

Mighty Men and Women Are Known for Their Fierce Loyalty

This morning we are going to continue the theme of **Mighty Men & Women of God**. As Mr. Kreyer talked about on Sunday, one of the character traits of the mighty men and women of God is *fierce loyalty*.

Let's break down these words: fierce loyalty.

- Fierce: Eager, intense, severe
- Loyalty:
 - Faithful adherence to a sovereign government, leader, cause, etc.
 - Being faithful to commitments or obligations
- Fierce Loyalty: Eager and intense faithfulness to commitments, obligations, leaders, causes, etc.

To start today and lay a little bit of foundation, I want to quote several paragraphs from the July-August 2010 Tomorrow's World magazine. This was an article by Mr. Wyatt Ciesielka titled *Loyalty: Lesson in a dog's life*.

The quote is a little lengthy, but it is not only a great message on loyalty and also appropriate for what we are doing out here in the wilderness this week. This quote is about the Lewis and Clark expedition across North America which was back in the early 1800s when Lewis and Clark took a 2-year and 8000 mile journey from the Mississippi River to out west to the Pacific Ocean and then back to the Mississippi River. They did this because Thomas Jefferson had just purchased the Louisiana Purchase and Jefferson tasked them with exploring this new land.

You may know the famous story of Lewis and Clark's expedition across the North American continent to the Pacific Ocean and back. But you may not have heard the story of a lesser-known member of the party, a brave black Newfoundland dog named Seaman. He was just a dog, but his story is a lesson of faithfulness and loyalty—a lesson that husbands and wives should consider.

Covering thousands of miles, Captain Meriwether Lewis, Second Lieutenant William Clark and their small band of companions made their way into American folklore. Captain Meriwether Lewis' faithful dog, Seaman, accompanied the expedition the entire distance.

Seaman was Lewis' faithful companion on a dangerous journey of many thousand miles. He defended his master's party; he witnessed Indian skirmishes, death, disease, success and failure and he endured freezing winters and long hot summers. He was injured many times, but he pressed on.

Once, deep in the wilderness, Lewis had to perform painful surgery on Seaman to repair a life-threatening injury the dog had received from a wild animal. When a tribe of Native

Americans stole Seaman, his master took the risk of retrieving him at gunpoint. Undaunted, the two pressed on.

Although the records are incomplete, there is even strong evidence that Seaman was loyal to his master unto death. According to Timothy Alden's multiple volume history, A Collection of American Epitaphs and Inscriptions with Occasional Notes (5 vols.), after Lewis' tragic and violent death in 1809, Seaman remained at Lewis' grave until he himself died: "The fidelity and attachment of this animal were remarkable. After the melancholy exit of Gov. Lewis, his dog would not depart for a moment from his lifeless remains; and when they were deposited in the earth no gentle means could draw him from the spot of interment. He refused to take every kind of food, which was offered him, and actually pined away and died with grief upon his master's grave!" (vol. 5, p. 98).

Seaman showed that fierce loyalty to his owner and he was just a dog. How much fierce loyalty, or eager and intense faithfulness, should we have as potential future sons and daughters of God's family? What should we show this loyalty to?

I think the obvious answer would be God and Jesus Christ. But also loyalty should be shown throughout our lives such as to the Living Church of God, your wife or husband, your parents, your children, your employer, your friends and we could go on and on.

Turn to Ephesians 5:22. Before we go too much further let's put a little qualifier on loyalty. We shouldn't have blind loyalty where we follow someone or something no matter what is going on or how much things have changed.

Ephesians 5:22

[22] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Drop down to Ephesians 6:1.

Ephesians 6:1

[1] Children, obey your parents in the Lord...

These verses are not saying for wives to blindly follow their husbands or for children to blindly follow their parents if the situation they are in is violent or toxic. We won't get into that much since that is a whole other topic in itself.

Now as for being loyal or faithful to an organization, church or similar, I would like to quote from Dr. Roderick Meredith on this topic. This is from a January-February 1999 editorial titled "How Loyal Are You?".

Certainly if a religious leader becomes an out-and-out heretic as many of us witnessed in the Church of God several years ago, then a faithful Christian should obey GOD rather

than such an apostate leader. However, once you have proved to yourself that God is using a man to faithfully preach His Word and do His Work, then you should follow that man as long as he continues to do the Work and preach the Truth. Anything less than that is DISLOYALTY.

We laid a pretty big foundation already defining loyalty and talking about what loyalty is. For the time remaining this morning I want to talk about two examples of loyalty – one example about a male and one about a female.

The title to this Bible study is *Mighty Men and Women Are Known for Their Fierce Loyalty*.

1. Uriah the Hittite

Turn to II Samuel chapter 23, verse 8. As we remember the theme that Mr. Kreyer set for the Bible studies this week, let's read II Samuel 23:8 as we set up our first example of loyalty this morning.

II Samuel 23:8, 39

[8] These are the names of the mighty men whom David had:..

[39] ...and Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all.

Here we see a list of David's mighty men and the last one mentioned here is Uriah. To be one of David's mighty men you had to be a man of great character, skills, strength and be willing to be so loyal to king David that you would lay down your life for him.

Turn over to II Samuel chapter 11 and we will start in verse 1 and read through the majority of this chapter. Our first example of loyalty that we are going to cover this morning is on the life of Uriah the Hittite.

I would assume that most people when they hear of Uriah the Hittite they first think of how David allowed Uriah to be killed in battle so that David could marry Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. But, this is actually a great story about loyalty which is where we are going to focus today.

One thing to note here, just for reference, is that David is approximately 50 years old at this point. So this is about 20 years before his death.

II Samuel 11:1-27

[1] It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

For reference, Rabbah was about 65 miles away from Jerusalem so the battle was quite far away considering 65 miles in those days took a long time to travel.

Verses 2-5

[2] Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. [3] So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" [4] Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. [5] And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child."

Here we see the adultery that took place with David and Bathsheba and it resulted in Bathsheba becoming pregnant.

At this point, instead of David coming clean of what he had done, he compounded this mistake he made with another sin.

Verses 6-8

[6] Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. [7] When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. [8] And David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet."

David wanted to hide this sin of adultery so he came up with a plan. He brought Uriah home from battle and disguised the purpose as all David wanted to know was how his people were doing and how the war was progressing. David would then send Uriah home to Bathsheba so that Uriah would sleep with Bathsheba and when the baby was born everyone would assume it belonged to Uriah and not David. David was trying to cover up his sin.

So after this long 65-mile journey from the battlefield, you would think Uriah was tired and hungry and the best spot to rest up for the next battle would be in his own house, in his own bed and with his wife.

Let's see what he did.

Verses 8-10

[8] ...So Uriah departed from the king's house, and a gift of food from the king followed him. [9] But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. [10] So when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?"

Verse 11, which is the only recorded statement from Uriah in the Bible.

Verse 11

[11] And Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing."

Remember that Uriah was one of David's mighty men so one of his responsibilities was to guard and protect David so instead of leaving his men on the battlefield and indulging in a relaxing, restful and enjoyable evening with his wife in his own house, he showed his loyalty to his fellow mighty men, his soldiers that were still on the battlefield and his loyalty to David.

After this, David made one more attempt to make Uriah go to his own house with his wife Bathsheba.

Verses 12-13

[12] Then David said to Uriah, "Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. [13] Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

Even Uriah in a drunken state did not let down his loyalty. He continued in his steadfast loyalty to his fellow warriors that remained on the battlefield and also his loyalty to king David.

You could say at this point that because of Uriah's loyalty, "plan A" for David did not work so David had to pivot to his "plan B".

Verses 14-17

[14] In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. [15] And he wrote in the letter, saying, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest [fiercest] battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die." [16] So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men. [17] Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And some of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

So David's "plan A" was to hide the sin by convincing everyone that the baby belonged to Uriah. When that plan did not work, he switched to "plan B" which was to have Uriah purposely killed in battle.

I would like to quote Josephus on what he had to say about Uriah in his *Antiquities of the Jews* – Chapter 7 of Book 7.

When Joab had received it, and upon reading it understood the King's purpose, he set Uriah in that place where he knew the enemy would be most troublesome to them; and gave him for his partners some of the best soldiers in the army; and said, that he would also come to their assistance with the whole army; that, if possible, they might break

down some part of the wall, and enter the city. And he desired him to be glad of the opportunity of exposing himself to such great pains; and not to be displeased at it; since he was a valiant soldier, and had a great reputation for his valour, both with the King, and with his countreymen. And when Uriah undertook the work he was set upon with alacrity, he gave private orders to those who were to be his companions, that when they saw the enemy make a sally, they should leave him. When therefore the Hebrews made an attack upon the city, the Ammonites were afraid that the enemy might prevent them, and get up into the city: and this at the very place whither Uriah was ordered: so they exposed their best soldiers to be in the fore front, and opened their gates suddenly, and fell upon the enemy with great vehemence, and ran violently upon them. When those that were with Uriah saw this, they all retreated backward, as Joab had directed them beforehand. But Uriah, as ashamed to run away, and leave his post, sustained the enemy: and receiving the violence of their onset, he slew many of them: but being encompassed round, and caught in the midst of them, he was slain; and some other of his companions were slain with him.

It is a shame that Uriah was murdered by David and Joab, but Uriah remained loyal to his country, to his king and to his fellow warriors down to his last breath.

We aren't going to finish this chapter today but it is a great story. This chapter finishes off with Joab sending a messenger to David to report to him that they lost the battle as well as Uriah had died. Bathsheba mourns for a while, she becomes David's wife and then they have their son together. The next chapter goes on to talk about when Nathan confronts David about what he had done to Uriah.

Changing gears now we are going to switch to an example of a female showing fierce loyalty. Turn over to Ruth 1, verse 1.

We are covering two well-known stories today – Uriah the Hittite and the book of Ruth. Traditionally this book is said to have been written by Samuel and the time period of this book is during the period of the judges when there was no king.

Ruth 1:1-5

[1] Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. [2] The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there. [3] Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. [4] Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years. [5] Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

This first section here of 5 verses gives a very quick overview of 10 years. Naomi and her husband lived in Bethlehem with their two sons until a famine hit which resulted in them moving to Moab. The two sons married Orpah and Naomi and then all 3 of the men died to that Naomi and her two daughter-in-laws – Ruth and Orpah – are now all widows.

The story continues with Naomi hearing that the famine was over in Bethlehem and after 10 years in Moab she was ready to go back to Bethlehem. Naomi told both DIL's to stay which Orpah did end up staying but Ruth had a different idea. Drop down to verse 15.

Ruth 1:15-17

[15] And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

[16] But Ruth said:

"Entreat me not to leave you,
Or to turn back from following after you;
For wherever you go, I will go;
And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;
Your people shall be my people,
And your God, my God.

[17] Where you die, I will die,
And there will I be buried.
The Lord do so to me, and more also,
If anything but death parts you and me."

You could say these verses 16 and 17 were almost like a vow of loyalty from Ruth to Naomi.

I would like to quote from the Bible study series that Mr. John Ogwyn did on the entire Bible. This quote is from Bible study #86 "The Writings – Ruth" from 3/10/1992.

She did not wish to remain there in Moab. Consider the difficulty of being the only person trying to worship God in a completely pagan setting as the Moabites were. It was one thing as long as her husband and her two grown sons were alive, but now she was left with these two Moabite daughters-in-law. Naomi wanted to go back to her own people. The daughters-in-law had outwardly conformed to the practiced religion of the household. When they married into the family, they took upon themselves to practice the religion of Judah. But now their husbands were dead, and Naomi felt that she wanted to be back with her own people.

So these DIL's had the option of taking the easy road by not taking a long journey back to Bethlehem and falling back into the world or stay faithful to Naomi and God's way of life and travel to Bethlehem. Orpah stayed in Moab while Ruth left with Naomi.

Verse 22

[22] So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

The barley harvest occurred during the Days of Unleavened Bread so this verse tells us what time of the year it was when they returned to Bethlehem. It is also interesting to note the theme of coming out of sin during the DOUB and that is what these ladies did – they came out of Moab and left it behind and came back to Israel. Nothing we are going to dwell on here but just something interesting to think about.

The first 9 verses of chapter 2 talk about how Ruth went out to glean the fields after the reapers and unintendedly started gleaning the fields of a man named Boaz who was a relative of Naomi's husband. Boaz noticed something very special about Ruth.

Verses 10-12

[10] Then she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, 'Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?' [11] And Boaz answered and said to her, 'It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. [12] The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.

You can see here and through the rest of the verses here in chapter two that Boaz took great care and respect to Ruth and was impressed by her work ethic in the fields but also because of her loyalty to her mother-in-law, Naomi.

Chapter 3 is all about Ruth going to the threshing floor and talking to Boaz and Ruth in a way proposes to Boaz in verse 9 but Boaz must talk to the next closest relative first.

Chapter 4 opens with Boaz in a way convincing this relative not to marry Ruth. There is more to the story but we are not getting into the love story part of this book between Ruth and Boaz.

As we wrap up the story of Ruth I would like to quote Mr. John Ogwyn once more from his Bible study #86 again on the book of Ruth:

We find that there were a number of qualities that Ruth evidenced in a remarkable way. She was a young woman of great loyalty and determination. She was a person of great humility and evidenced great respect. She evidences that in many ways. She evidences characteristics that we, as the firstfruit harvest of God, certainly need to evidence.

Ruth showed loyalty to Naomi, loyalty to Boaz and also loyalty to God and His way of life. She chose to leave the sinful land of Moab and come to Israel and continue God's way of life that she had learned while she was married to Naomi's son.

Uriah the Hittite had the mentality of "serve or die trying" which is a powerful example for us today.

Uriah and Ruth are both strong examples of fierce loyalty that we can learn from.