

Breaking Free From Toxic Relationships

Jeremiah 17:9-11

I want to talk today about something that eats away at people's lives, their joy, and their faith. It's not just sin out in the world—it's toxic relationships. I'm talking about people who refuse to change, who live in sin, who drain everyone around them, and who put their burdens on you while doing nothing themselves.

We've all seen it. They smoke, they drink, they won't work, they waste money, they live lazy—and then they show up at the church door wanting you to bail them out. And if you don't, they call you all kinds of names and spread lies about you.

If you do help them, they get what they want and disappear until they need something again. They're gone until they need something again. You don't see them in church unless they want something from you. You need see them giving to anyone else—never helping anyone else. But the moment they hit another crisis, here they come—back again.

And when you say "No" you're suddenly the bad guy. Suddenly you aren't the loving Christian. Suddenly they try to guilt trip you for not giving in.

The Bible has a lot to say about toxic relationships. God doesn't want His people dragged down by those who refuse to walk with Him. And let me be clear, if you are here really trying to get things right, to worship God, and to do better – I am not speaking of you today. I'm trying to help you to get the other toxic relationships out of your life.

Let's see what Scripture says.

Old Testament Warnings About Toxic Relationships

Samson and Delilah (Judges 16)

""Judges 16:19

And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.""

- Samson had great strength from the Lord, but he got tangled up in a toxic relationship with Delilah.
- She used manipulation and betrayal, all while acting like she loved him.
- That's what toxic people do—they pretend they care while they're cutting off the source of your strength.

And listen, this type of relationship is rampant in this world today. We have to fix this. Actually care about others instead of only yourself. If someone is working hard on something, instead of sitting back and watching, say: "Hey, why don't you go rest and let me finish that for you."

Do you know what the end result was for Samson and Delilah? A toxic relationship led to death and destruction.

Amnon and Jonadab (2 Samuel 13)

""2 Samuel 13:3

But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man.""

- Amnon wanted something wicked, and Jonadab—the “subtle friend”—encouraged him.
- Some friends are not really friends. They're sly, manipulate you, and push you deeper into sin.
- That friendship destroyed Amnon's life and caused violence in David's household for a long time.

Amnon destroyed a young lady, caused hatred, and death. A family was ripped apart. Amnon dead. Tamar desolate. Absalom became a murderer and ended up dead himself. And all this led to more trouble with the relationships of others. When you're toxic, you hurt people beyond what you can imagine. It's time to fix that.

Israel Complaining in the Wilderness (Numbers 11)

""Numbers 11:4-5

And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick.""

- God delivered Israel, but toxic complainers poisoned the camp with negativity.
- They were always dragging the nation backward to Egypt.
- Toxic people will always remind you of Egypt—they never want the Promised Land, just the old sinful life.

They don't want to get away from the sin. They want to pull you back into the sin.

Examples of Toxic Relationships

Here's an example. Not working is sin. Being lazy is sin. Complaining is sin. Stop the complaining as this is toxic to everyone. Instead, get to work on doing things the right way. For example, if you are in your 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's and you aren't working—something is wrong.

And you say: "But the government pays me." Did you know who the government is getting the money from? They don't have a magic money tree. They get the money from the people: the workers. So you don't get to sit there all day and do nothing. That's toxic.

Why is that toxic? Because you're taking from others without doing anything to earn it. You're taking others down. This country is going down. Imagine a huge animal and then you have all these leeches that cover that huge animal and slowly drain that animal of its blood and its life. This is what a toxic relationship does.

Here's another example. There are people out there who want to sue others for free money. They want to get hit by a car so they can sue. And they say: "The insurance company has to pay so it's okay." Actually, the insurance company isn't paying anything in reality.

Do you know whose paying for it? The laws are setup for the insurance companies. The working people are paying for it. So, when you decide to sue someone, you hurt the people. You hurt your country. WE ARE THE COUNTRY—we the people.

Toxic means poisonous. Capable of causing serious harm or death. Extremely harmful, malicious, or unpleasant in a pervasive way. Toxic people spread poison in your life—spiritually, emotionally, and/or physically.

If you're drinking alcohol at all, any day of the week, any time, YOU ARE BEING TOXIC TO OTHERS. If you're smoking marijuana any time, you are being toxic. And you say, "Well it's not affecting anyone." OH YES IT IS. It's killing you and the people around you. You waste the money God gave you. And you know what? He'll take it away.

When you try to find every little way to get extra free benefits without doing ANYTHING to earn something, you're being toxic. Let's say you get a benefit that is supposed to be used for food and you find every way to get cash for it so you can buy something else, this is toxic. You need to stop those things.

You are not getting ahead even though you think you are—you aren't. God will make sure of it.

Toxic doesn't just mean dangerous chemicals. Toxic means poison — and some people's attitudes, lifestyles, and relationships are nothing but poison. You let them in your life, and before long, their poison is running through your veins too. You have to break free from these toxic relationships.

And if you're one of those toxic people, it's time to let the poison go and do things right according to God's words. And you can start right now so you aren't toxic, and so you don't kill others.

New Testament Examples

The Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18)

""Luke 18:18-23

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. 20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. 21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. 22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. 23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.""

- He wanted eternal life, but he also wanted to keep his riches.
- Some people come around the church saying, "I want God's blessing," but when you tell them to repent of sin or to get serious, they walk away sorrowful. They don't want to change. They just want money. They want to take from you even though you worked hard for what you have.
- Toxic relationships with money and selfishness keep them bound.

Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5)

""Acts 5:1-5

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.""

- This couple was toxic to the early church.
- Instead of being honest, they pretended spirituality while lying to God.
- Toxic people in the church act spiritual, but their hypocrisy brings death, not life.

Here's an example. Most of you receive a check. 10% of that check, definition of tithe, is supposed to go the church to honor God and support the work of the church. When that doesn't happen and you continue to take from the church without giving anything, this is toxic.

You say—but I don't have enough. We can all say that—I don't have enough. And with that toxic attitude, you'll never have enough. When you do things God's way, you'll always have enough. But you have to trust in God. But most people won't trust in God when it comes to money.

The False Brethren (Galatians 2)

""Galatians 2:4

And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.""

- Paul warns about false brethren—pretenders who sneak into churches to drag people into bondage.
- Toxic people don't build freedom, they build chains.

You don't want to be a person who drags others down with them to bring them into bondage. Don't do that. Work hard to go in the right direction. There are many people in here right now working hard to go in the right direction. That means they aren't toxic. They are trying.

But, if you're out there, and you are not trying to make changes to get in the right direction then you are being toxic and it's time to change that starting TODAY. Not tomorrow—today.

What Toxic Relationships Look Like Today

The Bible examples are clear, but let's bring it home by being very direct:

- People who refuse to work but expect you to pay their bills.
- People who always complain but never thank God.
- People who drink, smoke, and waste their money, then show up at your door asking for help.
- People who disappear until they need something, then pretend to be your best friend.

That's toxic. And if you let them, they'll ruin your life, your family, your church, and your testimony.

For example, a liquor store develops a toxic relationship with the community—it's the only possible outcome. The liquor store drains the community. Churchill Downs is a toxic

relationship. "But they help Louisville by paying taxes." No, they drain Louisville. They take from the people who matter in Louisville. They make the rich richer while draining everything from the poor. They prey upon the people of Louisville. Gambling is toxic—it will drain you.

Drug dealers are a toxic relationship within Louisville. They drain you of the life within you. The gas stations where you buy sugary drinks and snacks are draining you. The cigarettes they sell you are draining you. This is a toxic relationship. I want you to take a step back in your life, take a look, write down the things that are toxic to you in your life. And get them fixed.

Why Do Many Businesses and Churches Leave This Area?

Toxic relationships destroy communities. No good jobs left. Others, like this church, come into this community to be a light and we cannot be destroyed by toxic relationships. Look around. Why do businesses leave? Why do churches close?

Because people would rather take than build. Always suing, always demanding, always playing the victim—but never taking responsibility before God.

""Proverbs 15:27

He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.""

People think they “win” when they sue, when they manipulate, when they grab for money. But do they really win? No. Toxic living doesn’t build—it tears down.

""Proverbs 28:20

A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.""

You might win money, but lose your integrity, your family, and your soul. God Himself makes sure greed never satisfies. If you're always looking to take advantage of someone because that's what you were taught in your life, it's time to change that.

""Haggai 1:6

Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.""

When you do things the wrong way, God makes sure you don't gain anything. Stop trying to take advantage of others. Micah’s day looked the same. They thought they were winning by taking land and wealth, but God said judgment was on the way.

""Micah 2:1–3

Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. 2 And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and

his heritage. 3 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil."

And church, that's what's happening right here in Louisville. Businesses, churches, families collapse under toxic living. But God sees it. The only way we're going to make it is if you all decide out there to start doing things the right way. Repent of the sin and turn to God's ways. Or the area will continue to lose—churches, businesses, jobs, food, stores.

There aren't good stores around here because they're sick of people stealing from them. The Dollar Store doesn't have anything because everyone took it without paying. No one can make it that way. When you steal, which includes taking free money for doing nothing, you're being toxic. It's time to WORK together and help each other.

Biblical Commands for Dealing With Toxic People

Don't Enable Laziness

""2 Thessalonians 3:10

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."

- God doesn't say feed laziness. He says stop it.
- It's not cruel—it's Biblical.

Separate Yourself

""Proverbs 22:24-25

Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul."

- Toxic people rub off. Stay away, or you'll become like them.

Jesus Walked Away

""Mark 6:11

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them."

- Even Jesus said, "If they won't listen, walk away."
- Don't waste your life being pulled down by someone who refuses the truth.

Tell them to get it fixed right now and show them the right ways. That's what we do here. Invite that person to church, get them here, and I'll give it all I've got to help them get things right. And we work together to get this done. All of us.

Healthy, Godly Relationships

People who come to church to do good—those are people we need here. We all need healthy, Godly relationships here in this life. We don't need toxic relationships. Look, we've only done good to people in this area and yet some that we've done good to will still talk trash about us. That's toxic—that's a sign of the toxic person. Don't be that person.

- Look at Jonathan and David: a friendship that strengthened faith (1 Samuel 18).
- Look at Ruth and Naomi: a relationship of loyalty and love (Ruth 1).
- Look at Paul and Timothy: a mentoring relationship that built the church (2 Timothy 1).

And look, if you don't know those stories that I just mentioned in the Bible, it's time to get you a King James Version of the Bible and get to work reading it. You have time. I have time. Read it. And learn how to be a good friend to people—one that loves and cares.

You'll find life-giving friendships in the Bible. That's what God wants for us. He doesn't want us draining the life out of others.

Conclusion

Church, toxic people are real. They look like Delilah, like Jonadab, like complainers in the wilderness, like Ananias and Sapphira, like false brethren. They drain, they deceive, and they destroy.

But God calls us to separate, to stand strong, to refuse to feed sin, and to build Godly relationships that bring life.

""Joshua 24:15

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.""

If someone wants to stay toxic, let them. But don't let them take you down with them. You follow Christ. You walk with the wise. You break free.

Let's pray.