

# *Is Your Relationship Black Or White*

A Sermon by Pr. David Johnson

I had the privilege of attending both a godly Lutheran High School, and a solid Lutheran Bible School. Over the years, my High School has retained its biblical base. But sadly, unlike our AFLC Bible College, the Bible School I attended did not. Rather than standing as an influencer for cultural transformation, the Bible School I attended absorbed the cultural influences of the last few decades. Unfortunately, many of my former Bible School classmates followed suit, leaving me with little in common with most of them.

Consequently, one of my consistent sadnesses has been the realization that many of those who were once friends (*some dear friends*) are now distant acquaintances at best. It's hard to look at old pictures, recalling cherished memories, and realize that those with whom you once shared your deepest thoughts, no longer share your most cherished convictions. I'm grateful for the dear friends God has provided since those days. But I still wonder if I should try and rekindle some of the friendships from those pivotal years. But when I do a little research, I find that the foundation of scriptural truth which once drove our shared passions and pursuits, were somehow replaced in many of their lives by personal opinion, social activism, or material priorities.

You may have had similar experiences. Your conversations with former friends are still cloaked in a form of spiritual respectability; but their love and reverence for God's pure Word has been replaced by a cool, more rationalistic view of Scripture. Biblical illustrations are replaced by television references, and discussions of eternal matters are exchanged by retirement plans. Before you know it, months and years pass between conversations, and you haven't really missed them. Sad.

For those who don't have a living relationship with Jesus, it's hard to understand this problem. For them, faith isn't a 24/7 venture; an all-consuming passion which drives the entirety of life. It isn't the foundation of everything you do in life. It's just a little block in a basket full of Legos. Losing this common ground wouldn't hamper a relationship to them. But for a Christian, it changes everything.

**2Co 6:14-18 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be MY people. 17 "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord...**

Now some might be thinking, "*Wow, that's a bit extreme, isn't it? I mean, we're not talking about*

*Satanists or demon worshipers are we?*" In fairness, No. But even falling for that thread of reason is to play into an unbiblical trap.

You see, God doesn't judge in shades of gray. He doesn't grade on a curve. God looks at a philosophy, an opinion, or an action and asks, "*Is it true, honorable, right, or excellent – in other words, IS IT PERFECT?*" God deals in absolutes, right or wrong, truth or lies, a bulls-eye or a miss. In God's color palate, there are no 50 shades of gray, to borrow from the title of some bestselling bit of trash. To God, anything shy of pure white, is black. Any variation is unacceptable.

God sets high standards, and He defines them implicitly, as we heard from our Old Testament lesson:

**Deut 6:1-5 "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded {me} to teach you, that you might do {them} in the land where you are going over to possess it, 2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 "O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do {it,} that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, {in} a land flowing with milk and honey. 4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**

That is not a compartmentalized affection. He isn't wanting a "sunny day" relationship of convenience. This isn't an "open marriage," as our current culture seems determined to make it. This is a *'til-death-do-us-part*, monogamous marriage; where even the slightest distraction or compromising influence is taken out behind the woodshed for correction. *All your heart...all your soul...all your might*, doesn't leave much room for diversity or inclusivity.

The Lord has even given us instructions on how to keep the main thing, the main thing.

**Deu 6:6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.**

Isn't it funny how quickly we tire of those things which once captivated us? The camper we had to have, now sits parked outside the house; unused. The sewing machine which we knew would save us hundreds of dollars in clothes, sits under piles of fabric, waiting for the occasional torn pocket or weak seam to mend. The new car we once gloated over has lost its shimmer and pales in comparison to the new 2023's. The qualities that drew us to those "must have" items, are now overshadowed or forgotten.

I'm convinced, that is precisely why God gave us the commands that he did:

- \* *Keep these words on your heart.*
- \* *Teach them diligently to your sons (children).*
- \* *Talk of them...in your house...while walking by the way...while lying down...when rising up.*
- \* *Bind them...on your hand...on your forehead...on your house and gates.*

We are to remind ourselves constantly why God loves us, why we love Him, and what God's desires and plans are for our relationship with Him. We need to make sure that all those close to us, especially those within our own household, know and share those same values. We are to commit every waking moment to the pursuit and support of those things that will strengthen our relationship with God. And we are to place focused tokens, in strategic places, which will remind us of our eternal covenant with Christ. We are to be completely consumed with, and motivated by, our passion for God; not in addition to our material life, but intermingled throughout it.

A husband doesn't want to be an after-thought of his wife. Nor is a wife satisfied with the convenient affections of a husband whose priorities are clearly found elsewhere. Neither want to be down the list of priorities in the spouse's heart. And anything that supplants or usurps that love, isn't a shade of grey, it is a black-hearted destroyer, and must be removed.

So also with anything that intrudes into the affections of the members of the Bride of Christ. To surround yourself with friends who share that priority, is to belong to a fraternity which will last all eternity.