

≡ TIM & JOY DOWNS ≡

ONE OF US MUST BE

**CRAZY**

...AND I'M PRETTY SURE

**IT'S  
YOU**

**Making  
Sense of the  
Differences  
that Divide  
Us**

# ≡ THE DIFFERENCES THAT DIVIDE ≡



*"You might as well stop pretending, John.  
I know when your eyes are wandering."*

2 LOYALTY:

**FAITHFULNESS** and **PRIORITY**

**Tim:** Not long ago I got together with some old buddies of mine. We went to a friend's beach house for the weekend, just the four of us. Just the guys.

**Joy:** Which I think is great.

**Tim:** We started talking about how we all met each other for the first time. My friend Kent remembered the first time we ever met, and I could remember the first time I ever saw him. We went around the table, sharing our memories, until we came to my friend Mike. He recounted our first meeting, and then everyone turned to me and waited—but I just sat there. Finally Mike said, “You mean to tell me you can’t remember anything about the first time we met?” I said, “Oh, please—I get enough of that from my wife.”

**Joy:** This is why women worry about men in groups.

**Tim:** It was a funny line. Everybody howled! Mike thought it was such a great joke that when he got back with me, he shared it with Joy. Guess what? Joy didn't think it was funny.

**Joy:** Can you imagine that?

**Tim:** Joy thought that my little joke was at her expense. I told her, “I wasn't laughing at you, honey; I was laughing with you.”

**Joy:** And I explained to him that to be laughing with someone, two people have to be laughing.

**Tim:** I told Joy that it was no big deal—that sometimes when men get together, they make little jokes about their wives.

**Joy:** I said I know. Sometimes wives do the same thing—and whenever their husbands hear about it later, it bothers them—and it should.

**Tim:** I finally began to understand why it mattered to her. It was more than a joke at Joy's expense; it was an act of disloyalty. I had said

something in private that I would never have said in her presence. I had painted a picture of her that was less than flattering—a stereotype of a nagging, demanding wife that wasn't true of her at all. Instead of defending Joy, I was demeaning her—and I was doing it behind her back.

**Joy:** Every wife wants to know that she can trust her husband, not just in the big things but in the little things as well. She wants to know that her husband is loyal—not only in what he says to her but in what he says about her.

**Tim:** So I learned a good lesson. And I told Mike that I still couldn't remember the first time we met, but I sure would remember the last.

### **Dreaming of Loyalty**

*Loyalty* is the value that asks, “Whose side are you on, anyway?” It's the dream of a partner who is a true *soul mate*—someone who is unreservedly committed to you and to the relationship. Consider some comments from our survey that indicate that the dream of Loyalty is at work . . .

- *We repeatedly disagree over outside obligations coming before me.*
- *He takes a piece of my heart with every lie.*
- *Why can't he stand up to his father on his family's behalf?*
- *Enjoying time for myself and my hobby doesn't mean I don't put my spouse first.*
- *I don't understand his quick reaction to others' needs but not to mine.*
- *How can he find so much to talk about with everyone else but not with me?*
- *I want his time to have fun to be with ME!!*



Loyalty has two essential components: *Faithfulness* and *Priority*.

### ***Faithfulness: You Can Count on Me***

*Faithful* is the term we reserve for those precious few we can count on to be truthful, trustworthy, and steadfastly committed to us—and few they are. “Many will say they are loyal friends,” Proverbs 20:6 (NLT) says, “but who can find one who is truly reliable?” Faithfulness means being able to count on someone regardless of the issue and regardless of the circumstances. Faithfulness is what we vow first and foremost on our wedding day.

#### **INSIGHT**

**I value the friend who  
for me finds time on his  
calendar, but I cherish  
the friend who for me  
does not consult  
his calendar.**

—Robert Brault

### ***Priority: We Put Each Other First***

*Priority* is something else we vow on our wedding day, though we may not have used that exact word. Priority is what we mean by the phrase “forsaking all others.”

To “forsake” means “to give up something *formerly held dear*.” The implication is to move someone new into first place in one’s life. In the case of marriage, it means to put someone in her *rightful* place. The book of Genesis describes a process for the formation of a marriage relationship: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). For a *Loyal* marriage relationship to be formed, there must be a cutting of ties and a shifting of priorities.

A man lies dying at home on his bed. Suddenly, he awakens! Drifting up the stairs comes the aroma of his favorite of all foods, his wife’s special chocolate chip cookies. He drags himself from his bed and down the hallway. He stumbles down the stairs, pulls himself to his feet, and staggers into the kitchen. There on the kitchen table . . . can it be? Yes! *Dozens* of thick, golden-brown cookies! He lurches toward the table and reaches out a trembling arm. . . . Suddenly, a spatula smacks him on the back of the hand.

“Get away from those!” his wife snaps. “They’re for the funeral!”

We all need to know that the marriage will come before the in-laws, the best friends, the children—even the funeral. We need to know that

we are our mate's *Priority*.

Each of us is born with an instinctive “me first” attitude. But in marriage, the husband and wife have to cultivate a “*we* first” mentality—and each needs to know that his or her partner shares that value. Family therapist Terry Hargrave calls this concept “us-ness.” “Instead of pursuing self-fulfillment,” he writes, “the partners could dedicate themselves to caring for a third entity: their precious and vulnerable relationship.”<sup>1</sup> Hargrave recommends that we think of marriage as a three-party arrangement. There's you, there's me, and there's *us*—and *us* comes first.

### Amplifying Factors

The most devastating breaches of Loyalty are ones that involve basic marital fidelity. When we speak of a spouse being *unfaithful*, we mean only one thing. Each of us desires our spouse to be faithful in the most basic sense, but the dream of Loyalty goes much deeper. Unseen aspects of Faithfulness and Priority cause conflict in day-to-day married life.

*She: Where have you been?*

*He: At the hardware store. Why?*

*She: All this time? You've been gone for three hours.*

*He: Sometimes I just like to look around.*

*She: What in the world can you look at for three hours?*

*He: I don't know. What do you look at in the mall for three hours?*

*She: Did you stop anywhere else?*

*He: What's with the third degree? I don't have to report to you every time I go out, you know.*

Those who especially value Loyalty are sometimes vulnerable to doubt and thoughts of suspicion. This husband feels like he's being accused of something. *All this time? You've been gone for three hours.*

His wife's desire for Faithfulness and Priority may be amplified by the stories she constantly hears about husbands who are somewhat *less* than faithful. Her best friend's husband asked for a divorce last week, and the woman never saw it coming—she had *no idea*. If that can

### INSIGHT

**The last thing  
one knows is  
what to put first.**

—Blaise Pascal

happen to her best friend, why can't it happen to her?

This wife dreams of Loyalty in a faithless world, and she longs for Priority in a world where wives are often *not* the Priority they should be. Even if her husband is a perfectly loyal man, he may still suffer from guilt by association—or at least *suspicion*. It isn't that she doesn't trust *him*; it's just that their marriage is surrounded by so much disloyalty.

He thinks his wife doesn't trust him. He's partly right; this *is* an issue of trust, but it's not entirely about him. Sometimes Loyalty arguments are about the world around you—and it's hard not to take it personally.

*He: Don't forget, Mom is coming over for lunch today.*

*She: Does your mother have to come over for lunch  
every Sunday?*

*He: Here we go on my mother again . . .*

*She: It seems like every time we have a spare moment you're inviting  
your mother over.*

*He: She lives alone; you know that. She doesn't have anyone else.*

*She: She has your brother and sister. She's their mother too. Why don't  
they invite her over once in a while?*

*He: Why don't you like my mother? She's always nice to you.*

Marital researchers tell us that in-laws are one of the most common topics of conflict for married couples. Not necessarily. In-laws are certainly one of the most common *apparent* topics of conflict, but the real dispute is often over something deeper.

The husband and wife in our scenario seem to be having a classic in-law argument. They are indeed—but in-law arguments are often not about moms and dads but about Loyalty. The wife may actually *love* her mother-in-law, but she resents the *Priority* Mom seems to have in their marriage. The husband assumes that his wife must not *like* his mother. Why else would Mom be unwelcome? As the scenario ends, he is preparing to make the case that his mother is likable, and that she deserves to be liked—an argument that will go nowhere, because the disagreement was never about Mom's character in the first place.

The conflict isn't about whether Mom should come over but whether

Mom should come *first*. *It seems like every time we have a spare moment you're inviting your mother over.* She wonders, *Why isn't the same level of initiative and interest being shown in our marriage? First leave, then cleave; sometimes it seems like he never left. Whose side is he on, anyway?*

### **Dreaming of Shared Priorities**

The Loyalty conflict is often about Priority, and it surfaces anytime something else seems to have claimed the attention and desire that you feel *you* rightly deserve, whether that something is a job, a hobby, an Internet site, another person—even your own children.

*She: I can't believe that in just five years Sarah will go away to college.*

*He: I'm kind of looking forward to it.*

*She: Looking forward to it! Are you kidding?*

*He: I'll miss her, of course. But think of all the things **we'll** be able to do...*

*She: You, maybe, but what about me? The kids have been my whole life!*

*He: Thanks a **lot**.*

He loves the kids—and he's glad that she loves them too. But when he hears the longing in her voice, he wonders if she feels anything remotely similar for him. It's been a problem for them since their first daughter was born. The wife seemed to love the newborn with an intensity her husband had never experienced himself, and at times he felt twinges of jealousy. When the baby first arrived, he expected his wife's love to expand to *include* the baby; instead, it sometimes seemed as if her love for him had transferred *to* the baby.

It's silly, he tells himself, to be jealous of his own children. He tries to remind himself how lucky he is to be married to a woman who is such a devoted mom—but it doesn't always help. Sometimes he finds himself pulling back from the kids, not because he doesn't love them but because he resents the Priority they've assumed. *It's always about the kids.* We need to love many people in our lives, but in marriage a person instinctively feels that he deserves a unique place in his mate's heart.

He feels ignored, and he longs to once again become his wife's Priority. But perhaps the reason that his wife has shifted her Priority to the children is that *his* Priorities have wandered as well...

### *The Word*

Many will say they are loyal friends, but who can find one who is truly reliable?

PROVERBS 20:6 NLT



*He: I have to work late again tonight.*

*She: Again? That's the third night this week.*

*He: I can't help it; performance reviews are coming up.*

*She: Last week it was the big audit to get ready for; this week it's performance reviews. It's always something.*

*He: What do you want me to do, quit my job?*

*She: Of course not. I just wish you gave your family the same amount of attention you give your job. Even when you're here, your mind is on some project.*

*He: Why do you think I work as hard as I do? I'm not doing this just for me, you know.*

One of the most difficult balances of life is the tension between work and family. How much time do you spend at the office, and when is it time to come home? Spouses don't always answer these questions the same way, and the resulting argument is often about Loyalty.

Ironically, what one partner sees as an act of Faithfulness, the other may see as a lack of Priority.

She understands the demands of his job, and she actually appreciates his dedication. She admires his position and his desire to provide for his family, but she still finds herself pulling back from him, afraid that her attempts to connect with him will be met with a dull "uh-huh" or a blank stare.

Part of the problem is that he never comes home at all—at least, not all of him. She would like him to be home more, but more importantly, when he is home she wants him to be *all there*—not just physically but in mind and spirit too. When she tries to explain this, he reacts defensively, suggesting that her demands are extreme and unreasonable. *What do you want me to do, quit my job?*

She feels misunderstood and taken for granted. Because he has withdrawn from the kids and no longer seeks to enter their world, she believes she must pull double duty. His lack of initiative in the family lowers her respect for him. She decides that she won't ask for his involvement anymore; she'll simply leave him alone and take care of

### INSIGHT

**Love is an act of faith, and whoever is of little faith is also of little love.**

—Erich Fromm

the family's needs on her own.

If they continue this way, she may never know that he really wants to be a vital part of her world. And sadly, he may never understand that she longs for him to be the hub of the family and have the sense of Priority he desires. It may all be lost in the whirlwind of conflicting desires over Faithfulness and Priority.

*She: Do you think she's pretty?*

*He: Who?*

*She: You know who. **Her.***

*He: Her? I didn't notice.*

*She: You noticed. I can tell when you look at another woman, Ted.*

*He: Okay, so I look sometimes. But I don't touch.*

*She: Oh, **that's** a big comfort.*

*He: Look, I'm only human. You expect too much, you know that?*

Husbands sometimes allow their eyes to wander—and wives notice when they do. “I still don’t understand why he looks at other women,” one wife lamented on our survey. Husbands tend to view an occasional visual tryst as a harmless indiscretion, but wives often see it as something more—as a kind of visual *unfaithfulness*. “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’” Jesus once said. “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27–28 NIV). Loyalty begins in the heart and works outward. True Faithfulness, in other words, is revealed in small things. As Jesus reminded us on another occasion, “Unless you are faithful in small matters, you won’t be faithful in large ones” (Luke 16:10 NLT).

“One thing that gets people through difficult spots is fidelity,” author Michael Leach writes, “not just fidelity to sexuality, but to the other person’s emotions, to compassion, to kindness. Those who value fidelity can get through anything.”<sup>2</sup> Those who value Loyalty long to know that their mate is *consistently* faithful, in attitude as well as in action, in public as well as in private, in small matters as well as in large.

## INSIGHT

**We laugh at honor  
and are shocked  
to find traitors in  
our midst.**

—C. S. Lewis

*She: Boy, this restaurant is expensive.*

*He: Don't worry about it. I'll put it on my expense account.*

*She: How can you do that? This isn't a business meeting.*

*He: I just got back from a business trip, remember? They don't know exactly when I returned, so I just tack it on to the end of the trip.*

*Presto! A free meal.*

*She: Wouldn't they fire you if they found out?*

*He: Who's going to find out? I do this all the time.*

*She: You do? But isn't that . . . dishonest?*

*He: Look, I thought you might like to go to a nice place for a change. We can still go to Burger King, you know.*

When Teddy Roosevelt was a young man, he worked as the foreman of a cattle ranch in Colorado. One day one of the ranch hands came to Roosevelt and told him that a stretch of wire had broken down, and several unbranded cattle from the neighboring ranch had wandered through onto their land. "I branded them and mixed them in with our own herd," the man said with a wink.

"Get your gear and get out," Roosevelt said. "You're fired."

The news of the ranch hand's immediate dismissal surprised everyone. After all, hadn't the man acted in his employer's best interests? Isn't that Loyalty? And besides, would the neighboring ranch have even missed a few wandering cattle? Asked about his decision, Roosevelt replied, "A man who will steal *for* me is a man who will steal *from* me."

Roosevelt understood that true Loyalty has no boundaries. A man who is dishonest at work will be dishonest at home. A woman who will talk to you about other people will talk to other people about you. A man who will steal *for* you is a man who will steal *period*.

That's why it's hard to trust the Loyalty of someone who seems to be faithful to nothing or no one else. If you're not loyal to others, can I really be confident that you're faithful to me? Why are you making an exception in my case?

Now it's time to consider how the dream of Loyalty relates to *your* marriage. Consider the following questions and ask whether each of them is true of you always, sometimes, or never.



*"Of course I'd like to know how you've been feeling lately.  
Why don't you Facebook me?"*

LOYALTY INVENTORY—Faithfulness	Always	Sometimes	Never
Do I betray my mate's confidence by the way I talk about him when he's not present?			
Do I joke about my mate in the presence of other people and later find out she is angry about what I said?			
Do I look at the opposite sex in a way that shows interest?			
Does my mate ever express disappointment about the way I notice the opposite sex?			
Could my mate walk in on me in any circumstance without me being uncomfortable?			
Does my mate ever have doubts about my faithfulness?			
Do I confide in my mate above anyone else about my personal issues and concerns?			



LOYALTY INVENTORY—Priority	Always	Sometimes	Never
Do I find myself having a difficult time saying no to others because their needs seem significant or urgent?			
Does my mate ever voice displeasure with the amount of time I spend with people outside our home?			
Do I sometimes put the needs of my children before the needs of my spouse?			
Does my mate ever voice a feeling of neglect when it comes to his place in our marriage?			
Do I put as much thinking and creativity into my marriage as I do into my work or hobbies?			
Does my mate ever voice regret about being taken for granted?			
Do we have things that we enjoy doing together or talking about other than jobs, children, or the business of running the home?			

### *The Word*

Faithful are the  
wounds of a friend,  
but deceitful are the  
kisses of an enemy.

PROVERBS 27:6

### **Finding the Root**

On a scale from one to ten, how important is Loyalty to you? Place an X where you think you belong. Now put an O where you think your mate belongs.



Are there recurring arguments in your marriage that you think might be driven by the desire for Loyalty? What are they about?

Do you think there is something from your past that makes your desire for Loyalty especially important to you? Have you ever discussed this with your mate?

Do you think there is something happening in your life right now that could be heightening your desire for Loyalty?

## Dreaming Together: Loyalty

There's no greater virtue than Loyalty, but even Loyalty has a dark side when it's taken to extremes.

THE GOOD SIDE OF LOYALTY	THE DARK SIDE OF LOYALTY
Faithful to a fault	Overlooking serious faults
Devoted to your mate	Idolizing your mate
Making your mate your priority	Ignoring all other priorities
Wanting your mate to be faithful	Jealous and suspicious
Wanting to be your mate's priority	Selfish and demanding

### ***A Tip for Spouses of the Loyalty-Minded***

If Loyalty is a bigger concern for your mate than it is for you, how can you begin to satisfy his desires for Faithfulness and Priority? A helpful way to demonstrate Loyalty to your mate is by *making a habit of offering accountability*.

As our children were growing up, we tried to impress upon them the difference between *trust* and *accountability*. We told them that we would always take them at their word. If our son said he would be at Todd's house, we trusted that that is where he would be. But if he left Todd's house to go to David's house instead, we asked him to call us and let us know of his change in plans. Our motive wasn't to constantly keep tabs on him or to track his every move. We didn't *distrust* him; it's just that there was always a chance that we might need to get in touch with him, and so we needed to know his whereabouts. It wasn't an issue of *trust*; it was an issue of accountability.

Instead of allowing your Loyalty-minded wife to struggle with vain imaginations, you can help fulfill her desires for Loyalty by *making a habit of offering accountability*. Instead of waiting for her to ask where you've been or why you were gone so long, tell her in advance. If you're going to be late getting home, call first. If you have to make a stop on

**INSIGHT**

**Always do what you say you are going to do. It is the glue and fiber that binds successful relationships.**

—Jeffrey A. Timmons

the way home, let her know. If an errand takes much longer than you expected, tell her why *before* she asks. By making a habit of doing these simple things, you are *offering accountability*. You are saying to her, “I have nothing to hide, and I have nothing to be ashamed of. I will live my life before you as an open book.” Remember, *offering accountability* is the key. If she has to request it, it only feeds her imagination: “Why do I have to ask for this? What does he have to hide?”

We can offer accountability in other areas too. Tell your mate she’s free to read your e-mail or check your Internet history. If you receive a personal letter, ask him if he’d like to see it. If she walks in just as you hang up the phone, tell her who you were talking to—don’t wait for her to ask. Make a habit of *offering accountability*, and trust may be less of an issue in the future.

Another simple but powerful way to *offer accountability* is to remind your mate of your faithfulness. From time to time, look your Loyalty-minded mate in the eye and say, “I just want you to know that there is no one else. I am completely faithful to you, and I love only you.” If this sounds to you like stating the obvious, that’s probably because Loyalty is not your issue. Your Loyalty-minded mate *wants* to trust you, and you can help relieve those nameless fears and nagging doubts by simply reminding her of your love and commitment.

Let’s apply the principle of *offering accountability* to a scenario we saw earlier in this chapter . . .

*She: Where have you been?*

*He: At the hardware store. Why?*

*She: All this time? You’ve been gone for three hours.*

He was gone longer than she expected, and a Loyalty conflict is under way. But if he had applied the principle of *offering accountability*, the conversation might have taken a much different turn.

*She: Where have you been?*

*He: At the hardware store. I know I was gone longer than I said I’d be, but I got to looking at power tools, and I started reading some of the*

*instruction manuals. I stopped for gas, and then I came straight home. Sorry if you were worried about me—I'll try to call next time.*

It was a simple thing, but by showing a willingness to reveal his whereabouts—by *offering* accountability—he protected his Loyalty-minded wife from doubt and suspicion.

### ***A Tip for the Loyalty-Minded***

If Faithfulness and Priority *are* especially important to you, what can you do to avoid the extremes of jealousy, possessiveness, or suspicion? A helpful first step is to begin to *voice gratitude and appreciation for faithfulness*.

As we said earlier in this chapter, those who especially value Loyalty are sometimes vulnerable to doubt and thoughts of suspicion. You can help resist the temptation of suspicion by reminding yourself of your mate's track record of faithfulness—and even more important, by thanking him for it.

First Thessalonians 5:18 (NIV) tells us to “give thanks in all circumstances”—not to merely *feel* gratitude but to *express* it. Something about thanksgiving transforms doubt and reinforces hope. Remember, suspicion grows best in a vacuum—wherever there is an absence of knowledge or encouragement. By giving thanks, we constantly fill the vacuum of doubt with reminders of past Loyalty.

And don't forget, thanksgiving has a transforming effect on both the giver *and* the receiver. By expressing gratitude to your mate for his Faithfulness and Priority, you make it much easier for him to hear your occasional doubts. As more than one man commented on our survey, “I need to hear what I'm doing *right* before I can hear what I'm doing *wrong*.”

Let's return to our scenario again. Instead of raising concerns about Loyalty, what if the wife had instead tried to *voice gratitude and appreciation for faithfulness*? How could things have gone differently?

*She: Where have you been?*

*He: At the hardware store. Why?*



*She: Look, I don't mean to doubt you. One of the things I appreciate most about you is your faithfulness. I've always been able to trust you, and I can't tell you how important that is to me. It's just that these thoughts cross my mind sometimes . . .*

*He: I'm sorry I was gone so long. I'll call next time.*



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