

Lessons from Elephants: Loyalty

Quarter 7 • Lesson 7

Focus on Character Development

- 1. Connecting:** Play a game and use “elephant trunks” to help others.
- 2. Teaching:** Learn what loyalty means (Philippians 2:4; Proverbs 17:17).
- 3. Responding:** Talk about how to show loyalty.

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- ½ meter hoops made of metal, cardboard, or other stiff material
(1 for every 4–5 children)

Optional Supplies:

- Memory Verse Poster
- Student Pages
- Crayons

Teacher Devotion

*A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for a time of adversity.*
Proverbs 17:17, NIV

We are all part of at least one community. That is because God created us to live with other people. He also created us to care about and love other people. He created us to be loyal to the people we care about. Loyalty goes beyond the things of this life and this world and helps us to become the people God wants us to be.

When you share joyful and difficult moments with others, you develop meaningful and lasting relationships. These relationships sometimes result in loyalty. Think for a moment about a person who has stayed with you and helped you through a hard time. If that person did not leave when you or something in your life became difficult to be around, you know this person is loyal to you. Maybe you are loyal to someone you care about. Think about what you would do if that person were in trouble. You would do anything to help that person because of your loyalty to him or her. God puts us in each other's lives to help us through hard times and to share our joy!

Family Connection: Encourage families to talk with their children about people they are loyal to. Ask them to share reasons why they are loyal to these people.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Play a game and use “elephant trunks” to help others.

Greet each child as he enters the learning space and ask him to give you his best elephant sound. Ask the children to form groups of 4–5 and sit in circles with their groups.

- **Raise your hand if you can tell me something about elephants.**

Allow 2–3 children to respond.

Elephants are very large animals with wrinkly skin and trunks for noses. These are the things we can see on the outside of an elephant, but did you know that they are also kind, caring, and helpful to one another? It is true! Elephants are very loyal. Elephants show they are loyal by helping those they care about and staying with those elephants no matter what happens.

When you are loyal, you are kind, caring, and helpful to someone who you will never leave. Let’s pretend to be elephants as we play a game about helping others. Stand up in your groups. Each of you will hold 1 arm out against your nose and pretend it is an elephant’s trunk. I will place a hoop on the “trunk” of someone in your group. She will pass this hoop to the trunk of another elephant next to her. Your group will pass the hoop around the circle until it has been all the way around. The last person to get the hoop will toss it to the middle of the circle. The first team to get its hoop to the middle of their circle wins.

After all the groups have passed their hoops around their circles, ask the children to sit in their circles. Announce the winner of the game.

You all pretended to be very helpful elephants! Helping one another is part of how elephants show their loyalty. Let’s learn more about elephants and all the qualities of loyalty.

2. Teaching: Learn what loyalty means (Philippians 2:4; Proverbs 17:17).

Teacher Tip: For some children who have not experienced unconditional love, caring, and affection, loyalty may be a difficult topic to understand. For these children, it is especially important to talk about different types of communities and ways that people in a community may care for one another. Take a moment to do this now by giving an example from your community or from your church.

Elephants are a great example of loyalty. Elephants live in groups called herds. Within a herd, all of the elephants help each other. Look around at the people in your group. We will call this your herd. You will stay with these children for this whole class period. You will be loyal to the children in your herd.

When you are loyal to someone, you help that person. You also do not leave that person to do difficult things alone. You do not let problems separate you from that person. Listen to what the Bible says about helping others:

Read this verse directly from your Bible.

*None of you should look out just for your own good.
Each of you should also look out for the good of others.*
Philippians 2:4

- **For our class today, who will you look out for? I will take a moment while you go around your circle and name the people in your herd.**

Pause for about 1 minute or until each group has stated each member's name.

God created us to live with other people. In doing this, He also asks us to help those around us. We learned from the bees that working together can help us to do things we otherwise might not be able to do. Elephants can also show us how to live and work together.

Younger elephants learn from the older elephants in their herd about what to eat, where to go, and how to act. All of the members of the herd look out for one another. Most herds are made up of female and young elephants only.

This does not mean the male elephants are alone, though. They form their own groups. The older male elephants help the younger ones to control their actions during a time when they can otherwise become very out of control.

Each elephant protects, helps, and honors the other elephants in its herd. For humans, families, friends, and communities can be like this. We help others to learn, find what they need to live, and support one another when things are difficult. Talk to the children in your herd as you answer this question.

- **What is something helpful you have learned from an older person in your community or family?**

Allow 2–3 minutes for the children to respond in their groups. If you notice a group that is not responding, you may go over to those children and offer them suggestions to help them begin their discussion. Suggestions may include: Older people can teach us how to do something in a different way. Older people can teach us about our past so that we do not make the same mistakes in the future.

Teacher Tip: Children who have not spent time with older people or have not had positive interactions with them may struggle to answer this question. Encourage these children to talk about something they have learned from an older sibling, a teacher, or anyone who is older than them.

Those who are older and have more experience than we do with different things can teach us a lot. They are not the only ones who we can be loyal to. You may be loyal to your family, friends, or people in your community. Being loyal means caring, supporting, and loving someone no matter what happens. Listen to what the Bible says about kindness and caring through loyal love.

*A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for a time of adversity.*
Proverbs 17:17, NIV

Adversity means something that is difficult and can cause someone to go through a lot of trouble. When you are loyal to someone, you are there with that person through everything, including very difficult things. You love that person no matter what is happening with that person or with you.

Do you remember the true story from the Bible about Ruth and Naomi? Naomi is the mother of Ruth's husband. In this story, both women's husbands die. The women are grieving and very sad. Ruth promises Naomi she will stay with her. Ruth shows she loves Naomi by staying with her, even though things are difficult.

Let's practice finding ways people can be loyal to each other. I will read from the Bible part of the true story of Ruth and Naomi. When I come to a part of the story where someone shows she is loyal, stand up.

When their husbands died, Naomi decided to return to her homeland. She told Ruth to go back to her own parents. Listen to Ruth's response.

But Ruth replied, "Don't try to make me leave you and go back. Where you go I'll go. Where you stay I'll stay. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God."

Ruth 1:16

Encourage the children to stand up.

- **How did Ruth show loyalty in this verse?**

She wanted to stay with Naomi and do what she did.

Ask the children to sit down.

The women traveled to the place Naomi was from. There, Ruth found work that would feed both of them. She shared what she earned with Naomi.

Encourage the children to stand up. Then ask them to sit down.

Ruth eventually married the man she worked for. She continued to be part of Naomi's family. Ruth had a son who Naomi treated as a member of her own family.

Encourage the children to stand up. Then ask them to sit down.

We can see loyalty in this true story of 2 women who were devoted to one another. God wants us to be loyal to our families, friends, and those in our communities. Here are ways you can show loyalty to someone:

Listen to the person

Support and help the person

Get excited with her when she is happy

Grieve with him when he is sad

Think about things you do to show loyalty and bring honor to your family.

- **How do you honor your family?**

Allow 2–3 children to respond.

The children will remain in their groups for the next activity.

3. Responding: Talk about how to show loyalty.

Loyal elephants and loyal people stay with those they care about no matter what happens. Let's listen to a situation. Then, you will answer questions in your herd.

Situation 1: Your older brother cares about you. He is always willing to help you do things you struggle to do on your own. He protects you from danger. Even when you get angry or sad, he wants what is best for you.

- **How do you know your brother is loyal to you?**

Answers include: He is always there to help. He protects you. No matter what you do, he still wants what is best for you.

- **What could you do to show your loyalty to your brother?**

Allow 3 minutes for the children to discuss with their groups the answers to the questions. Then ask a few children to answer for the whole class.

When you are loyal to someone, you want what is best for that person, even when that person is no longer living. Even when someone dies, a loyal person will do what he can to honor her memory. Let's listen to another situation.

Situation 2: Someone close to you has just died. This person helped your mother to raise you, your brothers, and sisters. This person brought food to you when you were sick. This person helped your brother to get a job. You loved this person and want to continue to honor this person.

- **What could you do to honor the memory of this person?**

Children may answer: I could tell stories about the person, play his favorite song, or say nice things about him.

Allow 3 minutes for children to discuss the answers to the questions with their groups. Then call on each group to share their answers. As the children answer the questions, you may choose to write down their answers. If you cannot write them down, remember the answers and repeat the list of answers back to the children.

Teacher Tip: If children mention ways to honor those who have died that are common in your culture but are not biblically appropriate, you may need to explain that we want to do what agrees with what the Bible teaches. Be careful not to shame the children or suggest that these answers are wrong. Children only know what they have seen and experienced as it relates to honoring the dead.

Optional: If you are using Student Pages, give each child a crayon. Ask each child to trace his hand on the page with a crayon. Encourage children to add details to make their hands look like elephants. Hint: The thumb makes a good elephant head and the other fingers look like legs.

Honoring people, caring about them, being kind to them, and loving them are ways to show loyalty. Elephants are loyal to their herds just as we are often loyal to family and friends. The Bible tells us that we can learn about the things that God does by watching animals. Our memory verse today says:

*But ask the animals what God does. They will teach you.
Or ask the birds in the sky. They will tell you.*
Job 12:7

Read the Bible verse again. This time, do the motions that go with each part. Then repeat the verse and the motions 3 times with the children. If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

But ask the animals—Make a gesture as if you are about to ask a question, such as shrugging.

What God does—Use 1 hand to point up to the sky.

They will teach you—Indicate the top of your head and pretend to pull something from it.

Or ask the birds in the sky—Look up. Reach your arms out to your sides and flap them up and down.

They will tell you—Put a hand near your ear.

End class by saying this blessing, based on Proverbs 17:17, over the children.

Blessing: May you serve others with loyalty. May they also serve you with their loyalty. May you help each other through difficult situations.

Lead the children in singing this quarter's song, if possible.

Raise a Hallelujah" by Bethel Music https://youtu.be/JvXBf_dEiHU