



Huddle Up

Part 5

July 18, 2021

Biblical Loyalty - Developing Loyalty and Unity within the Church

What does it mean to cheer? How important is it to encourage someone on towards his or her goals? Whether it is a child at an athletic event or a business executive being promoted or a spouse getting a little “thank you” from their special someone, we all love to be cheered and cherished. The truth of the matter is that every person, whether they are young or old, needs affirmation. Don’t believe me?

Well according to your Bible, Jesus didn't start His earthly ministry until after He was water baptized by John the Baptist and then affirmed by His Heavenly Father's words, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased."

It was then, and only then, that Jesus marched off into the Wilderness to defeat the Devil during the time of fasting and temptation. If Jesus needed affirmation, to be cheered on as it were, then why would we feel that we are any different!? Sometimes we need that pat on the back or that simple text message or even that phone call that just seemed to arrive just at the "right time" to encourage us in a matter of difficulty.

Point #1 - Loyalty Cheers

Hebrews 12:1-2, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Notice in the first verse that the Apostle Paul is explaining to us that we have a great cloud of witnesses in Heaven cheering us on towards the finish line of this thing called “life” and adjuring us to cast off everything that holds us back from our purpose. Isn’t it amazing how just one kind word or positive reinforcement from a person can totally change our perspective, uplift our spirits, and help us to make ends meet?

In the Body of Christ, we must learn the value of cheering one another on! We must learn the value in being loyal to one another and supporting one another through the tough time and the good times. Our loyalty should drive us to celebrate one another for who we are without stumbling over who we are not.

The Apostle Paul said in **Philippians 3:12-21**, “¹²Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.¹⁶ Only let us hold true to

what we have attained.¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.¹⁸ For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”

In Philippians 3, the Apostle Paul is pointing us towards the finish line but admonishing us to forget about our past mistakes, lay hold of what lies ahead of us, and to press on towards the prize! He is cheering us on towards the upward call of God that is in Christ Jesus! So like Paul, let us all see the value of not only cheering ourselves on but also see the value of cheering one another on because that was Loyalty does! It cheers!

But in our cheering, what does it truly mean to be challenged? Is it a difficulty on the job that you are tasked to handle or perhaps a struggle in your home life? No matter what arena of life you may think of; challenges are present.

Often times we find ourselves rolling our eyes and having that long exhaling moment before we take the step to address another issue that has arisen in our already difficult life. But what happens when we change our perspective and view challenges as an opportunity to take hold of and not a burden to bear? What happens when we see the endless possibilities that our challenges afford us, rather than viewing every challenge as a chore?

Point #2 - Loyalty Challenges

The Apostle Paul in the book of Philippians said this, “I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” In these three verses of scripture found in **Philippians 1:12-14**, the Apostle Paul is teaching us that many of the challenges that we face in life are for the sake of encouraging others to press on towards greatness.

Notice the first part of verse 12, “I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel...”

The Apostle Paul looks at his challenges and realizes that what he has faced has enabled others to look at his life and declare in their hearts, “If Paul can make it, then I can too!”

The Church of Philippi was encouraged by Paul’s chains; not discouraged. They were motivated by his challenges; not down trodden. It is imperative to understand that Loyalty to Christ in the midst of our circumstances is the anchor that stabilizes the Church when the challenges come.

Paul’s loyalty to the call and purpose of Christ upon his life is what motivated the brothers of the church and caused them to stand all the more boldly for the Gospel’s sake. Verse 14 declares, “And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

Notice that it was Paul’s loyalty to Christ that motivated others who were crippled by fear to arise to the occasion and fulfill their purpose. If our loyalty to Christ doesn’t challenge others then are we truly loyal? Because Loyalty Challenges... but in our challenges, what does Conflict look like and how should we handle it?

From the newspaper to the evening newscasts on television, it seems that we are perpetually surrounded by conflict. Whether its Politically, Financially, or even a small “spat” between two persons on Facebook, it seems that conflict is everywhere and in every facet of life. But what do we do, as Christians, when we encounter a conflict or a situation that we must bear the weight of?

What is the Biblical response to conflict and how does one confront without losing their witness? Whether you are in the secular world or the church world, there are times that confrontations must take place. Some of these confrontations that happened within the First Century Church are recorded in the Epistles and it is imperative that we learn from those who have paved the way before us on how to handle conflict and confrontation properly.

Point #3 - Loyalty Confronts

In Galatians Chapter Two, the Apostle Paul is recording a conflict that happened between himself and the Apostle Peter. Now some may say, “Wait a minute, you mean to tell me that the Apostles had disagreements and conflicts with one another?” Absolutely they did!

Whether it is arguing over the possibility of Gentiles being able to become a part of the Church in the Book of Acts or in the text of Galatians chapter Two, conflict is nothing new to the Church. Notice in the text of Galatians 2:11-13, “But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?””

Now what is the backstory of this text? Well, to make a long story short, the Apostle Peter was torn between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians who seemed to have some differing views over a few matters. Peter was willing to hang out with the Gentiles so long as the Jewish group was not around but when they showed up, Peter would disassociate himself. Paul hears of this matter and a conflict ensues.

The Apostle Paul, though loyal to the Church and to the Apostleship, was not willing to allow fear to cripple another Apostle's life and ministry. Thus Paul confronts Peter over the matter and a verbal conflict ensues. But notice, in the midst of the conflict and confrontation, the Apostle Paul refused to demean a fellow servant.

Paul's loyalty to Christ and to His Church spurred him on to confront Peter but to not "cut" Peter. We must understand that our loyalty to one another in Christ should drive us to be willing to confront our brethren but to never use the confrontation as a time to cut one another with our words. Confrontations are meant to be bring healing and restoration; not perpetuating pain and destruction.

This thought brings to mind the life of Judas; who was known to be stealing money and I feel confident to state, though it is not noted in Scripture, that Christ confronted him over this matter at some point. We must mature to the place where we can have hard discussions for the sake of healing and not for the sake of gaining an upper hand of thinking that one is right and one is wrong. Let our loyalty as a Church and as followers of Christ drive us to seek to be found guilty of being a "John" and not a "Judas" because Loyalty never cuts...