

Introduction:

- Last message in our series on Loving Clean: Bringing Relationships to Life! Today I want to talk about doing life with toxic people. We will always have toxic people that we come in contact with so how do we live life when this happens?
- John 13:1-3
- Toxic Terrorists, Living Life Among Terrorists, How Did Jesus Live Among Terrorists.

I. The Toxic Terrorist

- A. People who relate to others in toxic ways function as terrorists. Terrorism by definition is the use of violence or threat of violence in order to achieve an objective. Terrorism, like toxic behavior has specific goals:
1. To control with fear - to make you submit to my way by making you afraid of me.
 2. To slowly drain or wear down the enemy/you so you do not want to fight but to "give in". Toxic behaviors drain relationships of emotional energy and strength. They deplete strength and wear down rather than encouraging and building up.
 3. Demoralize - to weaken the moral of, to cause to lose hope and courage.
 4. Create victims that 'do not forget' and victims that are a constant reminder. I.e. Don't be come one! When you become a victim the terrorist now holds power over you.
 5. To communicate to you that your life does not matter. You become a 'non-person'. A person of no value in the relationship. Toxic relating whether intentional or unintentional does this.
- B. Types of terrorists. 6 types but there are many more. I want to name a few.
1. Tantrum terrorist-they are the ones who just "explode" with childlike anger.
 2. Texting terrorist - they "blow up" your phone when they are angry with you.
 3. Sarcastic terrorist - they throw acid in your face, with words, to mar your identity.
 4. Kidnapping terrorist - they hold you hostage until you meet their demands.
 5. stalking terrorist - they are obsessed with you so much so they smoother you, they have to know all about you, where you are going, what you are doing, who you are seeing.
 6. Master mind terrorist - they are the enablers that help 'non persons' destroy themselves.
- C. Our reaction to the terrorists/toxic people is what gives them their power or deprives them of their power.
1. Terrorism depends upon us to:
 - a) Become so self absorbed that we cannot see it for what it really is. I.e. Terrorism on a global scale kills very few people compared to: starvation, auto accidents, deaths due to smoking.
 - b) Become self righteous and paranoid so we sit around dwelling on it all day thinking: My life is more important their life does not count. I.e. "just kill all the Muslims". Why? Because we are afraid them and better than them.
 - c) to believe that we are next. So what are we to do when the toxic person strikes?
 2. The English would say it this way: "Keep Calm and Carry On". A phrase that became popular during WWII when Hitler was terrorizing London by constant bombing trying to get the people to turn against Churchill. I think that is what Jesus would say us, "Keep Calm and Carry On!"

II. Living Life Among Terrorists

- A. When I look at Jesus life, His was a life lived out among terrorists. We can learn from Him. The sinless Son of God living among sinfully toxic people. We all are spiritual terrorists that

wanted to pull Him down to our level. We all are toxic and unpleasant to relate too. The good news is: Jesus never ran away from us. How did He do that? He was spiritually healthy! It is amazing what you can do when you are spiritually healthy.

1. Almost everything you read on line about toxic relationships and people recommend that you run away immediately...even Christian articles.
 2. The majority of answers that you find online and the majority of psychologists that respond to this question advise people to walk out of the relationship/cut the relationship off.
 3. I do not believe this to be Jesus answer.
- B. There is not a 'one answer' fits all. But I can give you help! How do I respond to a toxic terrorist?
1. Realize you're not alone. Everyone deals with toxic people at some time and at different levels. So do not let self pity get you.
 2. The most important thing to remember is that you have the power to stop a toxic person. You do this by controlling your own actions and reactions. I.e. Get immunized by the Holy Spirit! LOVE and operate in fruit of Spirit.
 3. Know that when a person is toxic it is because of their own issues. Could be mental, definitely is spiritual, and almost always immaturity.
 4. Take note of their level in your life first. How we respond depends upon the role that person plays in our life. There are three levels in which we find toxic people. Same toxin different influence.
 - a) Level 1 - We can call these the Hi and Good Bye group. They are customer service people, road ragers, strangers on the street, they are people you don't know or know of from a distance.
 - b) Level 2 - These tend to be familiar acquaintances. No real need to be close, but contact is frequent due to life circumstances...fellow students, co-workers, neighbors, members of groups that you regularly meet with (church, book club, sports club, etc.) You identify with each other but are not close friends.
 - c) Level 3 - Is the group that it is ideal to be close in. Spouse, immediate family and close friends. Spouse and Family - "you can choose your friends but you cant choose your family."
 5. How do I respond to Level One Toxic people? Love! Don't get toxic with them.
 - a) Check yourself first. Think about your own behavior to see if you have done or said something to cause this. If you have apologize and ask for forgiveness do so. If they forgive you, then great! If they don't, you can walk away having taken the humble road.
 - b) If you cant think of anything you did. "Hi and Good Bye" in a polite manner and go on. Don't confront it most likely will not be fruitful. In other words, the other party's unkind behavior is on him or her; he or she will reap natural consequences in due time.
 6. How do I respond to Level Two toxic people?
 - a) Check yourself first. Your behavior. If guilty confess and ask forgiveness. You want this relationship to have life. "We are always called to forgive; but forgiveness should not be seen as a remedy to another's character, rather a soothing balm to protect our own hearts from bitterness." Ruthie Dean

- b) If you can't think of anything seek to gain understanding. Ask God to give you compassion for that person. *"The sick need a doctor."* They need Jesus in that part of their life.
 - c) The idea is to generate enough compassion for the other person to overpower or at least quell your hurt feelings. And if they come with apology, seeking forgiveness you will be ready to work towards restoration of the relationship.
 - d) After you have worked on developing compassion for the other person's circumstances, if you haven't received an apology, be kind, but don't push for a make-up session. An important part of experiencing emotional balance is learning to teach others that you expect to be treated with kindness and respect. This means you set boundaries on how they can treat you. And go home at the end of the day.
7. How do I respond to Level Three toxic people?
- a) Go through check of yourself.
 - b) While it's important that you teach family members and close friends how you expect to be treated, in some cases, it may be necessary for you to seek out a make-up session even if the other party has not apologized for his or her behavior.
 - (1) For example, if it was your spouse who mistreated you, and he or she has not apologized, if you know from experience that he or she is not likely to initiate a conversation that can lead to healing, and a top priority for you is to have your children grow up in a mostly peaceful and love-filled environment, it may be best for you to reach out first.
 - (2) By reaching out first in such a scenario, the hope is that you inspire your partner to edge closer to taking more responsibility for his or her actions during the next conflict. We do this in relationships we are deeply committed to.
 - c) Intimate relationships are worth having and they take work. WORK
 - d) You can't run from these but you do set boundaries of respect and honor.
 - e) If your life is in danger or you are being physically or sexually abused please you need to leave immediately and seek help.

III. How Did Jesus Respond to Toxic Terrorist? Jn 13:1& 3

- A. Jesus lived in a world of toxic terrorists. He loved. He did not run away. Why? He was spiritually healthy. He was so spiritually healthy He could relate/love all three groups.
 - 1. There were the people like tax collectors that He related to. Hi and Good Bye.
 - 2. There were the acquaintances but no real need to be close people. Pharisee and Sadducees. There were political leaders Herod and Pilate.
 - 3. There were His mother and brother's who thought him crazy. His disciples who left him and Judas who betrayed Him.
 - 4. All of these people related to Jesus in toxic ways. Their toxic behaviors never seemed to make Him ill. I.e. You may be thinking, Garden of Gethsemane but remember: "Not my will but yours be done." And on the cross, "Father forgive them."
- B. Jesus communicated the boundaries. How many of you think the devil is toxic? So did Jesus!
 - 1. *"Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's.""* (Matthew 16:23, NLT)
 - 2. *"Then one of the Temple guards standing nearby slapped Jesus across the face. "Is that the way to answer the high priest?" he demanded. Jesus replied, "If I said anything wrong,*

you must prove it. But if I'm speaking the truth, why are you beating me?" (John 18:22-23, NLT) Jesus let the guard know that he had crossed a boundary.

3. *"Pilate demanded. "Don't you realize that I have the power to release you or crucify you?" Then Jesus said, "You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above.""* (John 19:10-11, NLT)

C. Very simply Jesus demonstrated love to the full extent. Jn 13:1 *He showed them the full extent of His love.*

1. He was spiritually healthy. He knew: *"Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God."* (John 13:3, NLT) He knew who He was, whose He was, and that He would return to Father. Knowing that 'put Him over the top.' That is a healthy man.
2. Because He was spiritually healthy, He was empowered to
 - a) Serve them. He washed their feet. That was confrontative in a loving way.
 - b) He loved them - by eating with them. The meal declared the relationship.
 - c) He welcomed them in close to Him even though He knew where this was going. They did not know. But He did. *Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.* This did not change their character or choices but it did keep Jesus heart healthy before the Father.

Conclusion:

- We are all going to be toxic at some point in our relationships.
- We are all going to be touched by toxic people. When that happens we basically have three choices:
 - 1. Be toxic back and further poison the relationship. Not an option for believers.
 - 2. Run away. Some people have to because they are too spiritually weak to survive.
 - 3. Set boundaries and contend for the relationship.
- I believe that Jesus would have us to love and contend for relationship. Jesus would have us to contend to build safe, life giving relationships. It takes work.