

ITTAI THE GITTITE

Ittai the Gittite (native of Gath) was a Philistine refugee serving in the army of King David with command over 600 other Gittite warriors. It was not uncommon for David to have non-Israelites in his armed forces, especially given all the foreign relationships he established while he was on the run from King Saul many years prior. Ittai appears in 2 Samuel 15 during a time when David's own son, Absalom, was building a rebellion against him. After hearing of the rebellion and learning that Absalom had amassed quite the following to come against him, King David decided to flee with his entire household and all his people to spare himself and the city of Jerusalem from certain disaster. Verses 19 through 22 give us the background of why this "small" Bible character can teach us a profound lesson in loyalty:

19 Then the king turned and said to Ittai, a leader of the men from Gath, "Why are you coming with us? Go on back to King Absalom, for you are a guest in Israel, a foreigner in exile. 20 You arrived only recently, and should I force you to wander with us? I don't even know where we will go. Go on back and take you kinsmen with you, and may the Lord show you his unfailing love and faithfulness."

21 But Ittai said to the king, "I vow by the Lord and by your own life that I will go wherever my lord the king goes, no matter what happens – whether it means life or death."

22 David replied, "All right, come with us." So Ittai and all his men and their families went along.

-2 Samuel 15:19-22

APPLICATION

Loyalty is defined as faithfulness to commitments or obligations or faithful adherence to a sovereign, government, leader, or cause. Loyalty is generally earned rather than freely given. Loyalty is more innate in instances or relationships where we choose responsibility or where obligation is undeniable.

But loyalty gets put to the test when we are not the ones in control of the situation. This is especially the case when we question or even disagree with the chosen direction. Add a little bit of discomfort or a chance that there will be pain, and loyalty can become optional at best.

Exiled from his home in Gath, Ittai found refuge in Jerusalem and with King David. Not only did he find refuge for himself and his people, he also found purpose as he would ultimately become one of David's highest-ranking soldiers (2 Samuel 18). It would not have been foolish for Ittai to take his chances as a guest in Israel or even to take his countrymen and flee to another place of sanctuary. After all, this was David's fight, not his and surely not the 600+ people he led. But they stood beside King David, despite the pending rebellion. David earned his loyalty, 'whether it meant life or death'. God grants us refuge from the exile created by our sinfulness. He not only offers us sanctuary, he offers us purpose.

DISCUSSION/CONTEMPLATION

- Are you a loyal person?

- What or who have you committed your loyalty to?
How was it earned?

- Who in your life might be influenced by your loyalty or lack?

- Are you a loyal follower of Jesus Christ?

D6-CUSSION

What could make Absalom want to remove his own father from the throne? Why wouldn't King David use his power as king to take the fight straight to Absalom and settle the rebellion quickly and once and for all?

- What stands out to you the most?
- What questions do you have?
- What is an application for your life?

PRAYERS & PRAISE



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