

Wow! The Bible is INCREDIBLE! Love y'all.

MYESE!

Part 34: Elevate Your Life!

Texts:

Ephesians 2:6 (NIV) – “***God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.***”

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) - “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

Genesis 34:1-10 (NIV) - “Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. [2] When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and raped her. [3] His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. [4] And Shechem said to his father Hamor, “Get me this girl as my wife.” [5] When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he did nothing about it until they came home. [6] Then Shechem’s father Hamor went out to talk with Jacob. [7] Meanwhile, Jacob’s sons had come in from the fields as soon as they heard what had happened. They were shocked and furious, because Shechem had done an outrageous thing in Israel by sleeping with Jacob’s daughter---a thing that should not be done. [8] But Hamor said to them, “My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife. [9] Intermarry with us; give us your daughters and take our daughters for yourselves. [10] You can settle among us; the land is open to you. Live in it, trade in it, and acquire property in it.”

Continuing our series on "Soul Detox", today we shall speak on:

Toxic Relationships: When It's This Wrong, It's Just Not Right!

A. One of the greatest sources of pain is toxic relationships. Today, I want to help you deal with difficult people and learn ways to prevent you from being a difficult person for someone else.

1. Toxic relationships can hurt, disappoint, wound, and even damage our faith if we never learn to deal with them.
2. You can't always restrain a person from acting as they do, but you **can** develop a strategy to help you handle a situation, right? (See funny commercial about two antelopes wearing night vision goggles <http://youtu.be/7m0VnzPFxew>).
3. **Joke:** The Panther and the German Shepherd Dog

A German Shepherd lost his way in the forest and became very hungry, tired and afraid. Sure enough, a panther found him in this condition and began to stalk him.

Quickly, the German Shepherd realized he was no match for the panther and began to think, "What must I do?" Knowing he could never outrun the panther, he spied some decaying animal bones on the ground and began to gather them into a heap. Crouching on the ground with his back to the panther, just as the wild beast was about to spring, the German Shepherd growled, smacked his lips and shouted, "Boy, this panther I'm eating is really tasty. But I'm still hungry. Sure wish I had another one!"

Hearing those frightening words, the panther quickly backed up and fled. A squirrel that lived nearby had been terrified of the panther for years. Surely this was his golden opportunity to make friends with the panther, so he bravely reported, "That dog didn't really eat a panther. He was

deceiving you. If you'll go back with me, that dog can be a tasty meal—and then, you and I can be friends!"

Climbing on the panther's back, the two crept back. When the German Shepherd saw them returning, he figured out what was happening.

Crouching near the pile of bones with his back to the panther, he waited. Just as the panther was about to spring, the dog growled and said, "Man, I'm sure hungry! Where is that squirrel? I wonder what is taking him so long? He was supposed to find another panther and bring him here for me to eat!"

4. This message is for those who have a lion in their Serengeti or a panther in their forest—or, perhaps that's your position in another person's life!

- B. This passage in Genesis portrays the frightening story of Jacob's daughter, Dinah, being savagely attacked and defiled.
 1. For years, this story has troubled me. Did you notice anything unusual in Jacob's response? I'm thinking every father in this room would agree that something's wrong!
 2. Having a daughter and four granddaughters of my own, I know how concerned a father is about protecting his daughters. You would think Jacob would have immediately sought to avenge this wrong. But instead, he begins to make wedding plans for Dinah and the man who had forcefully defiled her! Great son-in-law to be, right? Even worse, verse 19 says that this guy was the most honorable member of his entire family. Some family Jacob's clan was planning to join!
 - a. **Genesis 34:19b (NKJV)** - "He was more honorable than all the household of his father."
 3. Understandably, Jacob's sons wanted justice. But their father was more concerned about not upsetting the people of the land than avenging his daughter of this great injustice!

4. Upon observing their father's response, the sons were shocked by this outrage. But Jacob was adamant about covering up what had happened. Does that attitude seem normal to you?
5. Consequently, Jacob's sons devised a way to obtain justice for their sister. According to God's requirement that every male among Abraham's descendants be circumcised, before consenting to this marriage, the perpetrator of this crime, his family, and every male in the entire clan must be circumcised. Obediently, they all agreed to do so.
6. While all the men of the area were still recovering, two of Jacob's sons, led by Simeon and Levi, suddenly attacked and killed them all.
7. Jacob was so terrified and upset, notice his response:
 - a. **Genesis 34:30-31 (NIV)** - "Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me obnoxious to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed." But they replied, "Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?"

- C. Such sound wisdom the Bible portrays! Don't ever think for a moment that this Book is outdated or irrelevant!
1. Scripture does not record the lives of perfect people who never made a mistake. Biblical characters struggled, just like you and me.
 2. As mentioned before, everyone has a story. We have all been through traumatic situations. Our stories may not be as extreme as this one, but we have all had to deal with less than ideal relationships.
 3. Our stories may have originated among others we know, such as: friends, companions, co-workers, culture, or family.

- D. We have already learned that people become toxic from their own wounds. What we might not have discovered is that when someone is severely wounded, wrong people and wrong things suddenly become much more significant.

1. On the other hand, those who ***really*** matter, such as: mom, dad, husband, wife, children, and family—are often overlooked. Those they feel sure of are often taken for granted.
2. This is why a hurting person desperately needs the approval of others. Gaining approval from the wrong people and the wrong crowd becomes most important—even though it upsets those they love the most.
3. Jacob was more concerned about pleasing and not upsetting the Canaanites, regardless of how they had treated his own daughter!

E. **Key point:** When you are involved in a toxic relationship and you want to fix the problem, the best way is to look within YOURSELF—not the person causing the problem.

1. Natasha recently taught how this works from Hebrews 12:14-17. We must refuse to allow the wrongs done to us to make us bitter so that we, in turn, defile those with whom we must interact.
 - a. **Hebrews 12:14-17 (NKJV)** - "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: [15] looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; [16] lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. [17] For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears."
 - b. The word 'defile' means: to contaminate or spoil; to taint.
2. Our wounds can set us up to taint or contaminate our relations with others and make them toxic.

F. Understanding is the key to fixing a problem.

1. **Hebrews 12:14** says, "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."

- a. A synonym for 'holiness' is *wholeness*.
2. Improper relationships are usually based on a self-perception of inadequacy or need. In other words, I "need this relationship" to make me whole.
3. Instead, the Book of Hebrews tells us to diligently look toward the grace of God.
4. If our perception of being needy points us to God and to realize how imperfect we are and how much we need Him, it's a good thing! It could even result in the saving of our soul.
5. However, when we see ourselves as needy and then use another person to complete us, that is **not** good! It could result in a toxic relationship.

G. How a relationship can become toxic:

1. The person who feels inadequate will project themselves as needy and unworthy.
2. Because that person projects these feelings, other people unconsciously accept the assessment of who they are—and then treat them that way.
3. This validates their feelings of being unworthy or inadequate—and the cycle is completed.
4. Their feelings of bitterness "defile" or corrupt many.
5. Relationships become defiled and corrupted by what a person is projecting.
6. The root becomes a tree. The tree produces fruit, and the fruit becomes a forest.

H. There are 12 major toxic personalities you must learn to deal with—but don't waste a lot of time or energy on these people. Unless they learn to deal with their own issues, it's useless trying to change them.

1. **The "Volcano."** This person is filled with anger just beneath the surface. Sooner or later their volcano will blow, spewing hot lava all over you. Compared to what's actually happening, their rage is always out of

proportion. Rather than tip-toeing on eggshells, just walk away from them.

2. **The "Charmer."** Otherwise known as a sociopath, this person might appear attractive and know all the right things to say. But their whole reason for being nice is to con their way into getting what they want. With a smile on their face, they cheat, steal, manipulate and exploit. They will break as many rules as they can get away with, but always with great finesse and never an ounce of remorse.
3. **The "Narcissist."** This person values themselves above everyone else. While they may seem to be a nice person, eventually you'll realize that only their needs and feelings matter. When you need their support, they will let you down and angrily attack if their needs are not being met.
4. **The "Drama Queen."** This person demands to be the center of attention, even if it means creating a crisis to do so. Either they're in trouble, demanding to be rescued, or they're making problems for those closest to them. At times, they will pit one person against another—and then sit back and enjoy the show!
5. **The "Cynic."** This angry, bitter individual sees the bad in everything, but their attitude is really a psychological defense against feelings of vulnerability. Unconsciously, they have chosen to use negativity and pessimism to prevent being hurt by others. The problem is, their rotten attitude is harmful to everyone they meet.
6. **The "Complainier."** Everyone else is blamed for what's going wrong in their life. Because they take no responsibility for their bad choices, they continue to repeat their mistakes, ad infinitum. Those nearby are always held responsible for their suffering.
7. **The "Peacock."** Incapable of genuine affection, this person is a social climber and name-dropper who only sees you as the next rung on their ladder to success. They'll stop at nothing to gain the money, power and prestige they long for. Social interactions are nothing more than strategies designed to give greater access to the lifestyle they crave.

8. **The "Wild Child."** This is the rebel, the rule-breaker, the non-conformist. At first glance, they may seem exciting. But you'll quickly see that their reckless disregard for their own and everyone else's property is hurtful and unattractive. They have grand ideas and plans, but fail to follow through, resulting in social and financial disaster.
10. **The "Lost Boy."** Like a modern-day Peter Pan, this person refuses to grow up. Instead, they manipulate friends and loved ones into caring for them emotionally and financially. Should they choose, this perpetual child could actually grow up. However, due to their lack of responsibility, they will remain a burden on someone—forever.
11. **The "Peacekeeper."** Jesus blessed the “peacemakers”—not the peacekeepers. This person tries to cover over and keep everything quiet, regardless of how many lives may be wounded or destroyed. Similar to Jacob's disturbing attitude toward his daughter's predicament, we “must not let the neighbors know!” This attitude is based on shame.
12. **The "Entertainer."** When the tension gets out of hand, this person tries to calm the situation by entertaining everyone. To prevent a fight from breaking out, they seek to make everyone laugh.

I. What is the solution for eliminating toxic relationships?

1. Follow peace with ALL men.
 - a. **Hebrews 12:14-17 (NKJV)** - “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:”
2. Pursue holiness or *completeness* in Christ. Look to the grace of God!
 - a. **Hebrews 12:16 (NKJV)** - “Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God;”
3. God's grace has been declared as the only remedy, the only viable solution for our problems. Why is His grace so amazing? It provides the perfect substitute for our inadequacies and shortcomings.
 - a. **Colossians 2:10 (NKJV)** - “and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”

- b. The word “complete” means: to be perfect; to be filled up; to cram!
- 4. We must forgive those who have wronged us.
 - a. **Hebrews 12:15 (NKJV)** - “lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble.”
- 5. Nelson Mandela said, “Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.”