

Reciprocal Loyalty

Our family became avid Carolina fans when our son graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Carolina is known for its basketball program and the school is a 7 time national champion. For my birthday I was given a sign for outside our home, publically identifying our allegiance to the school. We are proudly displaying it even if this year's basketball season isn't matching expectations. As of the writing of this devotional the University of North Carolina have lost more games than they won and is near the bottom of the ACC standings. Capping off the disappointing season the Tar Heels had their 59-game home win streak snapped vs. ACC foe Clemson. It was a game they led by 10-points with just two minutes remaining in the game.



Why is this important as a lead-in for a devotional? It is important because as a family we have never lost our loyalty to the school. We know that God is with us and trust that good times are ahead.

God is loyal to us as believers. *Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments (Deuteronomy 7:9)* Over our lifetime He has blessed us richly.

Even though we have good intentions we continually let Him down by our choices and, at times, a tentative faith. There may be seasons when our life is really off track, yet through it all God remains loyal to us. The Bible gives us an early example of God's loyalty. Deuteronomy 31:6 was written to encourage the people of Israel, including Joshua and Solomon, when they were facing insurmountable challenges. God wanted them to know without question that they could trust Him to lead them to victory. The verse says, *Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.*" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

My son gave me a book about Dean Smith as a Christmas gift. Smith was not only a legendary coach but a legendary Christian person as well. A major theme of the book is "reciprocal loyalty." The UNC players were loyal to Smith because he always put others, especially his players, ahead of himself or the quest for victory. Being reciprocal, Coach Smith showed his loyalty first – and then the players responded. As his players graduated he always said to them, "If you need something, call me." He responded to their needs countless times, well after their playing days were over.

God has a lifetime loyalty with us that will become an eternal loyalty as we remain faithful to Him. Hebrews 13:5 reminds us again, *Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.* Now it's your turn. Show your loyalty by the way you live your life and trust the Lord completely. When things get tough for you, when you are in the midst of a losing streak, God will be there. ... *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*" (Matthew 28:20). As a matter of fact, during those tough times, He encourages you to be strong. *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*" (Joshua 1:9). Stay loyal to the Lord. Good times are ahead.

Question: Can you name a difficult time when the Lord stood side by side with you, helping you through your struggles?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father. There will be times when things are not going well for us. We need you then, more than ever. We know you will never leave or forsake us. Let us stay true to our faith during good times and bad, as we look forward to sharing your victory with you. Amen.