ Criticize sparingly; praise lavishly
- ◆ Prove your faithfulness in the hard times
- ◆ Develop the art of encouragement
- ◆ Seek relationship restoration, not revenge



Balance

# Loyalty

with

*Justice*

*Decisiveness*

*Patience*

*Cautiousness*

- ♦ **Justice** is “taking personal responsibility to uphold what is pure, right, and true.” Loyalty loves the wrongdoer while still dealing justly with their wrongdoing.
- ♦ **Decisiveness** is “the ability to recognize key factors and finalize difficult decisions.” Loyalty understands the limitations of its ability to provide support and chooses

wisely when conflicts between loyalties arise.

- ♦ **Patience** is “accepting a difficult situation without giving a deadline to remove it.” Loyalty understands that sometimes the most loving act is to allow someone to experience the painful consequences of their choices.
- ♦ **Cautiousness** is “knowing how important right timing is

in accomplishing right actions.” Conflicts in relationships are inevitable, and communication is essential for those conflicts to be successfully resolved. Loyalty carefully considers the best place, time, and method to confront the issue of a strained relationship.

## LOYALTY

He may be six kinds of a liar,  
 He may be ten kinds of a fool,  
 He may be a wicked highflyer  
 Beyond any reason or rule;  
 There may be a shadow above him  
 Of ruin and woes to impend,  
 And I may not respect, but I love him,  
 Because - well, because he's my friend.

I know he has faults by the billion,  
 But his faults are a portion of him;  
 I know that his record's vermilion,  
 And he's far from the sweet Seraphim;  
 But he's always been square to yours truly,  
 Ready to give or to lend,  
 And if he is wild or unruly,  
 I like him - because he's my friend.

I criticize him but I do it  
 In just a frank, comradely key,  
 And back-biting gossips will rue it  
 If ever *they* knock him to me!  
 I never make diagrams of him,  
 No maps of his soul have I penned;  
 I don't analyze - I just love him,  
 Because - well, because he's my friend.

~ Berton Braley

*The Best Loved Poems of the American People*  
Hazel Felleman, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1936), 57-58

## It Matters on the Job

There is a temptation to think that loyalty does not matter in the workplace. After all, most people do not consider their relationship with their boss, co-workers, or employees to be close personal connections.

However, loyalty is closely linked with the character quality of responsibility: “knowing and doing what is expected of me.” Loyalty involves faithfully carrying out all duties - including inherent responsibilities that come with the acceptance of a job.



Loyalty matters - because the workplace is not exempt from moral obligation.

