

Be Devoted to One Another

Set yourself aside for closest Christian friends and relatives and their needs; be committed to other believers within reason; be loyal and faithful to all believers.

Mark 12:30; Luke 16:13; John 15:12-13; Rom 12:10; 1 John 3:14

Our loving God wants us to be devoted to one another – like He is devoted to us.

Rom 12:10 states it clearly, “*Be devoted to one another in love.*”

Many Bible translations use “love with brotherly affection” instead of “be devoted to”, which does not do justice to the Greek word “agape” for divine love. In our day, “brotherly affection” can be fulfilled in church aisles, as it should. But “agape love” involves self-denial for another’s good. That is why this Together deals with devotion, not with the weakness of sibling affection which in our day can range from politeness to real devotion. No, God wants devotion. We worship God by reflecting back to Him his great devotion to us. The more difficult the devotion, the more pure the worship.

What this means is that we are to set ourselves aside for the needs of those in our Christian Inner Circles and to be committed to other believers within reason.

Devotion is primarily an attitude that drives willing obedience to the Scriptures of all of the Togethers. Depending upon how strong our devotion is, we will minister to one another with various Togethers when situations call for such deeper love. For example, it is far easier to put up with other people’s objectionable behavior if we are devoted to them and obey the Scriptures that back up the Together of “Bear with One Another.”

Devotion affects the quality of our love and interaction with others. The clearest example I can think of is that parents who are more devoted to their children bear with a lot of objectionable behavior with patient love. Parents who have less devotion to their kids force themselves to do what is required of them from a sense of duty.

Devotion magnifies joy. We tend to derive more joy in those relationships marked by high devotion. For example, let’s use the Together of honoring one another. When we honor someone to whom we are deeply devoted, we experience more joy.

Becoming a more devoted Christian now will expand our experience in heaven indefinitely.

In heaven everyone will be satisfied with their sense of devotion to God and the other citizens of heaven. But, they will likely experience different intensities of joy from devotion based on how far their spirits developed before death.

If we want to feel the joy of devotion more intensely in heaven, we will want to yield more to the Holy Spirit who is constantly opening doors for us to become more devoted to God and to one another. We

can ask the Father in Jesus' Name for more devotion to our friends and then listen for God's Spirit to speak to our minds in ways that will urge us toward devotion to pray for them and dedication to make ourselves more available. We can seek God's help to be more devoted to our family and find that they become higher priority. We can let God make us more devoted to our husband or wife and experience additional joy in supporting him or her with help, compliments, and other loving gestures.

For many reasons, some will enter heaven behind others in this respect of sensing the joy of devotion. However, because devotion can grow in heaven's absence of sin and self-centeredness, everyone will grow in devotion to God and others. As they see more and more of God's goodness, everyone's heart, mind, soul and strength will respond with increased devotion. It will just be that some will have spirits more developed than others in depth of devotion at the start. And, they will likely stay ahead for all eternity. But, everyone will be happy, because everyone will be filled with devotion to the level of their capacity.

This fictional story of a person's testimony from heaven might give an illustration.

I am learning how to increase my joy in heaven. Before I died I was devoted to God, but not to His desire that I be devoted to other Christians in my life. When I came here I immediately noticed others having a more joyful time than I was having. Now, don't get me wrong, I was not unhappy, nor am I now. The only way I can explain it is that I am full of joy, like a 60-watt lightbulb, but there are others that are full of 100-watt light. I don't have the capacity for more than 60 watts, so I am as happy as I can be. That doesn't mean, however, that I would not like to grow in devotion and be more joyful.

After watching people with a higher quotient of joy, I discovered that they found joy in what they did – plus what other citizens of heaven were doing. I came to heaven only practiced in happiness for what I did. I am hoping that I will learn to find more joy in what those around me are doing.

[end of story]

There will be increased joy for those of us who became increasingly more devoted to God and to other people. If a devoted mother gets so much joy out of watching her daughter succeed in baking her first cake, imagine what joy we can have in heaven as we see other Christians continually accomplishing new things they try.

Who enjoys a daughter's beginning piano recital more, a parent devoted to her daughter's music or a mother who is only doing what a good mother would do?

Who relishes a son's Little League baseball championship game more, especially without a win to boost enthusiasm, a father devoted to helping his son learn the necessary baseball skills or one who just takes his son to the game and disinterestedly watches from the bleachers?

Who enjoys a friend getting a book published or being promoted at work, a friend who congratulates as a form of social politeness or one who has been so devoted as to encourage and pray for the friend's success?

In heaven, it might be that some of us will have spirits developed far enough in devotion that we will enjoy to a much higher level the many joys of others in heaven.

If we have been so excited for something good to happen for someone we care about that we think about it all day and cannot wait to find out what happened, we have been devoted to that person. It felt good to be outside of ourselves and delighted for someone else. How great it will be to be involved with other saints in heaven and experience the joy that comes from devotion expressing itself in anticipating their pursuits.

To get more ready for that, we may need to expand the group of people we are devoted to. When our week is full of anticipation about what is happening in the lives of many people, our spirits will be big enough to take in more joy in heaven. Now, devotion and dedication too often has to deal with potential bad things. But in heaven it will be anticipation only about good things others are experiencing.

So far, we have been talking about the good things in heaven that will come from a strong devotion to other people. But, what about a stronger devotion and dedication to God?

We usually like to be most around those we know are devoted to us. So it must be the same with God.

Think of how good it is to just sit and visit with people we know are supportive of us. We feel the warmth of their devotion. We appreciate their commitment to us. We feel we are in life together out of mutual dedication.

We should want our devotion to grow as much as it can this side of heaven because in some way it will determine the nature of our relationship with God. Let's not presume that God will just look the other way. He knows the level of our devotion to Him no matter how much of a religious face we put on in Christian fellowships. Every one of us has work to do to grow our spirits in devotion to God. None of us has conquered devotion to Him.

Furthermore, consider how we appreciate those who are devoted to our friends, our children and our spouse. This is the same with God. He appreciates when we are dedicated to His other children. If, as this Together and its Scriptures presents, we become more and more devoted to other Christians, God will see that this is because we are devoted to Him.

“Devotion” is defined at dictionary.com as (1) “profound dedication: consecration”, and (2) “earnest attachment to a cause, person, etc.” Notice the words “profound” and “earnest” in those definitions. This sounds an awful lot like 100% commitment. Just imagine the implications of such devotion in our Christian friendships. It is more natural to think of being devoted to family members and spouses, but even there, devotion might not be “profound dedication”.

Devoted love is the love of the kingdom of heaven. It is not reluctant, resentful, or obligated love. Devoted love is self-denial for another's good all of the time. It is far more than an emotion. It is complete dedication.

Strong devotion to one another is powered by devotion to God, which, itself, is powered by God's devotion to us.

Devotion to one another is powered by devotion to God. Such God-powered devotion to one another shows itself as joyful love made up of loyalty, faithfulness, and priority.

First, devotion to God and one another requires loyalty to God. Consider how loyal He is to us to grow in loyalty.

A believer who is fearful of mentioning Jesus is little devoted. He or she may claim to be devoted to God, but it is lying to oneself and dangerous. It would be like a husband or wife hiding that he or she is married when out in public. Lack of loyalty makes devotion impossible.

In friendships lack of loyalty yields gossiping and betrayal that hurts. Devoted friends protect rather than harm. They do not take undue advantage. Family members do not speak poorly of one another to gain friends or special attention. Such betrayal is the opposite of devotion and loyalty. Husbands and wives do not strive to outdo each other if they are loyal. Devotion in the “one flesh” relationship of marriage is profound dedication of two people spiritually attached to each other.

Second, devotion to God and one another requires faithfulness to God. Consider how faithful He is to us to grow in faithfulness.

Faithfulness to God includes so many things, including acting like forgiven people who continually walk away from unrighteousness to do what is good. Devoted friends are faithful to remember one another’s birthdays as well as each other’s difficult challenges. Unfaithful friends abandon one another when they forget to ask about the very important things in one another’s lives. Family members are unfaithful when they do not take into account the effects of their actions on all others in the family. Devoted family members are those who are faithful to consider the needs of other family members, as well as do their chores to contribute to family functioning. Devoted husbands and wives are faithful to their marriage vows and to their spouse’s well-being and biblical life goals.

Third, devotion requires top priority. Consider how high priority God makes us to grow in putting God and others at higher priority.

In return for God making us a priority to such an extreme that He had His Son die for us, we should be completely devoted to God and put Him first. Likewise, when friends are devoted, they make time for one another. In a family, devotion to one another means having the attitude that every member is a priority to a reasonable extent. Devoted parents make caring for their children a high priority over most everything else. And children need to learn that they are not each the center of the universe and must at times make others a higher priority. To obey this biblical instruction for devotion, husbands and wives need to make each other a priority concerning basic needs and enjoyment of life.

Devotion, of necessity, needs to be in degrees: highly devoted, moderately devoted, and basically devoted. We can be basically devoted to all Christians and be minimally available unless there is a crisis we can help with.

High devotion is practical only for our very closest Christian friends and family members. Since we cannot be devoted to more than a few people effectively, close Christian friends, family members and spouses are the ones to whom we can be significantly devoted.

To prepare for going home to heaven, become more and more devoted to those Christians you are close to.

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There is more about being devoted to one another at our website ChristiansTogether.org. Just go down the list of the Togethers and click on “Be Devoted to One Another”.

Prayer to Embrace this Together

I and those in my Christian Inner Circle will need Your help to grow our spirits to be more devoted to You and one another. Help us to yield to the work of the Holy Spirit for all of us to give You more glory in the way we devotedly place others at higher priority than ourselves.

Please help us all to become more like Jesus who is totally devoted to His Father and to us by being more devoted and available to those God has placed in our Christian Inner Circles.

May our lives worship You more because we reflect back to You Your great devotion to us. Let us be called upon in inconvenient times just as we can call on You at any time. Help us not to just be willing to be available, but “want” to be available.

Make us strong in Your power to defeat the devil by not letting him divert our devotion to God and others by enticing us to become devoted to less important, yet very interesting, pursuits. Help us to destroy Satan’s aim for us and not be devoted to anything more than we are devoted to You. Then, in our devotion to those in our Christian Inner Circles, may we with the Your power and the direction of the Holy Spirit wield various Together’s of Scripture necessary to defeat the evil one’s strategies in one another’s lives.

Help us all to prepare for heaven by growing more completely to feel the joy of devotion as a higher level in heaven. I and those in my Christian Inner Circle would like to grow in our devotion to the extent that we get great joy in the accomplishments of others. How wonderful it will be to be involved with other saints in heaven and experience the joy that comes from devotion expressing itself in anticipating their pursuits.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen.