

## Are My Relationships Stunting My Growth?

What you can relate to is in a relationship with you. Think about when you were a young child, as far back as you can remember. You had friends or young family members that you loved to see coming and there were the ones that you hated to see. Maybe, you were 4 years old, and you loved playing with the neighbor's son. He always had creative ways to get into mischief, and this was right up your alley. A new neighbor moves in who has a son that is the same age as the two of you. But, he's not so mischievous. He likes coloring books and watching movies, but chasing girls with frogs just isn't his thing. Now, as a child, you probably told him face to face that you didn't like him and then skipped along to find your mischievous buddy. Why? Was he bad? No. You couldn't relate to him; therefore, you didn't want to have a relationship with him.

Now, let's take a beeline back into today. As we grew older, we begin to define people as 'good' or 'bad' according to how they related or did not relate to us. If someone has nothing in common with us, the natural man will disregard, write-off and disassociate from the man whom he views as 'strange.' Just like that little boy! But, man does something worst. Man, often times, wants to destroy or imprison anything or anyone that goes outside of his own 'norm.' Because the average man likes to form relationships with either people that he can relate to or people that he hopes to relate to someday. Every living person will either change his or her atmosphere or be changed by his or her atmosphere. And this is where 'relationships' come in.

If you have ever had a potted tree, you would know that the tree could only grow so much in that pot. As the tree grows, you know to put in it a larger pot, give it more water and eventually, if you want it to grow to its maximum height, you'll plant it outside. If you want it to remain an indoor plant, you'll keep changing the pots until it grows to the height that you want it to. After that, you won't change its pot anymore, but instead, you'll water it as it is.

Or what about fish? You can place fish in an aquarium and fish that normally grow to be large fish, won't grow to their capacity because of the enclosure that they are in. Its ability to adapt helps it to stay alive.

The plant had to relate to its pot, just as the fish had to relate to its aquarium.

Now, let's talk about you. Did you know that every relationship that you are in will either help you to grow or stunt your growth? This is because God created us as creatures of change. In the natural, we normally reach our maximum height in the 16-18 year old age range. But, in the spirit, we can never stop growing, because God's knowledge is infinite and His wisdom has no ends.

Your environment is your pot or aquarium. Your environment is not the natural things that you see

around you, but your environment is the people and situations that you allow around you. These relationships will shape you and determine not just how tall you grow, but in what direction you grow in. Let's go back to the potted plant. Some potted plants, after they have grown to their maximum height, will change their direction and grow downward, because there is no more room 'up' for them to go. But, there is plenty of room 'down.'

Which direction are you growing in? Again, whatever and whoever is in a relationship with you is what and who you can relate to. And if you find that what you can relate to or who you can relate to is inside of sin, then you have chosen to be like that potted plant. Your height has been maximized, and the only direction that you can grow in is downward.

I know. You love your family and friends. They've been there for you, and you've been there for them. And the world taught you that the family relationships and friendships were supposed to remain until the ends of time. But, what did Jesus teach you?

Mark 3:31-35 reads: "There came then His brothers and His mother, and, standing outside, sent unto Him, calling Him. And the multitude sat about Him, and they said unto Him, Behold, your mother and your brothers outside seek for you. And He answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brothers? And He looked round about on them who sat about Him, and said, Behold my mother and my brothers! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

But, wait! You've got friends and family who do not do the will of God! In addition, you have friends and family members that are like potted plants. They have placed their roots in somebody's church and they stayed there. They never took the time to grow higher in knowledge because somebody told them that being 'saved' was being parked in a building and saying 'amen.' After service, they go right back to their sinful ways and sinful relationships. Because they can relate to sin and sinners! They are still rooted in the wrong things, so therefore, the fruit that is produced in their lives is wicked. But, tell them that and you've got a fight on your hands! Because they've got a pot to live in and somebody watering them!

And then, there is the sectioned off church. Go into some of these churches, and many times, what you will find is cliques and cliquish mentalities. There are the slanderers that tend to flock together and talk about every woman whose skirt was more than an inch above the knee or whose shirt was a little too revealing for their taste. There are the gossipers who know everyone's business, but their own. There are the mockers that mock the people of God. They proudly note how Sister Jefferson fell out last Sunday, even laughing as they imitate the fall before one another. There are the semi-worldly that praise the Lord in church, but hate anything and anyone who reeks holiness. They are usually the mockers, gossipers and slanderers audience. They laugh and never rebuke, because it makes them feel self-righteous and justified. And then there are the ones who want more of God, no matter where they stand in Him. What you see is a display of people coming together who can relate to one another.

But, let's say that you are a gossip, and you want more of Christ. You want to stop gossiping, but it's almost impossible with the group you hang around. What should you do? Change your pot! None of us are perfect, but again, either you are affecting your atmosphere or your atmosphere is affecting you. You owe no man anything, but to love them!!! "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." (Romans 13:8) You have to come out of the gossiping section and move on over to the holy section!

We keep staying in relationships trying to pay invisible debts to people that we have allowed them to place on our lives or debts that we have created in our own ignorance. Jesus paid the price, so be free! You have to know when it's time to grow. When it's time to grow, it's time to go. You can choose to stay in your relationships, never knowing what it is to grow to the height that you could have reached, but know this: Anytime you choose to fulfill the will of man for yourself and not the will of God for yourself; you have chosen an idol.

### **Romantic Relationships**

Again, think of yourself as that potted plant. Your relationship will determine how tall you get. Here's a fact. A 6 month-old puppy has not yet reached its maximum height, but a dog is usually done growing by the time it is one-year-old. Breeders will tell you that if you intend to breed a female puppy, you need to keep her from mating until she is a year-old. If you allow her to mate at six months old, she will not reach her full height, but her growth will be stunted, and she runs the risk of miscarrying her children or delivering a sickly litter.

***Dear woman of God.*** God has called you to a specific height in Him. But, the average woman will never know who she really is because she'll go off and be in relationships that God never called her to. Her growth is stunted and she'll miscarry her purpose. This is when you see women of God in bar brawls or seated amongst gossipers. Because they have to stay a certain height to relate to the man whom they have chosen to give themselves to. And many come out of one relationship and jump into another one, never understanding that God's will was to grow them up so that the man He anointed to be her husband could cover her properly and she could relate to him! But, just like Israel, she wanted a king, when God wanted to be her king. Consequentially, God let her have a Saul and Saul loved her until he found out that she was anointed.

***Dear man of God.*** God called you to a specific height in Him. But, two things have stunted your growth since the beginning of time. Romantic relationships and friendships. Like David, you want a woman who belongs to someone else. She has the souls of other men in her. You're attracted to 'seasoned' women, not knowing you were supposed to be the only 'seasoning' that your wife has ever known. So, you become daddies to children that you are not around to raise. A man of God is called to lead, feed and rear his sheep. Like Samson, you are attracted to Delilahs, who are beautiful on the exterior, but wicked on the inside. You have been blinded by your enemy because you have chosen to walk by sight and not by faith, when it is supposed to be the other way around. And many of you never reach your maximum height in God because you live in this aquarium, swimming around with friends

who are like yourself, chasing women who are just like you...in captivity. When God gives you the opportunity to free yourself, you run back to your tank because you're fed there with just enough to keep you alive. You've gotten comfortable in your captivity.

### **How It's Supposed to Be**

Come out of Egypt, people of God. Every relationship that you are in is either stunting you or allowing you to grow. You already know what that relationship is doing to you, whether you choose to acknowledge the truth in your heart or to continue to feed on the lies that fear feeds you.

You want to grow outside of what you know? Change your pot! Get into some soil that you cannot relate to, but you want to relate to and when you get too big for that pot, it's time for another change! Stop trying to be in relationships with people that you can relate to or you'll never grow past where you are right now. Think like an intern. An intern has just graduated from college and now takes supervised training from doctors. Why? Because that intern's goal is to be a doctor. However, once he or she becomes a doctor, he or she will not train under that doctor anymore unless that doctor has more to teach them.

Where are you doing your internship at? Who is in your circle? Elisha got it right! He chose Elijah as his mentor! Too many of you keep eating from the wrong tables, and that's why you are filled with nonsense. When it's time to grow, it's time to go!

Lastly, when you reach the height that you have set out to reach, don't 'pot' yourself there. It's time to set new goals for new heights. Some of y'all get mad at a millionaire that keeps trying to get richer, but what you don't understand is that if he doesn't grow his wealth, he'll shrink his wealth. So, he has to continue to form relationships that benefit him and not subtract from him.

### **Who's depleting you?**

Is it time for you to grow? It's time for you to go!