

Relationship Advice in Turbulent Times

Tim Miller, Gateway Fellowship, Oct 9, 2016

American culture of fear, labelling, us/them, blame-shifting, scapegoating, conspiracy, class-war, racism, and apocalyptic panic speculation, and distrust and slander as virtues. The Lord's return is viewed almost as an escape hatch and the church operates as a kind of bomb shelter. Not good. Unless we swim upstream, we are adrift in a carnal river of sins with little wisdom. I'd like to offer some ways out of that river.

Romans 8:6 "The mind of the flesh is death. The mind of the Spirit is life and peace."

Anxiety → Blame vs. Faith → Prayer

Philippians 4:6-7 6Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.7Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Prov 18:21 MSG Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit—you choose.

Unhealthy triangles: 1.) Victim (teller) 2.) Rescuer (listener) 3.) Bad Guy (absent 3rd party).

Matthew 18 is so clear. Confrontation and reconciliation is God's straight forward plan a, b, and c.

Wounded Bluetooth Pairing. Have you ever noticed that wounded and bitter people will find each other? It's like there's a spiritual bluetooth that is always in pairing mode. These folk find each other and instead of confront the wound with taking responsibility for releasing the pain and the right to punish and praying blessing on the one who caused the hurt, the wound stays fresh and even adds new data in the telling.

FACT: If they talk bad to you about others, they will talk bad about you to others. If you are talking about somebody before you are talking to them...be careful. Jesus said to go to them first, and only if they are resistant to caring for you are you to then get help from a third party, and even then, the third party is to come with you, not just pity you and get mad with you. If

you are upset enough to talk about somebody, you are upset enough to talk to them. This truly is a fear of the Lord issue. If you aren't convicted about this, then you have seared your conscience by an undisciplined tongue.

Malachi 3:16 Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name.

The fear of the Lord is on display in the words we speak to each other. Or it isn't. But that's an extremely big deal to the Lord.

Luke 17:3-4 "If another believer sins, rebuke that person; then if there is repentance, forgive. 4 Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive."

Confront. Forgive. That's so simple. And so counter-human. We struggle with both. **True Love = Vulnerable Assertiveness:** "Here's what's in my heart," and "here's what I'm going to do." We really mess this up when we begin to psychoanalyze the other person. "You obviously think this," or "you don't care about me," or "You NEVER listen." So broken. So judgmental. So designed to spool the conflict up. It's the verbal equivalent of hitting them angrily instead of letting them know that they are standing on your foot.

Get healthy. Stay connected. We cannot change others. Or fix them. Or rescue them. Or help them at all if we are changing who we are in order to make things better for them without them changing. We need to stop rescuing and enabling people, and thinking that we are responsible for them. I am only responsible for my own choices. And rescuing people leaves them stuck in the unhealthy patterns, and actually we get pulled in too.

Matthew 7:1-5 "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. 2 For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? 4 How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye."

Yes, I want "revival." But not one that simply fills our churches with enthusiastic singing and zeal for the things of God. That's not nearly deep enough. I want a revival that consists of the

attitudes of Jesus being our daily practice in our home relationships and extending out to each other. We have identified holiness as following rules and avoiding certain habits like cussing and smoking, but we have not repented of the far worse and more destructive habits of slandering, gossiping, assuming the worst of each other, and avoiding our responsibility to confront and forgive. Our triangles have left a wake of shattered relationships and abandoned friendships behind us. Who here has not been devastated by rejection and judgment? No one is untouched. Who here has not been tempted to give up altogether on church and forge a relationship with God somehow, somewhere, away from “unsafe people.” And who here has been without sin in what we say? Have I not been one of these unsafe people? Lord knows I have. Have I not been in the flesh from time to time? I suspect not many of us would deny this if really pressed by Jesus. But! The grace is on hand TODAY to repent and to take back the power of life and death in our tongues. To step up. To really love one another with the love God has first given us. This, we MUST do, if the world is to ever see a credible witness that Jesus is alive, that Jesus is Lord. If this seems like an impossibility to you, I suggest you get deeper into the presence of God where all things really are possible.

John 13:35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Family of Origin. Most of us still need transformation regarding our family of origin. Patterns and emotional systems we learned there are in many ways still being played out, for better or worse. For many of us, the actors change, but the same play is being shown over and over. I have a friend who counselled a couple with misbehaving kids to get radical gospel inner healing, not for the kids, but for the parents. When the parents changed, the kids changed.

Ephesians 4:25-27 25 ...Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. **26** And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, **27** for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

Anger isn’t sin. But not dealing with your anger quickly opens the door for the demonic to set up shop. Bitterness is satan’s agenda. Peace is the Lord’s. The human comes first, but (not dealt with) it gives a foothold to the demonic. This is a fascinating principle. Our human choices prepare rooms for God or demons.

Matthew 11:28-30 28 Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

Jesus' yoke is easy and his burden is light, so if yours isn't, you're carrying something he never gave you. Learning to live the different Kingdom way has far-reaching implications. Deep ones. Jesus does not simply answer our questions. He calls into question the assumptions underneath them. His way of seeing the world is counter to much that is so deeply embedded in our attitudes that we don't even recognize that it is driving us. Our burdens are often so heavy because we are taking responsibility for other people's choices...etc.

2 Questions in conflict:

- 1) *Is this conflict the result of my unhealth?* If so, take responsibility, refuse to blameshift, and get healthy.
- 2) *Is this conflict the result of my health?* If so, remain non-anxious, keep your love on, and stay the course.

"I want more of you, God!" "I want more of you, too." (God). We have been crying out to God for more of him, and the whole time he's also been yearning to get more of us. He most wants our hearts. You know, the real us. The us who avoids him in favor of serving him. The us who is allergic to taking responsibility for our wounds and fears and past. The us who is afraid of trials. He wants to get us to the place that we don't let anything outside of us ever determine what's inside of us. He wants us free. And we're only free when we're fully surrendered to Him. We say that. But the reality is walked out in individual yesses.