

The Power of a Relationship

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Introduction: God created man as a social being that must form relationships.

- A. God created man alone to make this very point. **(Gen 2:18-20)**
 - 1. Men often deny their need and think they are better alone.
 - 2. Relationships however are complex and need to be maintained.
- B. The most important relationship we have is God.
 - 1. God often uses human relationships to point out what He expects of us.
 - 2. We are the “bride of Christ.” **(Eph 5:30-32; Rev 21:2, 9)**
 - 3. What is the nature of this relationship? How should others relationships be handled in light of this one?

I. How does one sustain and maintain a relationship with the God of heaven?

- A. Man must listen and seek. **(Heb 11:6)**
 - 1. Man must get out of himself and look to another.
 - 2. Our God has promised to respond to those who “seek Him.”
 - 3. God through David often instructed the people about this. **(1 Chron 16:10-11)**
- B. Man must pursue those things that are attractive to God.
 - 1. What does God want of me? He wants me to be like Him. **(Hos 2:19-20)**
 - 2. Over and over God tells me that He wants my heart. **(Micah 6:8)**
 - 3. There are opposites of these things. God “abhors” them. **(Prov 6:16-19)**
- C. God expects man to build a heart based on His written word.
 - 1. This is a major test of our relationship to God. Many think affirming the relationship in words is all that is needed. **(Jn 8:31-32)**
 - 2. This word would develop character within a man. He will act on principle and not on a inward whim.
 - 3. What we learn here will be the basis of any good relationship.
 - 4. God’s covenant with man can be likened to the seriousness of our marriage covenant. God will not share us! **(2 Cor 11:1-4)**
- D. God expects to hear from us in worship.
 - 1. Why do I come before God? **(Psa 42:1-2)**
 - 2. This special focus on God allows us to be molded into His image.
 - 3. What happens if I stop worshipping?
 - 4. What happens to any relationship that is not maintained? **(1 Cor 11:27-30)**

II. Satan’s use of relationships

- A. The most powerful weapon in Satan’s arsenal is relationships. **(Mt 10:21-22; Jn 9:22)**
 - 1. The blind man had unassailable evidence and reasoning but the others were not operating on that basis!
 - 2. The most common argument I hear when people are honest enough to say it is: “These are my family/friends/church member and I will not go against them.”
- B. Consider the actions of Korah against Moses and Aaron. **(Num 16:1-3)**
 - 1. Korah had an ability to influence men and motivate them.
 - 2. He was of the tribe of Levi and had an important responsibility before God.

Instead he used those family ties and loyalty to create an uprising.

C. Korah appears to be appealing to a proper issue of principle. **(Num 16:3)**

1. Carnal people can quote scripture and appear to be righteous.
2. That mask will disappear when someone asks hard questions. Those who have been “trained” in this relationship know better than to ever do that.
3. I have seen that a “bad report” of another is easily believed by those whose loyalty is to a human relationship. **(Prov 18:8; 26:21)**
4. Once anger is kindled then they will fight to the end for their “just cause.” **(Prov 18:19)**
5. What does a spiritual man do? **(Prov 11:13)**

D. What did Korah fail to consider?

1. What did God think of Moses? **(Num 12:3; Mt 5:5)**
2. Why was Korah able to succeed in these false charges?
 - a. Because men in authority are easy targets. **(2 Pt 2:10-11, Jude 8-11)**
 - b. Because he operated behind the scenes until he had a faction.
Moses never had a fair hearing among Korah's followers.
 - c. He made it an issue of being “left out.” This approach some call “common sense.” **(2 Pt 2:19)**
3. The root of the issue was: "Who should be priest before God?" **(Num 16:9-10)**
4. How does a spiritual person handle being "left out?" **(Phil 2:3-4)**
5. Korah was infected by pride. Because of this he was not content with the blessings God had given him. **(Prov 6:16-18)**

III. The constant temptation towards wrong relationships

A. Once moved by a false loyalty to a relationship men find it difficult to escape it.

1. What did Korah’s followers do?
2. The leaders died. **(Num 16:28-35)**
3. Did the people learn from this? NO!
 - a. I cannot grasp the power that Satan had over these people. **(Num 16:41, 44)**
 - b. I have seen men with former good reputations get away with outrageous conduct. How can those be among the people of God.

B. Consider how Paul used this wrong sense of loyalty against his opponents.

(Acts 23:6-9)

1. This is a loyalty that is true in denominationalism today.
2. We can falsely have this kind of thinking towards a local church.

IV. There is a proper place for good relationships among Christians

A. When God is first we will pursue only those things that help us go to heaven.

1. Ask Peter about Paul’s love for him. **(Gal 2:11-13)**
2. Are you a real friend and brother?

B. Our needs of love will be met by those who love God. **(1 Cor 13:4-7)**

Conclusion: Where is your loyalty?

- A. God will test us.
- B. Will you pass the test?

The Power of a Relationship by Larry Rouse

God created man to be a social creature. Because of this everyone has a God-given need to form relationships with others. "And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him. **(Gen 2:18)**" God let Adam first see his need for companionship and then responded by creating Eve **(Gen 2:19-23)**. Today there are many, because of their immaturity or because of their past hurts, that have tried to deny this need and live apart from others. All who take this path will live a lonely and painful life.

Our need for a relationship is also central in God's drawing us to Him. God's care, His understanding, His wanting to listen and communicate with us and His willingness to know and meet our real needs are revealed in the scriptures. "How precious *is* Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings" **(Psa 36:7)**.

The real focus of our faith is found in coming to "know God." "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" **(Jn 17:3)**. When we do this, we will slowly be changed to be like Him. Those who "walk with God" will find their lives transformed and filled.

Our adversary, Satan, will not sit idly by without trying to destroy this relationship by offering substitutes. I believe this is Satan's most powerful weapon. As Christians, we need to look carefully at which relationship is the most important to us, that of God or that of other men. From doctrinal issues, to the use of our time and our lives, our priorities in relationships will be seen. May we always stand with Paul as he wrote: "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ" **(Gal 1:10)**.

The Example of Korah

Over the years I have seen men do things that made no sense whatsoever, until I examined their relationships. One of the more stunning examples in the Bible of how a relationship could influence others is found in the rebellion of Korah. Korah led a very "effective" rebellion against Moses. He used his relationship with "men of renown" to sway a majority of people to claim Moses and Aaron had cheated them by biding upon them their "traditional" view of the unique work of the priesthood. "They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "*You take* too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation *is* holy, every one of them, and the LORD *is* among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" **(Num 16:3)**.

Once the discussion turned from the revealed will of God to man's sense of "fairness" then Satan was able to use all of the tools in his arsenal. No doubt that these leaders of the various families had time to spread their anger in private meetings about the "legalism" of Moses and Aaron in their insistence that only priests could be used in the offering of incense in worship to God. Anger is an effective tool in shutting down the mind and inciting men to "mob action." "A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions *are* like the bars of a castle" **(Prov 18:19)**.

Most of those in the wilderness did not know God, and, as a result, they failed to reasonably look to see how God had displayed His authority so that they could clearly know His will. From the signs given to Pharaoh in the freeing of the people, to the parting of the Red Sea and ultimately in the delivering of the 10 commandments, God had shown to Israel over and over again that Moses was His spokesman. Many of the people, however, because of their relationships, were not going to accept this truth.

The Destruction of Korah and his Associates

The end of Korah and his fellow troublemakers was predicable. After several appeals to reason, God made a powerful display of His wrath upon Korah's new approach to worship. Imagine watching this scene as "the ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly" (**Num 16:31-33**).

The Stunning Response of the People

After seeing this incredible display of the direct wrath of God, any rational man would assume that the people would now understand God's way and the role that Moses played as God's servant. Here is where we see the diabolical power of relationships in the hands of Satan. The poison had already been effectively delivered by Korah in destroying the respect the people should have had for Moses. Because these falsehoods had been delivered by ungodly men that the people had come to trust and love but were now dead, these people are now ready to fight Moses, God and anything else that got in their way of their anger. "On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the LORD" (**Num 16:41**). Did Moses open up the earth and cause these men to be swallowed up? No, but these people clearly wanted the relationship with these ungodly men over a relationship with God. All of these men died in the wilderness and never entered the Promised Land.

The Battle Before Us Today

I have seen the rebellion of Korah replayed many times in my life. As churches are swept away by apostasy, most "arguments" consist of social pressure and ridicule rather than an open study before the God that we should fully trust. Great preachers, influential men and past "great" relationships are held before us as "proof" that we are "traditionalists" or "legalists" and therefore should line up with the majority. Others will follow their children in rebellion by "restudying" the subject of divorce and remarriage after their offspring needed to justify a new marriage that was contrary to God's teachings. Others will blindly follow editors of gospel papers, or elders of local churches out of a loyalty to a relationship and in opposition to the plain teachings of God's word.

The Path Less Traveled

Build your faith upon God. Come to know His will and turn away from those who would use social pressure to bring you into bondage to men. While you may lose relationships, you will never be alone. Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. ²They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me" (**Jn 16:1-3**) Later in the same chapter Jesus pointed to His future example: "Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. (**Jn 16:32-33**)"

Let us draw near to our God that will never leave us alone!