

December 28, 2014
Sunday Morning Service
New Year
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from Hebrews 3:5.

1. Explain the connection between belief and faithfulness.
2. If a person is truly faithful to God, how will that effect his or her opinion of the Bible?
3. What does your reading or studying of the Bible say about your dependability toward God?
4. Illustrate how Moses demonstrated loyalty to God's people.
5. How do you demonstrate loyalty to God's people?

LIVE LIKE MOSES IN 2015
Hebrews 3:5

I enjoy reading history, especially American history. One thing I have concluded as I have read much about the founding of this nation and the preservation of the culture through difficult times is that loyalty or faithfulness has been a critical characteristic of the people.

In the beginning, in the founding days of our nation, reasonable and intelligent people left the comforts of their homeland and families and, having sailed across thousands of miles of ocean, landed in a new, dangerous, and foreboding place. There were no welcome wagons or federal agencies waiting on the shoreline to welcome our forefathers and get them signed up for a bazillion government

giveaways. The people who landed at the places they called Jamestown and Plymouth Rock had to be loyal to their dream, loyal to each other, and (especially at Plymouth Colony) loyal to God who they desired to worship. The freedom to worship God apart from fear of religious persecution is one of the motivating factors that sent our forefathers to these shores.

In time, our forefathers faced the war of independence, the war of 1812 which they fought to stay independent, the war between the states, World Wars I and II, Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East conflicts and numerous other conflicts in between. None of those wars would have been won and we would know nothing of freedom if there had not been faithful soldiers who answered the call of duty.

Somehow the previous generations survived the agonies of the dust bowl days, the Great Depression, and other days of trial and testing. Somehow families stayed together and the culture became stronger. A very important part of the "somehow" was loyalty. Back in the "good old days" husbands were loyal to their families, mothers were loyal to their children, and the children grew up willing to fight for the family. Dads often went to work at the same place all their adult lives because they were loyal. People were loyal to the "Red, White, and Blue," respected authorities and adults in general, and supported the local police department. They were faithful to the local grocery store, the mechanic down the road, and of course the church where Grandma and Grandpa and Mom and Dad were buried just outside the door in the church cemetery.

We don't live there anymore. Those are indeed days gone by, never to be lived again in this nation or probably the world for that matter. The world culture has moved on to frontiers of sinfulness to an extent not experienced by cultures of the past. Sure, there has always been evil, sin, and wickedness. But in generations past, we did not have the social media that throws wickedness in your face all day every day. The age of innocence is long gone, and we have come to accept horrible sins as normal, acceptable living.

In my opinion, the root of our chaotic social condition is the sin of selfishness. Has there ever been a more self-centered, immature, whining, spoiled generation than the one in which we find ourselves? When it is all said and done and we have come to bottom line, the only thing that really matters in life is that I feel good about myself.

That is the attitude of too many of our peers—both Americans and the other people who are pouring into America illegally. Everyone is quite sure that someone owes them something. And for some unexplainable reason, our political leaders have strongly promoted that impossible dream.

To a culture sunk in selfishness, our Creator, God, speaks through His Word, telling us that His plan is for us to be loyal. He expects us to get our eyes off from our supposed needs, desires, and lusts and show some faithfulness. To what? Well, God chose to illustrate His goal, His plan for us by the man named Moses. In the letter to the Hebrew Christians, God used the author to point out how incredibly superior Jesus Christ is to all created beings whether they be angels, prophets, or even Moses, the Hebrews' hero. While it is true that Jesus Christ is superior to Moses, it is also true that Moses is superior to almost all of us because God found him to be faithful.

Moses teaches us the importance of loyalty—a trait we need to strive for in this coming year. If we each determine that in the coming year we will be loyal to God, loyal to God's Word, and loyal to each other, we will certainly witness the strengthening of this local assembly for the glory of God.

Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later (Hebrews 3:5).

Moses was Loyal to God.

The verse states that *Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant*. According to God, Moses illustrated faithfulness to God. That faithfulness began due to the fact that God called him. In eternity, even before God had created the earth or the people on it, He chose Moses to be His unique servant. Then in life, God's choice became evident. The interesting thing is that God waited until a time when the king of Egypt ordered all male Hebrew children to be killed to have Moses born. That sure didn't make sense to mere humans. Then God arranged for the king's daughter to find Moses floating in the nearby river. Oh, boy! He's dead! Maybe by human standards, but God is in charge of this one. God chose for Moses to be reared in the king's family, which virtually made him qualified to sit on Egypt's

throne as an adopted son. Throughout life, God was training this Hebrew fellow who should have been killed to do a special work. It all started with the timing of Moses' birth and him being found by the princess. Isn't God's plan great?

In the fullness of time God literally called Moses to the task. Moses was herding sheep in the desert when God called. What was a prince who lived in the king's palace doing herding sheep? This man who had such a qualifying upbringing and education was out in the desert because he murdered an Egyptian who was beating an Israelite, which Moses never forgot he was one with. So there he was out in the desert when from a miraculous burning bush God spoke audibly to call Moses to lead the Israelites out of bondage to become a nation.

We are probably not surprised that Moses balked at God's call. Or to put it another way, Moses preferred not to be loyal to God who was calling him. *Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you'" (Exodus 4:1).* In Moses' response, the word for **believe** is the Hebrew word *aw'man*. It just happens to be the same word the Hebrew Old Testament uses and is translated *faithful* in modern English versions. Moses was concerned that the people would never fall in with the plan to escape Egypt. They would never be loyal to such a task. Here is a good lesson for us. If you don't believe it, you won't be loyal to it (or Him). Moses became extremely faithful to God because he believed God with all his heart.

Therefore, the verse says that Moses **served** faithfully. This statement in the letter to the Hebrew Christians is actually a quote from the Old Testament. In Numbers we read that God said, *"Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house"* (Numbers 12:7). Looking around in that text, we discover that in the context of that statement Moses' own brother and sister rose up against him. They were jealous and self-centered. They wanted the people to submit to their authority just like the people were supposed to submit to Moses who God called to lead.

So in replying to the rebels, God contrasted Moses to other prophets saying, *"Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my*

house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Numbers 12:6-8). God pointed out that He spoke plainly to His servant. More than that, God explained that His servant was the epitome of faithfulness in the whole nation of Israel.

This is where things get interesting. The word for *faithful* here is again the Hebrew word *aw'man* (remember, "they will not believe," Ex. 4:1). When the ancient scholars translated the Old Testament Hebrew into Greek (LXX), they used the Greek word *pistos* at this point. That word means to believe or to have faith. Put it all together and we realize that Moses was loyal to God because he believed God. That simple conclusion speaks volumes to us and about us.

We must learn that faithfulness to God is proof of His calling us. We came to know God when He drew us. By nature, we did not know God or care about Him. By grace He began to draw us and we came to understand our need. When we confessed our sin, God forgave us and opened the door for fellowship so that we can know God more and more.

Now that we are born again, we are knowing God through fellowship. We gain more knowledge of God by learning about Him in the Bible He has given. It is His self-revelation to us. It is His revelation of us so that we understand our need. We gain even greater knowledge of God as we observe the truths the Bible teaches about Him working out in our lives. Therefore, as we learn more and more about God, we believe more and more about Him. If we truly believe what God reveals about Himself, we will be faithful to Him. Seasoned Christians would ask, "How could you not be more faithful as you have watched God work?" Conversely then, people who are not loyal to God don't believe Him, regardless of what they claim!

Moses was Loyal to God's Message.

Notice in this verse that God said that Moses was faithful *to testify to the things that were to be spoken later*. In this, Moses illustrated love for God's Word. He understood it and made decisions

in light of it. Generally it was not what Moses didn't know that bothered him. It was what he knew that caused him to be concerned. When God called Moses, the man was familiar enough with the people to know they weren't going to jump on the band wagon. But Moses understood what God told him.

Moses certainly understood God's laws and requirements. When he rehearsed them to the people, he understood what God required of them. As a whole, the people responded well enough. They just didn't do what God said because they didn't believe God. Right response or not, Moses was faithful to tell the people how God wanted them to live, where God wanted them to go, and what God wanted them to build. He spent his life trying to do what God told him to do.

Therefore, because Moses was faithful to God's Word, God entrusted Moses with His message. How amazing that God would put His law in a man's hand and expect that man to explain it to the people. Moses learned to draw on God's grace to communicate God's message. Surely there were times that he did not fully understand God's law or plan. Surely there were times when Moses knew the people weren't going to be very excited about God's edict or promised judgment. You can almost hear him now. "Okay folks, here is God's plan. You chose not to believe God and have proven that you have rebellious hearts too many times. Therefore, God is going to kill all of you here in the desert except for Joshua and Caleb. In fact, God is going to kill me because you made me so angry that I lost my temper. But God is going to let your kids inherit the promise He originally gave to you." Would you be faithful to declare God's message if that was what He told you? Would I? We know that whoever gave that message would not be *Time* magazine's man of the year. But because Moses was faithful to God's Word, he told the people like it is.

So it is in us: loyalty to God's Bible indicates love for God's Word. If we love the Bible, we will be faithful to know it. The very process of coming to know the Bible is a matter of faithfulness. A person can be familiar with the Bible by attending preaching once a week. That is if the preacher actually speaks from the Bible, which many do not in this age. But knowing the Bible and being familiar with the Bible is not the same. Knowing the Bible requires that you

spend time with it. You need to read it daily. You need to meditate throughout the day on what you read. You will talk about it regularly, if you love it.

You can read through your Bible every year by using several different reading plans. Or you can read three chapters each day, 365 days a year, and you will read completely through the Bible. If a person began that practice at age twelve, by the time he is my age he will have read through the Bible almost 50 times. If you read any book 50 times, you will be an authority on that book because you know it so thoroughly.

Faithfulness to the Bible message is a matter of love. If you don't love the Bible, it is doubtful you will read through annually, if you read it at all. But because you love the Bible, you want to spend time with it, you want to be familiar with it, you want to know it. Suppose that in a conversation someone tells you, "Oh wow, I really love that restaurant." Being convinced that this is true, you respond by asking, "So how many times have you eaten there?" "Well, only once so far." "Oh, and when was that?" "About 10 years ago." Does the person really love the restaurant? No. That was a flippant use of the word love. Now I wonder what the guy means when he says he loves his wife. Or what does he mean if he uses the word "love" the same way to tell of his love for the Bible?

Furthermore, if we know the Bible, we should be expected to apply it. What good is all the knowledge you accrue by reading the Bible if you never put the message into practice. Loyalty to God's word will not give you perfect understanding of all things. Loyalty to the Bible will give you principles by which to live and respond to all things.

Moses was Loyal to God's People.

We see this truth if we step back to look at the entire statement in this verse from *Hebrews*. *Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later (Hebrews 3:5)*. Moses illustrated what love for God's people looks like. On their part, they did not exactly honor him. From the outset they doubted that Moses would lead them out of Egypt. Of course when they first heard the plan, they believed and were excited that

God was going to do something (Exo. 5:31). But when Moses started to execute the plan, it made life a bit more difficult for the people and they despised Moses for butting into their lives. *They said to them [Moses and Aaron], "The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us" (Exodus 5:21)*.

Things didn't get much better after they left Egypt. Early after their release, when they stood on the shore of the Red Sea, they accused Moses of trying to kill them. *They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?" (Exodus 14:11)*.

And on it went. They grumbled against him because they didn't find good water (Exo. 15:24). They grumbled because he didn't provide bread and meat with the bread God gave (Exo. 16:2). They accused him of wanting to kill them and their children with thirst (Exo. 17:3). They grumbled because he didn't provide meat with the bread (Num. 11:31). The leaders rebelled against his authority (Num. 16:1-20). They refused to follow Moses into the Promised Land, then attempted the feat in their own strength and many died (Num. 14).

But Moses loved the people anyway. As a young man he was sympathetic toward them. It is clear from the history that as Moses watched the Israelites' hard labor and punishment, he identified with them to his own hurt. He had been adopted into Pharaoh's family and could of snubbed his nose at the slaves. However, when he defended a "brother," it cost him his career and family. More than that, Moses showed love for the Israelites as he led them out of bondage contrary to his own desires (Exo. 3).

He interceded for them when God could have destroyed them (at the Golden Calf). God said to Moses, *"They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you." But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, "O LORD, why does your*

wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever'” (Exodus 32:8-13). How could it be made more obvious that Moses was loyal to God’s people?

Loyalty is one of the most obvious expressions of love for others. Therefore, when we love each other, we will put up with a lot. Of course love isn’t always necessary for loyalty. It is possible to be faithful out of sheer grit and determination. People who follow false gods often have great loyalty in spite of cost and pain. Some children grow up knowing that loyalty is expected, and they show it contrary to own desires. Young people can grow up in churches being taught that they must be loyal, which they do through sheer determination. But generally when people in these kinds of circumstances get a window of freedom, they cut and run very quickly.

Loyalty that flows from love is more dependable. This is the kind of loyalty that causes a man to go into battle to defend his country. Loyalty flamed by love causes a person to love God to the death, stand for the Bible to the death, and to stick with other people. Loving loyalty is able to endure difficult relationships.

Paul described real love in these terms. *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).* That kind of loyalty has to flow from a heart of love.

That is why loyalty that flows out of love is steadfast and dependable. This person is always there through good times and bad times. The person might even get angry with you, but he or she is still going to stick with you and defend you. I think back over the years of the number of people who have been loyal to Community Baptist

Church and to me as their pastor. There have been times that I have wondered why you didn’t cut and run like others did. I have to conclude that you are faithful to me and to these people because you love us.

And that is odd because loving loyalty flies in the face of nature. Natural sinfulness is concerned about self– not only first, but generally always. We are born to be selfish, self-centered, and self-absorbed by nature. Then when we place that perverse nature in a more perverse culture, we are hopelessly consumed with self. Self love says stuff like, “I want or I don’t want,” “I need or I don’t need,” “I like or I don’t like.” Being around folks like that might be difficult. You have to deal with people who are governed by that attitude all the time . . . and sadly it is not always children.

Regeneration, in contrast, causes us to focus on others. When God gives us a new heart, we are able to learn how to die to self. We learn through sanctification how to love others which causes us to be faithful to them. In contrast to the immature desires of selfishness, loving loyalty says, “I wouldn’t do it that way, but I can live with it.” “I wouldn’t have said that, but I understand.” “I wish we could do such and such, but it’s okay if we don’t.” Only a miracle of God’s grace can deliver us from ourselves. Sanctification teaches us to grow in loyalty.

On Thursday this week we have sort of a clean slate handed to us. Sure we still have to deal with consequences, habits, and practices from the past year or longer. But we have an opportunity to start a new year. Let’s determine that in 2015 we are going to be faithful people like Moses. Let’s determine that by God’s grace we will be loyal to God, loyal to the Bible, and loyal to each other.