

**Fool Proofing Your Life:  
Wisdom to navigate and avoid destructive relationships  
Linda Huffman**

Karla Worley says: “On our journey, we bring with us emotional baggage—the hurts, fears, expectations and truths with which we have papered the walls of our hearts over a lifetime. This baggage affects our ability to adapt to change, our behavior in response to conflict, our capacity to give and receive love.”

(Ed Welch) As people pleasers we will allow others to treat us hurtfully and destructively because our own comfort and worth is more important than godliness. If we are people lovers we will be willing to confront those who are relating in ungodly ways.

**Galatians 1:10; Prov. 29:25; Prov. 1:7**

A comparison of two relationships:

Sinners in a fallen world.

**Eph 4:17-32**

Paul Tripp (Relationships: A mess worth making) God knows our tendency toward these sins:

- self indulgence vs. 19-24, deceit vs. 25, anger vs. 26-27, selfishness vs. 28, unhelpful communications vs. 29-30, division vs. 31 & unforgiveness vs. 32.

God also gives us the power to live differently because of the gospel:

- God-direction vs. 19-24, truthfulness vs. 25, gentleness, patience & love vs. 26-27, wholesome communication vs. 29-30, unity vs. 31, forgiveness vs. 32.

Idols of our hearts: what we worship affects how we live.

**The proverbial picture of wisdom:**

The wise...

- Are teachable and they learn their lessons well. Prov. 3:13-17; 9:8-9; 10:8 & 14; 13:1
- Listen to advice and rebuke. Prov. 4:5-10; 12:15; 19:20; 21:11
- Speak & act carefully. Prov. 12:18; 13:16; 14:3; 16:21; 29:8
- Are godly in their choices & influence. Prov. 10:23; 13:20; 14:8; 15:20; 16:21; 23:24; Eccl. 8:5; Eccl. 10:2
- Turn from evil & are humble. Prov. 11:2; 14:6, 16 & 33; Eccl. 2:14
- Reap a good harvest. Prov. 3:21-24 & 35; 9:10-11; 14:24; 21:20; 24:3; 28:6; Eccl. 8:1 & 5

**The proverbial picture of foolishness:**

The foolish ...

- Are unteachable. Prov. 15:20; 23:9; 24:7; 26:28
- Do not listen to advice or rebuke. Prov. 9:7-8; 12:15; 13:1; 14:7; 15:5; 17:10; 18:2
- Speak and act destructively. Prov. 9:7-8; 10:8, 14 & 18; 12:16-18; 13:20; 14:16; 18:6; 29:8-9; Eccl. 10:2 & 12
- Are ungodly in their choices and influence. Prov. 10:23; 13:16; 14:8, 16 & 24; 21:20; 26:5
- Reap destruction. Prov. 3:35; 10:8; 11:2 & 29; 14:13; 26:12; 29:9;

Luke 6:45-46 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. \\\

### **Questions about your relationships:**

1. Is the relationship mutual, or is one person controlling it, or one person doing all the work?
2. Are you fed and refreshed as a result of the relationship or drained and exhausted?
3. Do you fear any part of the person or relationship?
4. How are boundaries respected (or not in the relationship)? Does “no” or “not now” stick?
5. Is distance or space acceptable?
6. Do you feel valued in the relationship?
7. Do you feel respected (the condition of being esteemed or honored) or disrespected to regard or treat without respect; regard or treat with contempt, disregard, irreverence or rudeness.
8. Do you feel used or abused?
9. Is there clarity or confusion and chaos?
10. Is there reliability and integrity in the relationship? Is there regular disregard for feelings, needs or concerns of others?
11. Is high drama or intensity the norm or the exception?
12. Are truth and honesty acceptable? Do you have to over-weigh your words in fear of having them twisted or used against you?
13. Is responsibility for wrong or sin acknowledged?
14. Is there forgiveness and brokenness? Does one person do most of the apologizing or forgiving?
15. Is there blame in the relationship?
16. Can there be disagreement?
17. Is there excessive anger or verbal abuse?
18. Is there any punishment or retaliation in the relationship?
19. Are needs met in this relationship? Are the needs met realistic?
20. Am I a better person as a result of this relationship? Is the other person better as a result?

**The question we all need to ask about our relationships is this: Do I look more like Christ as a result of this relationship?**

### **When do we avoid and when do we navigate?**

Scripture advises us to stay away from certain kinds of people because they are destructive. As adults we are often willing to give great advice to our teens, but do we heed it ourselves?

**Pro 1:10-16 ; Pro 14:7; Pro 22:24-25.**

**1Cor 15:33** Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."

Leslie Vernick: Jesus called us to be peacemakers not peacekeepers who pretend all is well in order to maintain the illusion of peace.

**Rom 12:18—14:19:** biblical peace does not mean an absence of conflict but a genuine state of harmony.

**Step back from the relationship** for a time to see things more clearly.

1. **Look at your own heart truthfully.**
  - What is your area of bondage? Comfort? Approval? Fear? What keeps you silent or fearful? Be honest. Repent. Tripp-“grace of enablement,”-God has given us the ability through His power to live the way he calls us to. **Eph 3:20** The negative aspect of enabling is when we give others the power, permission or means to control our lives.

- Identify the lies behind it—I need this person to be happy; this person is more powerful than I am; I deserve to be treated like this, etc.
  - Replace the lies—No person can make me happy—my contentment/worth are found in Christ alone. I am of great value to God and don't deserve to be treated like this.
  - Take responsibility for your sin and failures in the relationship.
2. **Look at the relationship truthfully.**
- How does the relationship line up biblically?
  - Mourn the loss of the “desired” relationship and grab hold of what is. When what we hope for doesn't happen we get bitter, hurt, disappointed, frustrated. Insanity—doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. (Expectations in life and relationships aren't necessarily bad, they become a problem when first, the expectations become an idol—and secondly when they keep us from accepting reality. Letting go of our desires and wants is painful-like grieving a death. It is healthy to accept reality and truth over fantasy.
  - Seek wise counsel to gain a clearer picture of the relationship.
  - Paul advises us to distance ourselves from people who are continually destructive. **1Co 5:11**
  - Look realistically at how the relationship has affected you. Destructive relationships make you will feel sick physically, emotionally and spiritually.

**How unhealthy/destructive relationships affect us:**

Spiritually: Relationship with God suffers—God becomes small compared to the destruction.

Physically: stress causes heart, stomach, immune, sleep problems

Emotionally: Thinking becomes cloudy, confused, twists our perspective of ourselves and others

Relationally: One destructive relationship affects all our other relationships

3. **Fight for the relationship.**

- Pursue righteousness, godliness, peace (**1Ti 6:11**) “Gift of consequences”- Seeking genuine peace between 2 individuals may require tough action-consequences, especially when one party continues to be blind, unresponsive or unrepentant. **Prov. 27:6**
- Pray: Ask God for clarity and wisdom. Pray **Eph 6:10-18, Isaiah 61, Romans 12: 14-21.**
- Prepare—be proactive not reactive. Know your own buttons and weaknesses. How can you respond differently or avoid those places? **Prov. 12:18, Eccl. 3:8.** God calls us to speak up, not be tolerant of sin. **Mt 18:5, Luke 17:3** Passivity is detrimental when others lie to you, ignore you, treat you disrespectfully, or use you.
- **Practice-write down what you want to say, pray over them, rewrite them. Don't be sidetracked.**
- **Lovingly confront.** CS Lewis—Love is more stern and splendid than mere kindness. **Mt. 18 - confront one on one first, and if that is not fruitful, to take others. Stand up for righteousness, goodness, truth and peace”—we are living out the gospel!!**
- **Seek a mutually good time to meet.**
- **State facts clearly, lovingly. Watch body language and tone of voice. State boundaries.**
- **Listen to the response. Listen to other person's perspective. Does it have to do with the hurt they caused others and a willingness to do what it takes or are they more interested in backing you down and excusing what happened? Don't debate or be talked out of concerns, continue to restate.**
- Look for the fruit of genuine repentance. **2Co 7:10** For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.
- Repentance means to think differently, to reform, to reverse. “Godly grief” means an intense sorrow; “worldly grief” means a decoration or an adorning, which is very superficial. The response will determine the fate of the relationship—life or death.
- Continue to seek the good of the other person. Breaking relationships may be necessary, but we can still act in the interest of the other thru prayer, not seeking revenge, retaliation or gossiping. By acting in their best interest we can invite them into repentance and relationship. **Romans 2:4**

**If there is genuine repentance or Godly sorrow:** Consistent change over time=reconciliation. Test to see what happens if you don't give them what they want. **Mat 3:8** Continue to stand firm on truth and on boundaries.

**Lack of repentance or worldly sorrow:**

**Mt 18** says when people are blind to their sin against you, enlist the help of others. They will try to pull you back into old routine. Stay strong and resolute.

**Pro 29:1; 1 Cor. 5:9-11, 2 Thes 3:6, 14-15** Paul encourages us to distance ourselves from other believers who are sinning and refusing correction:

**Continue your own healing**

**Heb 12:1-3** Strip off things that weigh us down-bitterness, anger, need for revenge--& keep our eyes on Jesus.

**John 5:6** Do you want to get well?

- Let go of unrealistic expectations.
- Let go of negative emotions- Forgiveness comes in here. **1Pe 2:21-23**
- Let go of shame and self hatred. Work thru forgiveness. **Eph 4:26-31**
- Let go of lies. Detect the lies and replace them with truth. **Romans 12:1-2**
- **Php 2:12-13** work out your own salvation(this is physical, emotional & spiritual)
- Develop a good support system.

**The result of walking in healing is this: Heb 12:11-15**

**Resources:**

The Emotionally Destructive Relationship: Leslie Vernick Harvest House, 2007

Broken-Down House: Paul David Tripp: Shepherd Press, 2009

Safe People: Dr. Henry Cloud, Dr. John Townsend, Zondervan, 1995

Idols of the Heart: Elyse Fitzpatrick P & R Publishing, 2001

Relationships: A mess worth making: Tim Lane, Paul Tripp, New Growth Press, 2008

When People are Big and God is Small: Edward Welch, P & R Publishing, 1997

Who I am...

I am currently a woman of God living in a world that is not my home. I long for what will be yet stay present in the reality of what is in this broken world. Craig and I live with our two dogs Charger and Zoey, two cats Peaches and Patches, who my friend Beth said I should have named Kitty and Lydia from our favorite movie *Pride & Prejudice*. I have been Women's Minister at Summit Community Church in O'Fallon Mo for 10 years. Much of what I do is help women understand the "what is" and the "what is not yet" of the life of a follower of Christ. My job entails much more than women, because when you touch women, you touch everyone and everything in their world. I have a master's in counseling from Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, which I utilize hourly in my job and in my life. I love to bead, shop, watch movies, do lunch, spend time at our lake home in Lake of the Ozarks, MO and come to Phoenix to hang out with my "Jonathan" friend Beth Hancock. I have three grown step children and seven grandchildren we love to visit and spoil. Every day God shows me that the cost of following Him is worth it.

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