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Loyalty

Frank L. Jenista

Cedarville University, jenistaf@cedarville.edu

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■ I N T E G R I T Y ■

tempered our thoughts and attitudes. We have experienced the peace of God and have felt the prayer support and love of many caring people. Like the nobleman, we have seen our faith increase.

We know what it is to grieve mightily and at the same time to receive great strength and blessing because we trust in a God who is mightier than our grief. As we saw God answer our prayers and increase our faith, we approached more closely the integrity that He desires for us.

It is our prayer that individuals might come to know Christ as Lord and Saviour and to possess the faith that enables them to praise God and to "...know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). ■



Frank L. Jenista, the son of missionary parents, is a Cedarville College graduate and earned a Ph.D. in Asian Studies from the University of Michigan. A United States Foreign Service Officer, he has been assigned to American embassies in Japan, Indonesia, New Zealand, and the Philippines, and currently serves in Washington, D.C.

Loyalty

by Frank Jenista

Throughout history and across the world's cultures the trait of loyalty has marked the person of integrity. Sacrifice of time, money, health, reputation or even life itself for a person or a cause has been celebrated in legend and song, praised by poets, acclaimed in books, and memorialized on marble monument walls.

The United States has its share of such heroes. A few years ago President Reagan relayed to the nation the story of a Marine gravely wounded in the Beirut bombing. From his hospital bed the young man looked up at the visiting Marine Commandant and managed to whisper, "Semper fi." Semper fidelis — always faithful — the Marine motto. Tears came to many eyes across America at this quiet, emphatic reaffirmation of one of mankind's most treasured values.

God, too, treasures faithfulness in His sons and daughters. From the patriarchs of the Old Testament to the apostles of the New, loyalty is an important part of the biblical record. We are repeatedly presented with portraits of faithfulness among both great — Noah, Abraham, Job, Esther, Paul — and small — Caleb and Dorcas.

Perhaps the latter are the more important models. Not many of us are likely to have our loyalty celebrated on granite monuments. For most, the daily demonstration of faithfulness is done quietly and, to the human eye, often invisibly. This does not make it less important. The mark of a person's

integrity, it has been said, is how he behaves when alone in the dark. Loyalty is much the same. It is measured by the act, not the audience. As Luke 16:10 reminds us, "he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

Loyalty has two important components — one internal, the other external. The first is commitment, the personal and voluntary dedication to a person or cause. The second component is action, the public, tangible consequence of this personal commitment.

A soldier, a diplomat, or other public servant begins service to the nation by pledging allegiance to the Constitution and swearing to protect it against all enemies. Service to God begins with accepting Christ's sacrifice and committing one's life and talents to Him. Such first steps are essential, but well-intentioned oaths of loyalty are no guarantor of faithfulness. Loyalty is only proved over time, by unswerving determination to fulfill the obligations of a solemn pledge.

Devotion to duty requires sacrifice of personal desires or preferences to a greater calling. It certainly demands time and often requires service under difficult circumstances. It is the testing, the endurance of hardship, which is the measure of loyalty. Medals are not earned in ease and comfort but in the trenches, through faithfulness under fire.

What motivates men and women of integrity to offer their resources or even their lives in loyal service to another? Why endure avoidable hardship and self-sacrifice?

I have had opportunities to observe some of America's finest diplomats in action, to see exceptional talent applied wholeheartedly to the advancement of America's national interests, despite very real danger in this age of terrorism.

I have also seen first-hand the devotion of Christ's finest ambassadors. They walk the muddy paths of distant villages rather than the carpeted corridors of power, serving faithfully for decades in small outposts at the farthest reaches of God's kingdom.

These ambassadors, too, have sometimes paid the ultimate price for their dedication, but instead of rifle volleys over a tomb in Arlington there are prayers at a simple gravesite on a far-away hillside. Yet can there be any greater reward for the person of integrity than that eternal salute, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Semper fi. ■