



SOULISH TIES

Peter Doseck

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by
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SOULISH TIES

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Chapter One

ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Good relationships are wonderful things. They provide companionship, counsel, laughter, shared responsibilities, and a lifetime of memories. As great as relationships can be, we should never allow any close tie, whether marriage or friendship, to go beyond the authority of the Word of God.

1 Corinthians 7:39 says: “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.”

Notice the last phrase, “only in the Lord.” This verse shows us what should bring about the birthing of a new union, and it shows us the guideline that should apply to all close connections. All important relationships in our lives should abide “in the Lord.”

As Christians we should never desire or build a close relationship with someone who is not born again. When I say born again, I am talking about those who are proven to be so. In other words, as Jesus said, “You will know them by their fruit.” (See Matthew 7:20.)

There are far too many “thirty second converts” who are more concerned about getting to the fruit of your life than about nurturing the fruit of the spirit. Before you connect with any person, make sure they have a provable experience with Christ, one that is a

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genuine manifestation of His grace.

We limit who our children are allowed to spend time with, so it seems like common sense to me that we should also limit ourselves. The reason is simple. You will act like the people you associate with. If you spend too much time with the ungodly, you will begin to do as they do.

This is why God never allowed the children of Israel to join themselves with other nations, because He knew this principle would work against them. He knew they would be drawn to worship foreign gods and idols rather than the other way around. It's much easier to drag someone down than to pull someone up, so be very cautious when it comes to spending time with those who don't know Christ.

Paul said: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship does righteousness have with unrighteousness? And what communion does light have with darkness?" (See 2 Corinthians 6:14.)

Of course we can interact with sinners; we just need to be cautious. We can open doors for witness by showing ourselves friendly, and we can extend kindness and be known among them, but we should never become intimately involved with people who are not blood-bought, born again, and sanctified believers. We need to win the world, but we do not want to live like them in the process.

Soulish vs. Spiritual

There are many kinds of relationships in the

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world. There are family ties, friendships, business associations, church family connections, dating relationships, and of course marriages.

All of these relationships fall under two primary categories, which I call spiritual and soulish. One is God's design, and the other is man's preference. One is the most powerful in the world, and the other is a close second. Let me do a little definition building to help you understand the difference between the two.

A soulish relationship is one where a man or a woman becomes interwoven emotionally with another person, whether with the opposite sex with the ultimate purpose of marriage, or with the same sex in the context of friendship or a business association. A soulish relationship is one that is primarily built on soulish interaction.

A soulish relationship will strengthen the soul of man rather than the spirit. It will depend on the soul (the mind, will, and emotions) rather than rely on the spirit. A soulish relationship will feed the unrenewed mind, and it will fixate on emotional gratification rather than spiritual edification.

A spiritual relationship, on the other hand, is one that is built on sound biblical principles, one that honors God above all else, and one that prefers character building to emotional fulfillment. A spiritual relationship is one where each will put the other first, and where Christ-like principles will be observed in all things.

With these defining characteristics in mind, let's see how a soulish relationship is created. Soulish relationships usually begin with enticing

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words where one or both will give ear to the other because of an emotional response. Feelings of “he understands me”, or “she knows just how I feel” will lead to further interaction.

Another way a soulish relationship develops is through an ongoing association, such as a working or social relationship. We communicate well, and we seem to have a similar passion for something, but be warned: a passion for success is not enough to form a lasting spiritual bond.

There’s nothing wrong with connecting with someone socially, but you must be cautious and make sure there’s more to the association than shared rewards or emotional fulfillment. Failing marriages prove that soulish ties are not enough. We must be linked spiritually, or our relationship will not last.

We all have portals of entry into our lives, and we must govern the input. Ideally, you want to be linked with people on a spiritual level first, and then on an emotional level. Our most important relationships should first be founded on who we are in Christ.

Crisis Living

Many Christians have such a hunger for companionship that they will forsake the safety of the Word and choose to live outside its boundaries because they are dependent on the soulish ties they have forged with others. These Christians quickly find themselves living a crisis-centered life, moving from one problem to another because they have chosen an emotional tie over a spiritual covering.

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Here's what I mean. If you have an emotional bond with someone, when trouble comes you will likely pick up the phone and pour out your sorrows. What you really need is someone who will redirect your thinking to the Word and send you to the prayer closet for a season, but what you want in the moment of crisis is to hear someone say, "Oh, how terrible!" Most often it feels better to have sympathy than the truth.

If you bounce from crisis to crisis, and you become dependent on hearing the soothing words of a soulish friend, you will never break free from the cycle. It will be one crisis after another, and one problem to the next. You will feel good for a moment because they will stroke your ego and tell you how wrong everyone else is, but what you really need is a kick in the pants and a "Why don't you go pray this through?" rebuke from your friend.

There are far too many hooligans in the church, too many fornicators, whore-mongers, abusers, and hypocrites in the body of Christ, and the reason is because they are crisis Christians. They only want to rely on the Word when they need help to get out of a jam, but they don't want to be subject to the Word when they are going through the daily routine called life.

Crisis Christians try to turn things around when trouble comes, but often it's too late. For instance, it's amazing how quickly a man will turn for spiritual help when his wife files for divorce. What he fails to realize is that he wouldn't be in such a fix if he had lived a spiritual life and cared about her before.

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Suddenly, this man wants to be a good husband. My question is, “Why did you treat her like a dog in the first place? Now she’s biting you, and you want to be loosed from the penalty of your actions?”

Jesus said if you live by the sword, you will die by the sword (see Matthew 26:52). My paraphrase would be, “If you act like a dog, you’ll get bit like a dog.”

Don’t be a crisis Christian! Don’t let bad habits, enticing words, and soulish ties influence the way you live.

Honor Boundaries

In Matthew 19:4-6 Jesus said: “Have you not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”

This is such an important rule when dealing with relationships. Marriage is a spiritual bond like no other, and its standards are different than those which govern other ties. Unfortunately, I have met far too many people who violate one or more of the principles Jesus taught.

I’ve met many young men and women who got married, and yet one or both ran back to mama and papa every time something went wrong. They did this because of a soulish tie. They drew their peace, strength, stability, courage, and safety from mommy

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and daddy instead of being spiritually oriented and drawing it from their relationship with Christ.

On the flip side, I've also met many parents who could not keep their noses out of the lives of their married son or daughter. Again, they got involved because of a soulsh orientation. The Bible forbids this type of involvement because it will cause division.

Parents need to let their children work out their own issues, knowing they will never make it if mommy and daddy are constantly rescuing them and protecting them from all of life's trouble.

Do not put yourself in opposition to the spiritual union of marriage because of a soulsh tie with your child. Once two people marry, soulsh bonds with parents are altered dramatically, and a spiritual union with a new spouse is established. Let it go, and let it grow.

Whenever we run to men instead of running to God, or if we allow someone to come to us instead of going to God, we are creating a reliance on our soulsh ties rather than on the Word. This will bring a curse according to Jeremiah 17:5 which says: "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord."

This is serious business. Married people, make sure you truly leave your father and mother and cleave to your spouse. And parents, you make sure you honor this important boundary set forth in the Word. You'll all be better off for it.

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Be Friendly

There are many people who get saved, but they cannot seem to stay saved. Six months after a powerful salvation experience they are back on the streets running with the old crowd again. They're out there doing what they did before, and sometimes even worse. How does this happen?

The answer is twofold. Number one, they fall because they refuse to sever soulish ties with the world, and number two, they fall because they fail to create spiritual ties in the church. Too many brand new Christians are trying to live without Christian friends. When enough times passes without companionship, they will be drawn back to their old habits by a desire for company.

Don't let this happen to you, or to anyone around you. The answer is simple: make friends. It took you 30 years to make 12 friends who were drunks. You may not make 12 good friends in 30 years as a Christian, but at least you ought to give it as much time before you declare you're lonely and rush back to the world.

Loneliness is rampant, and it does not need to be. If you want a handshake, you've got to stick your hand out. If you want to find a friend, you've got to reach out and be a friend. Put a smile on your face and find someone to encourage.

"But shouldn't people be looking for me?" How will they know you want to be a friend if you don't let them know? Go to church events. Stay after the service and talk with someone new. Come early and

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get involved.

How did you make friends in the world? You went to the bar, and you watched people until you saw someone who looked interesting. Then you got up off your stool, and you went over and said something goofy most likely, but eventually someone bought your line, and you made a friend.

Why, now, do you expect everyone to come looking for you? It's no different now than it was then. Look around the sanctuary. Find someone interesting, and go say, "Hello."

Proverbs 18:24 says: "A man that has friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother."

You will not make friends or keep them unless you are friendly. Jesus is the friend who sticks closer than a brother, and we ought to follow His example. People loved to be with Jesus because He was real. He was kind, but straightforward. He told the truth, and He was not afraid to be around new people. If we all took this approach, we would all have plenty of friends.

Avoid the Clique

We need good, spiritual friends, but there is a balance in all things. 1 Corinthians 1:11-13 says: "For it has been declared to me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was

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Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”

What was this? It was a manifestation of soulish behavior. Paul’s point was that no one was crucified for them, but Christ alone. Only He brought them into the body of Christ. Only He deserved their complete devotion.

This type of division is rampant in the Christian world today, only the names have changed. I won’t write the name of your favorite preacher, but there are plenty of people who follow and nearly worship their favorite minister of the gospel. Some evangelists have cliques of people who follow them around the country, showing up at meeting after meeting looking for a soulish fix. They are intent on feeding their need to be recognized and associated with someone.

It’s not the minister’s fault. The fault lies at the feet of those who prefer the exhilaration of following after a man rather than the high calling of following after Jesus. I might as well say it: they’d rather follow a personality than take up their cross to follow Christ.

Now, let me bring this down to the level of everyone reading this. At the last social gathering in your church, did you mingle with anyone new, or did you hang with the same old crowd? Our churches have their own little divisions.

We’ve got the “revelation crowd” who want to talk about nothing but their latest discovery in the Word. There’s nothing wrong with discussing the Word, unless it excludes those around you who don’t study as much as you do.

We’ve got the “worship crew” who want to talk

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about their latest catching away into the heavenlies during a new song. Again, there's nothing wrong with pressing in and going from glory to glory, but let's not create an exclusive club around it.

How about the “we've got children and you don't group?” Or the “we're single and like it bunch?” Or how about the “you don't dress like us gang”, or the “we're too cool for the rest of you club?” Or how about the “old people need not apply troupe?”

Let's be careful we don't let our spiritual ties become soulish weapons, making ourselves exclusive and cutting ourselves off from the rest of the body of Christ. The people on the other side of the room are your brothers and sisters. They're blood-bought family, and you need to get to know them.

If you want friends, make them spiritual friends, not soulish ones. If you want a group to hang with, make sure it is spiritual in nature and open to all for true fellowship.

You must always expand who you know so that God can expand where you will go. As you cultivate new relationships and build spiritual ties instead of being comfortable in your soulish relationships, you will increase the opportunities for God to use you to touch those around you.

So many in the church spend their time dunking cookies in their best friend's coffee while they talk about God, rather than going to the neighbors they don't know to tell them how to find God. We must go into all the world, not into our little cliques.

Our cliquish behavior in the body of Christ is one of the reasons people stay away from church. Who

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wants to deal with a frosty reception or watch people hug on one another and ignore the rest? Let's get over this obstacle and get about our Father's business.

Rule Your Soul

Proverbs 25:28 says: "He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." This verse is not talking about the recreated human spirit that is made in the image of Christ, but it is talking about the soul of man. Like a city without walls, the man who has no rule over his soulish life is vulnerable to attack from the enemy.

Most people we meet have come out of a world where they were not raised to be Christians, where they lived a life that was dominated by the flesh, where they were motivated by pleasure, and where their desires were soulishly fulfilled. These people cannot be trusted in relationships until they learn to rule their souls.

So many people in America are driven by a desire to be emotionally fulfilled no matter the cost. Men and women have crossed guidelines in our country that would never have been crossed 20 years ago because of a need to be satisfied with pleasure. They are looking for emotional fulfillment from those who "understand" them. Jesus understands them. He has the answer, and it's not a soulish fix.

To rule the soul is to renew the mind with the Word of God. You must turn from your emotional desires and concentrate on creating new desires by reading the Word. Like a ship changing course,

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it will not happen overnight, but you must begin the process. Dig into the Word; study it, and let it penetrate your mind, creating new trenches where living water may flow.

To rule your soul is to allow your spirit the ascendancy for which God made it. It's re-examining every thought and determining the source. Only those thoughts birthed by the Word should be allowed to stay, and all others should be cast down.

It is possible to rule the soul; otherwise, Paul would not have said: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (See 2 Corinthians 10:5.)

Notice he said "every thought." You can rule your soul, but it will take the Spirit of God and a constant dependency on the Word to bring you to the other side.

Chapter Two

SOULISH ERROR

1 Samuel 2:22-25 says: “Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings by all this people.

“Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: you make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.”

What should Eli have done the very first time he heard of his son's evil dealings? He should have stoned them to death on the spot. This was the response required by the law, but Eli ignored it because of his soulish ties with his sons.

Now I know all the mercy people reading this are saying, “How could you say such a thing?” Because this is the spiritual response dictated by God.

A typical soulish response would be to cover up the transgression, forgive them, and watch to see if they do better. No! You cannot override what God prescribes for any situation. You are not the judge or creator, and you have no right to overrule the Word.

God set forth sovereign laws of tabernacle

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service, and He did so to protect the revelation of the Messiah who would provide redemption for the world. What right did Eli have to override the law? He had no right.

This is why sanctified Christians run around with sinning Christians and never say a word about it. They would rather benefit from the soulish companionship than rebuke, reprove, and push toward repentance - the way God would have us behave.

We are called to bear one another's burdens, and to watch one another, attempting to restore a wayward brother in the spirit of meekness. Unconditional forgiveness is not the most spiritual answer in these cases.

Forgiveness without repentance is like brushing the dirt under a rug. It allows sin to fester into a massive flesh-eating wound that will kill not only the host, but those around him.

Sin abounds in the body of Christ because we are too soulishly connected. We want friends more than saints. We want forgiveness more than correction. We want smiling faces all around us more than the sorrow of repentance.

This is wrong. It's time that we stand up for righteousness, purity, and sanctification. It's time that we do what the Bible says in our spiritual relationships. The world will never be drawn to us until we sanctify ourselves and cease from our hypocrisy. It's time to stand tall and live right.

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The Error of Passivity

We may read the story of Eli and wonder why he didn't do something. But let me ask you this, when it comes to correcting your children, are you an Eli, one who believes in being a friend to your children, or a follower of Proverbs 23:13-14?

Here's what the verses say: "Withhold not correction from the child: for if you beat him with the rod, he shall not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell."

The Bible also says: "He that spares his rod hates his son: but he that loves him chastens him betimes." (See Proverbs 13:24.) And to top it off, Proverbs 19:18 says: "Chasten your son while there is hope, and let not your soul spare for his crying."

Are you ready to act against your soul, which is moved by the tears, and act instead by the spirit, bringing pain to your child for a moment but delivering his soul from hell? Are you an active corrector, or a passive observer?

Too many parents are passive, and as a result they are more soulishly tied to their children than they are spiritually committed to God. I've had people leave my church because we told them they needed to correct their child and keep him from beating up another child. They were so soulishly connected to their son, they chose to reject all spiritual guidelines created to promote right in his life.

Psalm 127:4 says: "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth." A parent's job is to train their children so that they can hit the

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mark like straight arrows, but instead too many twist and pervert the arrow by doing it their way instead of doing it God's way.

Proverbs 29:15 says: "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself brings his mother to shame." Eli let his sons bring shame to his house because he did not do what was right in God's eyes. I don't believe any parent wants such an outcome, but many will receive a similar reward if they fail to raise their children spiritually and instead choose to raise them soulishly.

I encourage you to correct the soulish connection with your children. Begin to honor your spiritual relationship with the Word and its government in your life. If you will do that, you will have children who will be raised to carry on the standard of righteousness so that Christianity will abound in generations to come instead of false religions.

"Oh, but they'll resent me." Well, then let them resent you now and honor you later. This is what normally happens. Our children murmur and complain about all of our boundaries today, but they will tell their friends how much they appreciated them tomorrow.

Life is like that. What aggravates us today will be what we thank God for tomorrow when we see the fruit of our labor, so don't give up. Be firm, but loving. Be honorable, but forgiving. Be angry when you need to be, but don't let it lead to sin (see Ephesians 4:26).

Do what is right in God's eyes, and He will help you raise righteous, holy, stable, productive

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believers, full of the Spirit, and full of praise for their parents' tenacity.

The Error of Mis-Leading

Ephesians 4:11-15 says: "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

There is only one way for you to receive spiritual maturity and cultivate unity whereby you may fulfill the plan of God, and it is through spiritual connections, not soulish leadings. Soulsh ties often become manipulative, and soulsh Christians are notorious for using such ties to try to bring about spiritual transformation.

Here's what I mean. Most of us know someone who spends their energy trying to get everyone to act like they do, have the same convictions, and even come to the same church. They use soulsh ties with brothers and sisters in the Lord to convince them they are out of God's will if they don't follow their

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example to the extreme.

I've seen it in my own congregation, where one will come, and pretty soon a whole flock will follow. If God led them all here, that's great, but usually it is a manifestation of soulish people following one another around.

This most often leads to families staying in dead churches because they are more tied to Mama, and to Grandpa Bubba who built the sanctuary in 1922, than to the will of God for their lives. On the flipside, we in growing, Spirit-filled churches sometimes try to convince other believers that they are not truly spiritual unless they attend church with us.

Too many Christians withhold their friendship from believers who do not worship as they do. We should be friends with anyone who is blood-bought, born again, sanctified, and living for Jesus. If they don't shout our shout, so what? If they don't preach our preach, big deal. As long as they bear fruit for the Kingdom and keep their lives pure, we should be known as the body of Christ, not the splinter group of the Lord.

Let's allow God to increase our churches and add to them as He sees fit. Let's pray for and encourage those who are down the road from us doing something different. Let's avoid soulish manipulation, and may we never be found trying to steal sheep from one another's pastures. Churches should be built by spiritual leadings, not by soulish magnetism.

In the body of Christ, every individual should be led by the Spirit, not by other people. It doesn't matter if you believe you are being led from one

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church to another, if you're handling a normal day to day decision, or if you're discerning if a prophecy you were given was really of the Lord - you must put all decisions and leadings under the microscope of the Word of God.

When you are led by the Spirit rather than led by soulish connections, your life will be Word-dominated and prayer-motivated. You will fulfill your calling and use your gifts for expansion of the Kingdom. You will cherish your brothers and sisters in the Lord, and you will always have room in your heart for new people and new challenges. This is how the Kingdom is supposed to work.

The Error of Disobedience

1 Samuel 15:1-5 says: "Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint you to be king over His people, over Israel: now therefore hearken unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.

"And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley."

The custom in Israel was that the prophet would speak to the people. So we know that Samuel did not

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Speak this word to Saul only, but he proclaimed it publicly in Israel. They all knew what the outcome of the battle would be, and they understood the complete destruction the siege was to result in. They knew without a doubt that nothing was to live through this attack.

Now, we go down to verse nine which says: “But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.” Notice the phrase I have underlined, “Saul and the people”, which signified oneness and unity.

In verse 14 their disobedience was discovered by Samuel the prophet. He said: “What is the meaning then of this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”

Saul passed the blame and said: “They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.” (See 1 Samuel 15:15.)

Samuel lit into Saul for the next few verses, and in verse 19 he asked Saul a valid question: “Wherefore then did you not obey the voice of the Lord, but did fly upon the spoil, and did evil in the sight of the Lord?”

Saul shot back: “Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the

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people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord your God in Gilgal.” (See 1 Samuel 15:20-21.)

What was this mess? I believe Saul was more interested in his soulish relationship with the people than he was in his obedience to God. The sad thing is, the people also held to their soulish ties with Saul more than they honored God. They were all in the wrong.

The king should have done his duty and obeyed God no matter the cost to his reputation. If he would have stood firm and done what was right, I believe the people would have followed his lead. That's what leaders do. They lead in paths of righteousness for His name's sake, not for their own pleasure or promotion.

Saul was a soulish king, through and through. The people of Israel had begged for a king, and because they refused the sovereign rule of God, He gave them a man after their own heart, a man of soulish desire.

God had warned Israel, but they did not listen. The soulish king did just as God had said he would. He had no regard for the law or for the people, and he was overly concerned with his status and his personal agenda.

Later, God replaced Saul with a man after His own heart, King David. Thankfully, David ruled as a spiritual king, and he lived and ruled as one who had the heart of God. Unfortunately, much distress had already been sown in the land.

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The Error of Soul Seeking

Proverbs 27:7 says: “The full soul loathes a honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” In other words, if we don’t guard our soulish desires and put them under the rule of the Word, we will be open to every godless influence that comes into our lives.

If you don’t have a spiritual relationship with God that fulfills you, you may someday reach out to the psychic because there is no voice from Heaven in your life. You may read the horoscope because there is no prophecy coming forth in your home. You may indulge in addictive behavior because the joy of the Lord is not your strength.

Your empty soul will crave spiritual input, but you will seek it in all the wrong places. You’ll begin to see right as wrong and wrong as right. You’ll give up your righteous stance for a soulish connection. You may not think it is possible, but I’ve seen it happen.

For instance, I’ve had couples come into my office and tell me that God said it was okay for them to have sex before marriage. I told them it was absolutely not true, but they were convinced of it because they had no government of the Word in their lives. Their souls were hungry, and they were open to a damnable doctrine of devils that their flesh and a perverted spiritualism brought to their minds.

Here’s another example of the unchecked soulish hunger that is all too prevalent in our world today. A husband and wife don’t communicate very well.

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While at work, the husband talks to a lady coworker who “understands” where he is coming from. She strokes his ego, and soon an affair is the result.

The wife retreats to a chat room every night after he goes to bed, and there she finds solace in communicating with a stranger who seems to touch her soul. The man online says everything she wants to hear, so without regard for her spiritual well-being she runs away to meet him in another city.

I’ve seen both of these scenarios happen, and it tears a family apart. Because people fail to curb their soulish appetites, and because they fail to connect on a spiritual level with God first, and with their spouse second, their emotions are left to rule. They become vulnerable to the attack of the enemy, and disaster will be the inevitable result.

Don’t let your soul get out of control. Don’t go so long without spiritual input that your soul rises up to take the reins in your life. Keep your soul in check by keeping your spiritual needs met in the Word and prayer. Stay satisfied spiritually, and you will be safe emotionally.

The Error of Love

I know this section heading sounds unscriptural, but stay with me a minute. In Luke 14:26, Jesus said: “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”

This is pretty strong language, so let me qualify

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one word for you. The word “hate” is not literal hatred, but it could be translated “love less” (see Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible). Jesus simply said, “You’ve got to love God more than your family and yourself, or you cannot be My disciple.”

Every spiritual relationship can become a soulish tie if we fail to keep it within the guidelines of the Bible. In the verse above, Jesus was telling us that we must count our spiritual relationships as more important than our soulish ties. In other words, never love a soulish tie more than you love your spiritual commitment.

Too often, family relationships are the most skewed when it comes to spiritual versus soulish. They begin as spiritual, but they can become destructively soulish if we don’t allow them to grow and be changed over a lifetime.

For instance, a mother and daughter are close as the girl grows up. There’s nothing wrong with this, but then comes the wedding day, and the mother refuses to give up her close connection.

She still wants to talk on the phone twice a day, and she drops by unannounced three or four times a week. What was once a spiritual relationship soon becomes a manipulative soulish tie because the mother has stepped outside the boundaries of the Word of God. She loves her daughter more than she loves the command of God.

Jesus ran into a man once who asked Him what he could do to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him to sell all he had, give to the poor, and come follow Him. The man was shocked and said, “I can’t do that!”

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Why? Because he was more connected to his own soulish self-provision than he was to the spiritual hunger he felt inside. Though he wanted something from God, he was self-centered and loved his standard of living more than he loved the option God gave him. Sadly, he missed the eternal life that was offered to him.

We must make sure that the relationships God gives us remain spiritual and do not break over into the soulish realm; otherwise, we will miss the options that God has for our lives, too.

Never love your children and family more than you love God. Always be willing to do what the Word says for them, and do not shy away from telling them the truth.

Never love your calling more than the One who called you. You cannot become so ministry-driven that you lose your personal relationship with your Heavenly Father. Ministry is work, but working for Him should never overshadow your relationship with Him.

Never love your life more than you love laying it down for the One who loved you and gave Himself for you. If we cling to this natural life by hanging onto our soulish ties, we risk losing that which Jesus sacrificed so much to give us. Lay down your soulish ties, and take up your spiritual cross to follow Him.

The Error of Tradition

1 Peter 5:8 says: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks

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about, seeking whom he may devour.”

The devil may seek you out, but he cannot devour those who have a healthy spiritual relationship with God and His Word. The storms may come, but you will not be overthrown.

The devil is looking for a man who will release his spiritual responsibilities and begin to deal with things on a soulsh level. Remember, a man who does not rule his soul is like a city without walls – open to attack. One of the more subtle attacks is wrapped in the cloak of religious tradition.

The Bible says this in Mark 7:5-9: “Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, Why don’t your disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? He answered and said unto them, Well has Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

“Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things you do. And He said unto them, Full well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition.”

Why does a man reject the commandment of God and embrace a tradition of men that is as lifeless as washing the dishes? He does it because of a soulsh bond. Soulsh bonds will cause you to forsake life-filled commands and instead embrace deadly tradition.

I met a man once who told me something

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troubling. He said, “Right or wrong, when I needed a friend, a Jehovah’s Witness was at my door, and you weren’t. Right or wrong, I will believe what they say, and I will go to Heaven or hell by what they say.”

This is a commitment that will send this man to an eternity without Christ because his soulish tie with a group promoting false doctrine is so strong, it has overridden his good sense and captured his imagination.

When we allow soulish ties to build habitations in our lives, we open the door to error. We can even find ourselves allowing traditions of men to dictate our response to God in order to protect our human relationships. This is why cults are so successful.

Cults encourage your dependence on them by separating you from everyone else and promoting soulish bonds based on man-made doctrine. They will offer friendship, and sometimes even advancement, in order to hone in on your soulish desires. They know if they can capture your heart and mind, they can capture your entire being.

We ought to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves when we deal with people in the body of Christ. We must extend the hand of fellowship; not for manipulation as do cults, but for the purpose of true friendship.

We must help people give up their lifeless traditions and embrace the safety that is found in the truth of God’s Word. We do that by creating a shelter of hope within our churches; by embracing people for who they are, and standing by them as they are transformed into the image of Christ; by preaching

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the uncompromising truth from our pulpits, and by extending a hand of love whenever we can.

Let's not allow people to go untouched in our congregations. We are our brother's keeper.

The Error of Unchecked Sorrow

I'm going to take you down a sensitive path now, but it is too important to pass by. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 says: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."

Paul instructed the church to avoid grieving like the world when a believer died. He knew that people who do not know Christ respond to death soulishly, but people who know Him should respond spiritually.

Does this mean we don't cry? No, we all weep when we lose a loved one. This is a part of life. Does it mean we try to get around the grieving process? No, we go through the process, but we have a different outcome on the other side.

Even when we know our loved one is with Jesus we still miss them, and we long for their companionship, but we do not allow ourselves to open the door to unnatural sorrow by giving in to a soulish response.

A soulish response to death is one that believes there is no hope of resurrection, one that clings to what was and grieves uncontrollably because there is no looking forward to a reunion. If you deal with the death of a saint on a soulish rather than a spiritual level, you will allow your soul to become deeply

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wounded.

This will cause you to be open to demonic influence, so that instead of being sorrowful for a season, you will give in to a spirit of grief, and you will become oppressed and depressed. You will be unable to hold fast to the knowledge that your loved one is with the Lord, but you will be obsessed with your soulish loss.

I know this sounds hard, and I truly don't mean it to be. I have suffered loss, both of family and of close friends. I have felt the stab of pain at the news, and I have wept for the end of our earthly relationship. I have walked through the fog of the first few days, and I have gone down the path of grieving. But what I did not allow was an unchecked grief to rule me.

The Bible actually tells us that we should weep when people are born and rejoice when they die, but because many people have such strong soulish ties with loved ones, they reject this truth and embrace worldly error. The truth sets them free, but error will imprison them.

There is a delicate balance. The Bible tells us to weep with those who weep, so there is no shame in sorrow. The error arises when we get stuck in the grief, fail to ask God to heal our wounded souls, and become enslaved to the sorrow.

We all deal with grief in different ways and on individual timetables, but what we all must do, as spiritual beings looking forward to a spiritual reunion, is guard our hearts and minds, recognize the damage prolonged sorrow can do, and press in to the Comforter so that He may help us, heal us, and

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strengthen us to move ahead.

We don't forget our family and friends; we simply move them to their rightful place in our hearts. We await a wonderful day in Heaven when we will see Jesus face to face and soon after rejoice with those who have gone before us. This makes the pain bearable.

If you've lost a loved one, remind yourself that he or she ran the race, finished the course, obtained a crown, and now abides with Christ where there will be no more battles, no more tears or sorrow, no more sickness or pain, and no more regrets. They have arrived where we all desire to be, and one day we shall be as they are.

There are so many Christians who are depressed, discouraged, and living in mental and emotional agony because a loved one went home to be with Jesus. I have known loss, and I do not diminish any feeling anyone has ever had at the loss of a loved one.

What I do encourage is this: after a time - after the memories have surfaced and resurfaced again and again - you need to begin to look forward; begin to seek joyful interaction with those who are still here with you; begin to anticipate the return to a life worth living.

It will come, but you must allow God to heal your wounded soul. Let Him seal your heart against the damage of prolonged grief. Some will resist this because they have come to depend on the grief, another soulish manifestation, but I encourage you to do as Paul instructed and sorrow as a believer, not as

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a lost sinner would.

Rejoice for the life that was lived well, and prepare for the homecoming that is not so far away. Depend on your spiritual relationship with God now more than ever, and let Him heal you and see you through to better days.

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Chapter Three

SOULISH DANGERS

2 Samuel 15:2-6 says: “Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city are you? And he said, Your servant is of one of the tribes of Israel.

“And Absalom said unto him, See, your matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear you. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which has any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

“And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.”

David was king, and he was anointed of God; his son Absalom was not. God anointed David in the midst of Israel and confirmed his ordination by supernatural feats, not only the killing of Goliath, but the slaying of ten of thousands.

God did not anoint David one time; He anointed him three times. David was the indisputable anointed of the Lord, and God placed him in Israel as one

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empowered from Heaven to rule the people.

Absalom, full of evil intentions, rose up to steal the hearts of men using manipulation, and he did so by way of soulish ties. A kiss is a direct connection to the emotional realm, so when Absalom received the men of Israel with a kiss, he went straight to the heart, cutting past their spiritual obligation to honor the king.

Absalom was intent on using the people for his own vengeful pleasure, so in rebellion he put forth his hand to cause division in Israel. He did it with a hateful attitude toward his father, and he purposefully set out to lead the nation away from their rightful leader.

He was so successful, he even led away one of King David's primary counselors. The soulish tie between Absalom and this man became so strong, the counselor asked for a troop of men so that he may go forth to kill David. This man, previously knit with David for the purpose of godly counsel, now wanted to wipe him off the face of the earth; proving soulish ties can lead to dangerous minds.

The same thing happens today, only much more subtly. Soulsh relationships cause men and women to defy and override spiritual relationships which have been ordained, appointed, and empowered by God to impact their lives for the good. This is why we must be very wary, and we must not allow soulsh ties to ruin our spiritual calling.

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The Danger of Division

If you've been saved six months, you've probably heard of a church split somewhere. There's nothing more damaging to the body of Christ, so why are splits common? I believe it is because people prefer the emotional benefit of a soulish tie to the character building of a spiritual connection.

Soulish splits usually begin in the area of helps ministry. Within this group of people, who are called alongside to help in the body of Christ, there are many compelling frontline ministries which touch hearts and minds in a powerful way.

One of the most recognizable helps ministries is that of worship leader. There have been more chaotic splits in the body of Christ over worship leaders than anything else.

Often a worship leader will be so well-known in the house, and will be so often in front of the people, some members of the church will begin to believe that he is of more value to the church than the pastor.

Here's what we must understand about the operation of a local congregation. In Jeremiah 3:15, God said He sent pastors to feed the flock. We all know that the intake of food causes growth, so it is clear that God has entrusted pastors with the responsibility of feeding and encouraging spiritual growth in our churches.

The pastor needs the worship leader to plow up fallow ground in order to open the hearts of the people. His plowing allows the pastor to sow a spiritual seed in soil that is prepared, rather than

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having to plow it himself. The plowing alone will never bring forth fruit, but the seed of the Word must be planted in order for growth and harvest to come.

This is why a worship leader will never produce spiritual growth on his own. He will touch you, and he will prepare your heart for the planting of the Word, but he will never cause spiritual transformation to occur because that's not his job.

A worship leader may tap into an anointing that is very evident, and when he does it is attractive, but what we must realize is that a worship leader partakes of the anointing of the house. As a part of the helps ministry he pours forth blessing on the congregation to help fulfill the call and purpose of the church.

Where people go off track is when they become emotionally attached to the worship leader and others in the helps ministry. If they're not careful, this soulish attachment will make them more dependent on the soulish input of the helps minister than on the spiritual input of the pastor. When this happens, they will open themselves to an Absalom spirit should one arise.

In my opinion, no pastor should ever allow one soulish Absalom to overthrow the kingship that God has placed in a house, but it happens every day because people respond to it. Congregations split and follow a man who does not have the vision of the pastor; he was a helper, but the people allowed him to kiss their hands and lead them away.

Soulish ties blind people to spiritual dominion and authority simply because most Christians prefer the emotional fix to the spiritual connection. We'd

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all rather shout than study, but we need the spiritual much more than the soulish. We need the planting of the Lord more than the tickling of the ears.

I guarantee, no church split has ever been birthed by a spiritual relationship, but only by a soulish attachment. This is why six months later the split crowd is waning, and the only people hurt are those who followed a soulish leader rather than sticking with their spiritual bedrock.

The Danger of Familiarity

There is another danger when people become too familiar with a spiritual leader. This happened to Peter once. Read Matthew 16:13-23 to see how in just a short period of time Peter went from being praised by Jesus for his revelation, to being rebuked by Him for missing the whole point of His ministry on earth.

You must realize that the devil is lurking around every corner, and he would like nothing more than to trick you into using your ties with a spiritual leader as an opportunity for manipulation. It's very possible, because the more familiar you get, and the more your emotional buttons are pushed, the more you will think you know better, and the more you will want to be heard.

Protect yourself, and be very careful that you do not cross the line and enter into the world of rebellion, which God compares to the sin of witchcraft. (See 1 Samuel 15:23.) This is dangerous stuff, and it must be avoided at all costs.

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Romans 8:14 says: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” When you follow the leading of the Spirit of God, you will live in the benefits of sonship, but if you concentrate on following soulish ties, you will miss the guidance of the Holy Spirit reserved for sons and daughters.

That’s what Israel did when they followed Absalom. They forsook their spiritual connection with their spiritual father, David, and instead pursued an illegitimate soulish tie with his rebellious son, Absalom. They became close with Absalom, and they delighted in being known by him.

The people wanted David to be familiar with their troubles and to do something about them personally. They believed they had a right to his attention, and when he did not respond and do things their way, they were offended. They rejected the notion that David was called to rule the nation rather than kiss them on the cheek.

You can know a leader after the Spirit by what he deposits in your life, and this should be enough. You don’t need to know what he eats for breakfast to benefit from your spiritual connection with him. Don’t ever desire to know or to be known more than you desire the input of the Spirit of God.

Remember, everything Absalom did was soulish; everything David did was ordained of God. Yet, the people chose Absalom because they could get closer to him, be more familiar with his ways, and be known by him personally.

What they did not realize is that by rejecting David, they automatically forsook the way of the

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Lord. They missed the leading of God, and they grieved the Holy Spirit. May it never be so in your life.

The Danger of Being Needy

Associate pastors are often given immense soulish appreciation. This happens because they are in some ways the hands and feet of the pastor. While he is busy trying to protect the anointing that has empowered him to fulfill the vision of God, the associate pastor is busy cultivating relationships, which is a part of his job description.

Pastors cannot possibly touch everyone in their congregation personally, and so they depend on men and women in help ministries to reach out and make contact for them. This has always been true.

Go back to Moses. At first, Moses tried to handle all issues and disputes himself, keeping as many soulish ties intact in the wilderness as he could. Thankfully, his father-in-law Jethro saw the pressure was about to kill him, and so he intervened and told Moses that he needed to divide the responsibilities among 70 men.

Moses came to his senses and realized he had been trying to protect his soulish ties rather than nurture his spiritual relationship with God. When he did as Jethro suggested, he not only lightened his load and allowed himself the fellowship with God for which he was created, but the people actually got better care.

Pastors all over the world deal with similar issues

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today. Personal visits to hospital bedsides, personal interaction at family events, personal intervention in times of need – these are the things some crave from their pastors, but they are simply not possible on a wide scale.

When this personal interaction is unavailable, some become offended and turn to the associate pastor for their soulish fix. This is dangerous because it can lead to splits if an associate begins to believe the way some people believe, that he cares more for them than their pastor does.

Truthfully, this is why most churches in America will never grow beyond 200; because people prefer to be soulishly connected to spiritual leadership rather than to be part of a growing outreach in their community.

Your pastor does not need to visit your house to minister to you. Let him do what he needs to do to prepare for his opportunity to sow into your heart each week. Let him give himself to fasting, to the Word, and to prayer. (See Acts 6:1-4.)

Don't tie him down with demands to visit every sick person, every backslider, and every weak and weary saint. Let the leadership appointed by your pastor touch you, and let him do what God has called him to do.

The Danger of Offense

2 Samuel 16:20-22 says: “Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do. And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in

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unto your father's concubines, which he has left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that you are abhorred of your father: then shall the hands of all that are with you be strong.

“So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.”

This action demanded that Absalom be stoned, because it was an act of incest for a son to uncover the nakedness of his father's concubines. Yet Ahithophel, David's former trusted friend, encouraged Absalom to override all of the law and the statues of God in order to gain power over his father.

Ahithophel was Bathsheba's uncle, and he had a hidden agenda. He had bitterness in his heart for the shame that was brought upon his family by David's murderous affair. David had repented and been restored by God, but because of his resentment Ahithophel refused to accept what God had done. He harbored unforgiveness until it became a bitter root, and this root of bitterness birthed a soulsh relationship with Absalom that defied the anointing of God on David's life.

This is what happens to Christians when they harbor unforgiveness among the brethren. Bitterness rises up, and they begin to look for validation for their feelings of resentment. Offense takes hold, and the devil attempts to use it to break spiritual relationships and promote soulsh ties with people of like hurt.

This is why we must deal with offenses quickly and scripturally instead of hanging onto them. We

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cannot allow a root of bitterness to spring up and produce a harvest of chaos in our lives.

Being offended is wrong. It should never be condoned nor allowed to rule us. We must keep our relationships in balance spiritually in order to avoid grave error. If we don't, we may find ourselves in a state similar to Ahithophel.

Ahithophel had no right to allow unforgiveness to rule his life. God had completely forgiven David, eradicated his sin, and restored his righteousness, but Ahithophel couldn't get over what had happened in his family, and he harbored resentment to the point of risking death in order to fulfill his soulish desires.

No offense is worth the loss of your eternal soul. Forgive freely and often, and you will live the better for it.

The Danger of Fame

Numbers 16:2 says: "They rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown." These men were famous because they were in front of the people, but as you will see in a moment, the only anointed one among them was the one they were confronting, Moses.

Verse three goes on to say: "They gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, You take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then

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do you lift up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?”

What a prideful thing to ask God’s appointed leader. Moses immediately fell on his face, and he spoke the words they thought they wanted to hear. Little did they know Moses’ words would turn out to be some of the last they would hear prior to their destruction.

These 250 famous men were led by a man named Korah, a man who had witnessed the mighty acts of God through the hand of Moses, and yet he thought he and his men were of the same caliber.

When was his staff turned into a serpent? Where was his Red Sea opening? Where was his water from a rock? When did he have an intimate encounter with God that resulted in the glory of the Lord shining upon him? Korah’s mighty acts did not exist, and yet he brought a charge against God’s man.

You may wonder how this group of men could be so ignorant. It happened because they had itching ears. Korah spoke something to them that they wanted to hear. His enticing words caused them to cross a line, and they began to call themselves anointed when no such anointing existed.

They should have come to their senses and said, “Stop! We are mere men, and you are not our leader. We see the hand of God on Moses, and we know his acts and ways. Who are you to defy the living God?”

These “men of renown” should have joined forces and drawn their swords to kill Korah on the first acre of ground that he intended to take. This would have been the right thing to do, but they didn’t

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do it because they were tempted by what he said.

They should have embraced who they were, instead of who they wanted to be. Then they would have been allowed to live rather than be swallowed up by the earth, as they were a few verses later.

In the same way, if people in the church today will embrace their own gifts and callings, rather than desiring the gifts and callings of others, many problems will cease. What God has sanctioned will stay sanctioned, we will not have the reproach of disunity, and the move and work of God will prosper.

The Danger of Murmuring

Miriam and Aaron, a few chapters prior to Korah's folly, had their own day of reckoning. They conspired together and came to Moses with a complaint on a matter that was not their business.

They approached him on a soulish level, and they failed to honor him on a spiritual level. They did the same thing Korah did; they tried to belittle Moses and exalt themselves.

This was very odd because Aaron was spiritually connected to Moses. He was acting as the "right hand man" until Miriam began to speak in his ear. This soulish tie with his sister caused the faithfulness that God had placed in his heart to be aborted.

Aaron was once sold out to the work of the Kingdom, but because he gave in to a listening ear when he should have rebuked Miriam, he found himself challenging God's anointed, the very man who had brought him into the ministry. Aaron owed

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all that he had to Moses, but a soulish tie nearly snuffed it out.

Miriam took the brunt of the punishment and was stricken with leprosy, which proves that God is not happy with this kind of behavior. God brought instant judgment on their murmuring, and He let them know He would not tolerate it.

Murmuring still happens in the church today. We ought to know better, and we ought to honor what God is doing in our spiritual relationships. We should make sure that we do not become soulishly motivated because of the voice of someone who desires promotion, recognition, or an anointing not their own.

When we give ear to murmuring and complaining about spiritual leadership, and when we allow ourselves to join with those who come against God's anointed, it is because we are enticed by words of soulish motivation.

When I say God's anointed, I'm not just talking about a personality. When God anoints a vision, there is an empowerment there to do a work. Unfortunately, many of the works of the Kingdom have been destroyed because people have been soulishly moved to rebel against them. This should not be so.

We should be moved to acts of service in our local churches, willingly working together to promote the expansion of the Kingdom. That's what it's all about, the Kingdom.

It's not about our personal work, our personal ministry, or our personal call and anointing. It's about each of us doing what we have been called to

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do, working together to build one another up in the body of Christ, and compelling one another to acts of service on behalf of our King.

If we will concentrate our efforts here, the rest will take care of itself.

Honor Anointing

John 7:1-5 says: “After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brothers therefore said unto Him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You do.

“For there is no man that does anything in secret, and he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world. For neither did His brothers believe in Him.”

This passage of scripture reveals how blind soulish ties can make you to spiritual anointing. Here Jesus was going about working miracles and healing the sick, and his brothers said, “If You do these things...” There was a blindness to not only the things that Jesus did, but also to who He was. They were so connected to the soulish realm, they could not open their eyes to see what God was doing right in their midst.

This is why a prophet is not without honor, except among his own people. Remember when Jesus went to His own city, and there He could do no mighty works because of their unbelief? He had power, and He was willing, but they simply refused to believe

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because of their soulish point of view. (See Mark 6:1-6.)

The mother of Jesus also had a relationship with Him, but she kept it in the spiritual realm and did not allow it to become soulish in nature. She refused to know Him after the flesh, but she knew Him after the Spirit.

Soulish bonds will abort and dethrone faith, removing confidence in what God has empowered a man to do. In other words, when you see someone through soulish eyes, you will lose the impact of their anointing on your life. You will disconnect yourself from the yoke-breaking, burden-removing anointing that is on a man of God when you address him in a soulish manner rather than in the honor of his office.

Let me bring it home in simple terms. Don't address your pastor by his first name. Don't call him "Bill", or "Steve", or "Mike". Call him "Pastor"; not for his puffing up, but for your spiritual good, because you will not be able to receive of his anointing if you refuse to honor it.

I'm not talking about undue honor, but about giving honor where honor is due. Of course we must prove every anointing, and we must be sure we are led of the Spirit. We have a right to ask ourselves some very probing questions about our relationships with spiritual authority.

Where is the goodness? Where is the righteousness? Where is the truth? Where is the fruit of the spirit and the discernable spiritual impact on your life? That's where you will find a spiritual tie. But when someone demands honor without fulfilling duty, that

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relationship is soulish in nature.

I truly believe that if a relationship with spiritual authority has been birthed by the leading of the Spirit, there will be continued spiritual benefit, but if it abides in the soulish realm there will be no discernable difference in your life for having been under the leadership of that individual.

Ephesians 5:8-10 says: “For you were sometimes darkness, but now are you light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.” Prove and honor true spiritual authority in your life, and you will benefit from it immensely.

Chapter Four

THE ART OF SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIPS

You may be wondering if emotional feelings are wrong. No, it's not wrong to have emotions, but it is wrong for emotions to have you. The Bible says: "Be angry, and sin not." (See Ephesians 4:26.) You can experience an emotional response, but you cannot allow it to hinder you and draw you into sin.

Jesus expressed anger when He threw the money-changers out of the temple. He was frustrated with the disciples time and again. He wept openly when a good friend died, and He was moved with compassion repeatedly. Jesus was not a stoic, unfeeling man, but He clearly ruled His emotions rather than the other way around.

We all need good, spiritual relationships that are full of love, joy, and passion, but first they must be full of the fruit of the spirit, godly character, and truth. This is the critical difference between a spiritual relationship and a soulish tie: a spiritual relationship is for the eternal good of both parties.

Whenever you join yourself with someone in a spiritual relationship, you become accountable to that person, and they become accountable to you. You become a burden bearer according to Galatians 6:2, a prayer warrior according to Ephesians 6:18, a yoke-fellow according to Philippians 4:3, and

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a fellow-helper according to 2 Corinthians 8:23. Spiritual relationships do not just happen; they are made.

God is the author of spiritual relationships, and He has much to say about how to build them, maintain them, and protect them. Your part is to make sure that you do not allow passivity to destroy them.

Spiritual relationships were God's idea from the beginning. In Genesis 2:18 He said: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." We understand this was talking about Adam and Eve, but the point is clear that man does not do well alone. And neither does woman. We all need each other.

In Genesis 1:28 we see God's mandate for Adam and Eve: "God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

To me, this scripture shows us that people who avoid connecting with others actually hold back their productivity and fruitfulness. By trying to live on an island, men and women who do not cultivate good relationships will find themselves unable to fulfill the call of God for their lives.

We need spiritual relationships. We need the give and take of caring for others, and of being cared for in return. We can care deeply, express passionate emotion, and show tender concern for our loved ones, but we must do it God's way.

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Overcome Your Inner Loner

To build a spiritual relationship, you must begin at the beginning. First, you have to tear down any misconceptions you may have about what a good relationship should look like. You need to learn the truth, and you need to lose your fear.

After reading the first three chapters you may be inclined to avoid people altogether rather than risk a soulsh tie, but you cannot be a loner for the rest of your life. You cannot hide while trying to protect yourself from error and danger. You need active relationships with a variety of people to be healthy and happy. There are no “one man shows” in the Kingdom of God.

Loners are afraid to build relationships, but the trouble with being a loner is twofold. You lose out on the multiplication principle of Genesis 1:28, and you cannot be used by God to reach anyone because you refuse to come out of your cave.

The devil wants Christians to avoid good relationships. He wants them to stay disconnected and hide in their loneliness. More than anything he wants them to avoid cultivating spiritual ties. This is why he is more than happy to stir up strife whenever two people get together. If he can hurt you enough times, he knows you will likely retreat and give up. For me, I don't want to give him the satisfaction.

If you have loner tendencies, let me help you. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says: “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to

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him that is alone when he falls; for he has not another to help him up.

“Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

Here we see that spiritual relationships should be a priority in every life. They will not be easy, and they will require your time, energy, and patience, but they are essential for success.

You do not want to be alone on a battlefield. You don't want to be alone when you stumble and fall. You don't want to be alone when the cold winds of life begin to blow. It is only in a good, spiritual relationship that you can be strengthened as you draw from someone else the things you cannot produce on your own.

There is a lot of truth in the old saying that opposites attract. When this happens it is a good thing because we each add to the other whatever is lacking. This is why it is always helpful for a husband to consult his wife before he makes a big decision. She will see the issue from a totally different perspective, and she can add valuable insight if he will be wise enough to ask for it.

What happens too often is that women give such detailed answers, their husbands lose patience, and so they forego the wise counsel they should be seeking. Women need to pare it down a little and try not to give an encyclopedia full of information on every subject, and men need to humble themselves and listen even if their wives do tell them more than

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they want to know.

Spiritual relationships should be give and take arrangements that benefit both parties, but we must be willing to reach out to receive from others the things which we do not naturally possess ourselves. A spiritual connection where you can openly and honestly discuss matters of life ought to be one of the top priorities of every Christian.

Fulfilling Our Covenants

Now that we know we should be seeking spiritual relationships, let's learn how to build them successfully. Spiritual relationships are some of the hardest things to not only build, but to bring to a level of fruitfulness, and then to maintain for life. Don't panic, because it can be done, but it will take commitment.

Spiritual relationships are covenants, and they can be divided into two primary categories.

First, there are open covenants, such as marriage, where we make a defined commitment by way of our wedding vows. We speak them in front of witnesses, and we pledge ourselves to one another for a lifetime. This kind of covenant relationship requires constant involvement, not just words you speak one time and then forget. It takes daily effort, and it takes a continuing renewal of your devotion.

The second kind of spiritual relationship is what I call an unspoken covenant, such as in the case of friendship. We do not make public vows, but we do dedicate ourselves to be good friends, knowing our

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unspoken covenants have boundaries and obligations we must live up to.

There are no easy relationships in the world. Even a man's bond with his dog requires commitment. He better put food in Fido's bowl, or Fido will leave the earth. He better walk Fido down the sidewalk on occasion, or Fido will turn into a big blob. He better provide Fido with adequate shelter, or the humane society will have something to say about it.

Certainly, we understand our duty to take care of the pets that live with us. Most of us do a pretty good job of caring for Fido and Fluffy. So why are people afraid of living up to the expectations of those made in the image of God - their spouses, children, and friends?

There are many people who have issues with commitment, and they cringe when they think of what is expected of them by another human being. If someone struggles with commitment, he needs to know that if he tries to be a spouse, or even a friend, without living up to the expectations of the person he has connected with, he will quickly find himself disappointed and alone.

It's time to make a fresh promise to do what is right for your spouse, your children, and your friends. Make good on your covenant commitments, and begin to see those around you in the light of God's love.

Light vs. Dark

2 Corinthians 6:14 says: "Be not unequally yoked

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together with unbelievers: for what fellowship does righteousness have with unrighteousness? And what communion does light have with darkness?"

This verse is not talking about outward attributes, but about matters of the heart. It's talking about people with moral clarity, godly character, and genuine integrity who are trying to walk hand in hand with those who live by immoral standards, ungodly character, and absolute dishonesty. It can't be done.

Spiritual relationships are to be based on faith in God, and not on unbelief. If you try to run around with people who disrespect your beliefs, you will never win them to Jesus, but they may win you to their way of thinking. Godless relationships will lead to more ungodliness.

Your relationships will affect your moral soundness. They will affect your ability to walk in the depths of the Spirit. They will affect your prayer life, your heavenly connection, and your faith. This is why you must examine every relationship to determine if its foundation is solid or shaky.

Bad relationships, or those you neglect, will affect you negatively on every level. They will cause you to stumble, and they will extract strength from your life.

Psalm 1:1-3 says: "Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not

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wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper.”

Notice how important your associations are. They literally determine whether you will be blessed or not. Your rightful blessing can be stopped if you continue in ungodly relationships.

Your relationships with others will affect your passion level for the Word. Notice the man who walked in the counsel of the ungodly had nothing good to report, but the man who freed himself from it and stayed committed to the Word found blessing and prosperity coming his way.

Relationships require participation, and wherever you participate, there you will find your passion, depth, and steadfast desire. Jesus said it this way: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (See Matthew 6:21.)

Connect light with light, and be cautious when darkness comes knocking at your door. A simple friendship can ruin a spiritual walk with Christ if you’re not careful. Choose Jesus, who gave His all for you, and commit to live for Him above anyone who demands and takes from you.

Maintaining a Good Friendship

To find a good friend is a gift. Friendship has many benefits, but it also comes with many demands. Let me tell you about a few of the things that I expect from my friends.

I expect loyalty. I don’t want a friendship that is here today and gone tomorrow. I want long-term relationships that I can count on.

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I expect my friends to be secure. I want them to be confident enough in our relationship that they will not be disappointed if I don't immediately jump up from the couch when they walk in a room. If I want to take a nap while my friends are visiting, I trust they won't be upset with me for being tired.

I expect my friends to honor my boundaries. I am willing to put a reasonable amount of energy into every relationship I have, but I refuse to have to work constantly to make sure my friends are not offended with me. I don't like relationships that require over-the-top effort.

I love cars, but I don't like cars that break down all the time. A clunker puts a sour taste in my mouth, and so does a clunker of a friendship. Trying to be friends with someone who is easily offended and high maintenance is rarely worth the effort.

I expect my friends to be glad for me when things go well, just as I am glad for them when they do well. If my friend buys a new "toy", I'm not jealous and upset because I didn't buy one, too. I'm happy for my friend, because good friends want the best for one another.

I expect occasional kindnesses, and I give them in return. Spiritual friendships are built on mutual love that is expressed through a spirit of giving. You don't have to buy each other gifts all the time, but you do have to realize that no one can have a relationship in word only. Eventually there will have to be some action to back up the words spoken.

I expect my friends to be flexible rather than demanding, and I am flexible in return. I expect

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my friends will not demand more of me than is reasonable to give, and I never make unreasonable demands on them. A friendship will not survive if one of the friends is constantly making demands on the other without offering anything in return.

If you are the one who always has to initiate the call to do something together, I would wonder why. If you are the one who always picks up the tab for the pie and coffee, one day I would wake up and smell that coffee.

Don't be a user, and don't enable a user. Be honest with your friends, and lay out your expectations. If they are willing to stick with you, you will have friends for life. But if they go, wave goodbye and sigh in relief, because the ties would not likely have lasted anyway.

Surviving Adversity

Proverbs 17:17 says: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Notice that a friend loves at all times, not just in the good times. When adversity strikes, this is when we will discover who our true friends are.

If you put yourself and your needs above your friend and his needs, your friendship will never last. On the flip side, if your friend always puts himself first, you won't be friends for long.

The Bible says: "Give and it shall be given." (See Luke 6:38.) If you never receive a word of encouragement when times are tough, and all you seem to do is support your friend when he is down,

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your relationship is out of balance.

You should meet the needs of your friend in times of adversity, but you also have the right to expect your needs to be met when tough times come your way. I'm not talking about paying one another's bills, but about coming alongside to brace up your weak and weary friend.

Galatians 6:2 says: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." The word picture painted by the original language in this verse is that of a stake being driven next to a tree or a plant to hold it up until it is able to stand up by itself. That's powerful.

If your friend needs help, stake yourself shoulder to shoulder until he or she can stand alone. And when you need help, don't be afraid to ask your friend to come alongside and drive a stake next to you.

Christians should be more than just fair weather friends. We should be known as those who stay put no matter what happens to our friends and loved ones. We should never be caught running away when a friend is down, but we should be at their side in the blink of an eye, fighting for space to stand shoulder to shoulder with our buddy or our best friend.

Sacrificial friendship is true friendship. If we love and trust our friends, there should be no fear in giving our lives for one another because we know the law of mutual exchange is at work, and one day we will reap what we sow.

This is also why building new spiritual relationships should be serious business. Are you willing to add a new friend to your list of those for

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which you are willing to lay it all on the line? Are you willing to commit in good times and in bad? Are you willing to pick up their burdens and carry them should the need arise? Are you willing to drive a stake beside them and stay with them until they are strong enough to stand?

If you aren't willing to invest yourself and get involved in someone's life, laying down your own desires when times get tough, then don't start the relationship building process. And don't ever begin a one-sided relationship where you believe you will benefit from someone else without having to give anything in return. It's not fair, and it's a form of manipulation.

The Sharpening Process

Proverbs 27:17 says: "Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend." Good relationships should sharpen us spiritually and emotionally, but the truth is, the sharpening process is painful sometimes.

First, we discover we're dull, or chipped and broken, and that's not any fun. Then we must apply abrasion and pressure to our ragged edges to restore the proper shape, sharpness, and shine.

As an example, sharpening metal tools is usually done with a series of finishing stones. It sounds odd, but you have to apply mud to the stones to get what you want. Adding dirt doesn't seem right, but it works. Sharpening also takes a fair amount of pressure and skill, and it requires repeated strokes

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against the uncomfortable, abrasive surface of the stone to reach the desired outcome.

The first stone, which is also the most abrasive, only reshapes the tool, but it does not leave a smooth edge. That comes later when we move to the medium stone to remove the lines the harsh stone left behind. Here we hone the sharp edge, but we still have no shine. This comes from the final step with the polishing stone. This last step gives us the nice sheen we are all looking for.

Why would anybody want to submit to this multi-step process? We do it because it's good for us. We don't want to be a dull or broken friend, on the brink of becoming useless. That's what a dull tool is, absolutely useless. You've got to either sharpen it, or throw it away.

Sharpening should go both ways. We sharpen our friends by exposing their dull places, roughing them up a bit with our honesty, smoothing things out with our patience, putting a sharp edge on them with our faithfulness, and restoring the shine of their countenance with our love. Good friends will return the favor and do the same for us.

The give and take process of any friendship should leave us both better off than when we started, but if we find ourselves tearing one another to shreds, we need to find out why.

I believe that when companionship is a constant struggle, it may not be of God. Don't be afraid to allow a contentious friendship to die. Its death could open the door for a new journey in your life where you will find another, better friend.

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Now, don't all you married people shout, "Hallelujah! Pastor Doseck just gave me an out!" No, marriage is a higher calling that should never be entered into lightly because it is a covenant whose expectations and demands far exceed those of simple friendship.

Friendships can fade without major consequences for either party, but failed marriages hurt everyone involved. You can walk away from a friendship and move on, but God forbids you to walk away from a marriage unless there are specific violations on the part of a spouse.

This is why you better pray longer and harder before you marry than about any other decision in life; primarily because it is a decision for life. There are no "easy out" buttons.

The Law of Mutual Exchange

Every kind of spiritual relationship has one thing in common. It needs mutual exchange to survive. Even Jesus had an expectation of mutual exchange. He said: "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." (See John 14:15-16.)

Our expression of love toward Jesus is a life of obedience, and His expression of love toward us is the Holy Spirit. His gift far outweighs ours, but the law of mutual exchange is operating, and God is pleased.

Every relationship has a level of love upon which it

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is built, and every love level demands an expression, a mutual exchange, to keep it going. The love I'm talking about is simple human kindness, respect for one another, and a desire to express itself in tangible ways.

When we express love to our spouses, our family, or our friends, the roots of our relationships are deepened. Our expression will vary from relationship to relationship, and it will not always call for the giving of things, but that may be a part of it. We see something we know our spouse would like, and we buy it and tuck it away for a surprise. This is the joy of a good relationship. We give, and we receive, mutually benefitting one another.

Sometimes mutual exchange can take on a spiritual dimension. You're feeling down, and so your friend encourages you, prays for you, or maybe even fasts with you. This is bearing one another's burdens, and it is a shared thing. One day your friend will need a lift, and you will step up to the challenge.

Many marriages are unsuccessful because one spouse (or both) fails to understand the law of mutual exchange. This often happens because they skipped over being good friends first. Romance blossomed, and it was off to the altar before they really knew one another. Without knowledge of what makes the other tick, misunderstandings abound.

You need to know your spouse. Know what he or she likes, not just what you like to give. You can't say, "Honey, I love you" without expressing your love in a way that your spouse values. In other words, if your wife does not hunt, don't buy her a shotgun for her

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birthday, and if your husband does not knit, forget new needles for Christmas!

These are exaggerated examples, but you get the point. You must give what will please your spouse or your friend, not what pleases you. Does your spouse crave spending time with you? Then give it. Does your spouse need an encouraging word now and then? Then express how proud you are of all he or she does for your family.

If you know what your spouse needs but refuse to give it, I have to question your love level. Love is a giving word, because God is love, and He has given us more than we will ever dream of giving another human being.

Become a giver and not a taker, and allow the law of mutual exchange to operate in your life. If you do, you will find your marriage deepening and your friendships being strengthened. Without it, you will surely fail.

Truth in Love

No spiritual relationship, whether marriage or close friendship, should be dominated by fear. If you run your house by instilling fear in your wife and children, you need a new plan. If you manipulate your friends by keeping them under the thumb of fear, you need to find something else to do.

Fear only succeeds as long as the fearful can see you. When they are out of sight, they will do what they want because the motivation will be gone. Love should be the motivating factor in every spiritual

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relationship, and love strives for the good of others no matter what.

This is where couples must evaluate before they get married. Are you afraid of your boyfriend or girlfriend? Maybe not afraid of physical abuse, but are you afraid they will stop loving you if you speak the truth? If so, I would advise you to cancel the wedding and get out of the relationship. You will never succeed in marriage if you are afraid of telling the truth.

Marriage happens day by day. Sometimes it's boring, and sometimes it's exciting. Sometimes it's happy, and sometimes it's sad. Sometimes it's fascinating, and sometimes it's downright ugly. Marriage is all about real life happening before our eyes without the aid of a script.

Friendships are much the same. They are not always full of laughter and giving. Sometimes they are filled with struggle and friction. We need to know how to maintain our relationships in the nitty gritty, everyday world.

If we cannot speak the truth in love to one another, in good times and in bad, our spiritual friendships and our marriages will fail. We must be able to adjust to the ups and downs of life, and we can only adjust if we can work through issues without the fear of reprisal.

To succeed in marriage and in close friendships you must be genuine, honest, and unafraid to tell the truth in love. You must be willing to sharpen one another, and to let your true desires be known.

If you are still single, and your boyfriend or

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girlfriend can't love you for being true to yourself and honest with them, then I would advise you to find someone else. Don't let fear trap you in a discouraging, disappointing cycle of dating that leads to a disastrous marriage.

If your close friends cannot count on you to be honest with them, either fix it, or let them go. It's not fair for one to be honest in a spiritual relationship while the other hides his or her true feelings. Make yourself a true friend, and not just a head nodding "yes-man".

As for married couples dealing with issues, you will have to buckle down and work on them one by one. Start by admitting your needs and weaknesses face to face, and then commit to work together to make a course correction.

Be sincere in your attempts to make truth telling a daily experience. Banish fear from your household, and let love be your guide.

The Relationship Mirror

Jeremiah 12:2 says: "You have planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: you are near in their mouth, and far from their reins."

What does this mean? Basically, the people described here honored God with their lips, but they refused to let Him have the reins of their lives. They said all the right things, but they did not live up to what they said.

When you are a Christian and involved in spiritual

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relationships, you will quickly discover the depth of your connection with Christ. You will discover if you can live what you say you believe in the midst of daily trials and tribulations, or if you will fall apart every time things don't go your way.

It's fine to say, "I'm a believer! Oh, praise the Lord!" when things are going well, but what happens when the boat gets turned upside down? Then you will live what you truly believe, rather than what you say you believe.

As the old saying goes, "Actions speak louder than words." If you are going to name the name of Jesus and call yourself a Christian, then you will have to allow Him to direct you and refine you. If you choose to direct yourself, it will reveal a shallow commitment to Him.

Your relationships are like great big mirrors. They show you what you're made of by the words you speak and by the way you react in good times and in bad. You can get away with talking the talk in church, but when you step over the threshold at home your spouse will see the real story, and he or she will reflect to you who you are and what you believe.

Ephesians 5:31-32 makes a direct connection between marriage and our relationship with God. It says: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Your marriage will be a direct reflection of your relationship with God. You are "one flesh" with your spouse, and you are one with Christ if you have

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made Him your Lord and Savior. You are not your own anymore, not in spirit, and not in the flesh. You belong to Christ and to your spouse. Your life is to be lived for them, not for your own selfish desires.

It's not so different in other spiritual relationships. The way you treat people in general will display the depth of God's activity in your life. Your friendships will expose your spiritual capacity to receive from God, and if you let them they will enlarge your faith and give you opportunities to be transformed by the Word.

Life is an excellent classroom, and we are all learning how to live as God commands minute by minute, and day by day. May we commit to live what we learn, and in so doing live the love walk together in Christ.

The Order of Marriage

Here's where the Bible places the spiritual relationship called marriage in the pecking order of life. It's God over Christ, Christ over man, man over wife, man and wife submitting to one another, and man and wife over children.

This is the structure of marriage and family. There is always someone over us. We are never at the top of the rung because God holds that position.

The family structure is a form of government. While children live at home they are always answerable to their parents, husbands and wives are always answerable to one another, and everyone in the house is first and foremost answerable to God.

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The family runs on delegated authority, and this is where marriages most often break down. So, if we can pinpoint the weak spot, then we can shore up our chances of success. Life is like that. When we see a road sign and know there's a bump around the bend, we can brace for it. It's the unforeseen potholes that jar us the most.

Here's a warning sign that should appear in every home – “Delegated Authority in Use: Enter with Caution.” Delegated authority, when used properly, is a wonderful thing. It reminds us of our purpose, calls us to fulfill that purpose, and corrects us when we get off course. But when it goes bad because one or both parties do not understand it, marriage can be very difficult.

If you are not willing to let someone have a voice of authority in your life, a place of involvement, and room for expression of opinion, then you are not ready for marriage and family.

Proverbs 27:9 says: “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so does the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.” Your spouse should be your best friend, and as such he or she should be ready to give you counsel, whether you ask for it or not. It's just the nature of things in the family structure.

We should be glad for wise counsel, but often we feel threatened by it. When you said, “I do”, you as much as asked for it. Why else would you promise to stay with someone until “death do us part?” Who would want to live with someone for a lifetime without offering or receiving any input or advice?

Go be a waiter if you want to chat about the

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weather, but if you want to thrive in a marriage you will have to communicate. You will have to give counsel and receive it without fussing and fighting.

You will have to be willing to live under delegated authority with both of you bearing a portion of the load, and each being willing to help the other with their part. Marriage requires accountability to delegated authority, and accountability takes work.

Proverbs 27:6 says: “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” Nowhere are these words more true than in a marriage relationship.

If you are not living right, pulling your weight, or doing what God told you to do, a good husband or a good wife will wound you to save you from yourself. This kind of wound comes from wise judgment.

You may not like what your spouse says, but if your spouse is truly looking out for your good, he or she will not compromise in order to keep you happy. A good spouse will be willing to sacrifice peace for a season to make sure that you are right with Christ.

This is how a marriage thrives, when each is willing to work for the eternal reward of the other. Marriage is not just about what we eat for dinner, who does the laundry, or who takes out the trash. Marriage is about living well, and then spending eternity with Jesus. That’s what makes it all worthwhile.

I encourage you to nurture your spiritual relationships, and make your best effort every day. Give yourself to bettering the lives of others, and God will give Himself to making your life the best it can be.