

“Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.”

– Luke 15:29

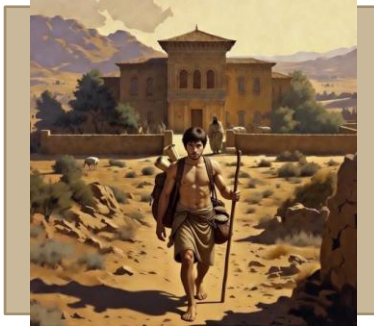




Fragile Relationships: Part One

What Makes Our Relationships Fragile? | *Luke 15:29*

Figures from the Holy Great Fast



Luke 15

The Prodigal Son

Eager to leave — his desires were incompatible with his father's house.



John 4

The Samaritan Woman

Five husbands — yet none brought fulfillment. Her relationships never lasted.



John 5

The Paralytic

"I have no man" — 38 years with no one to help him into the water.



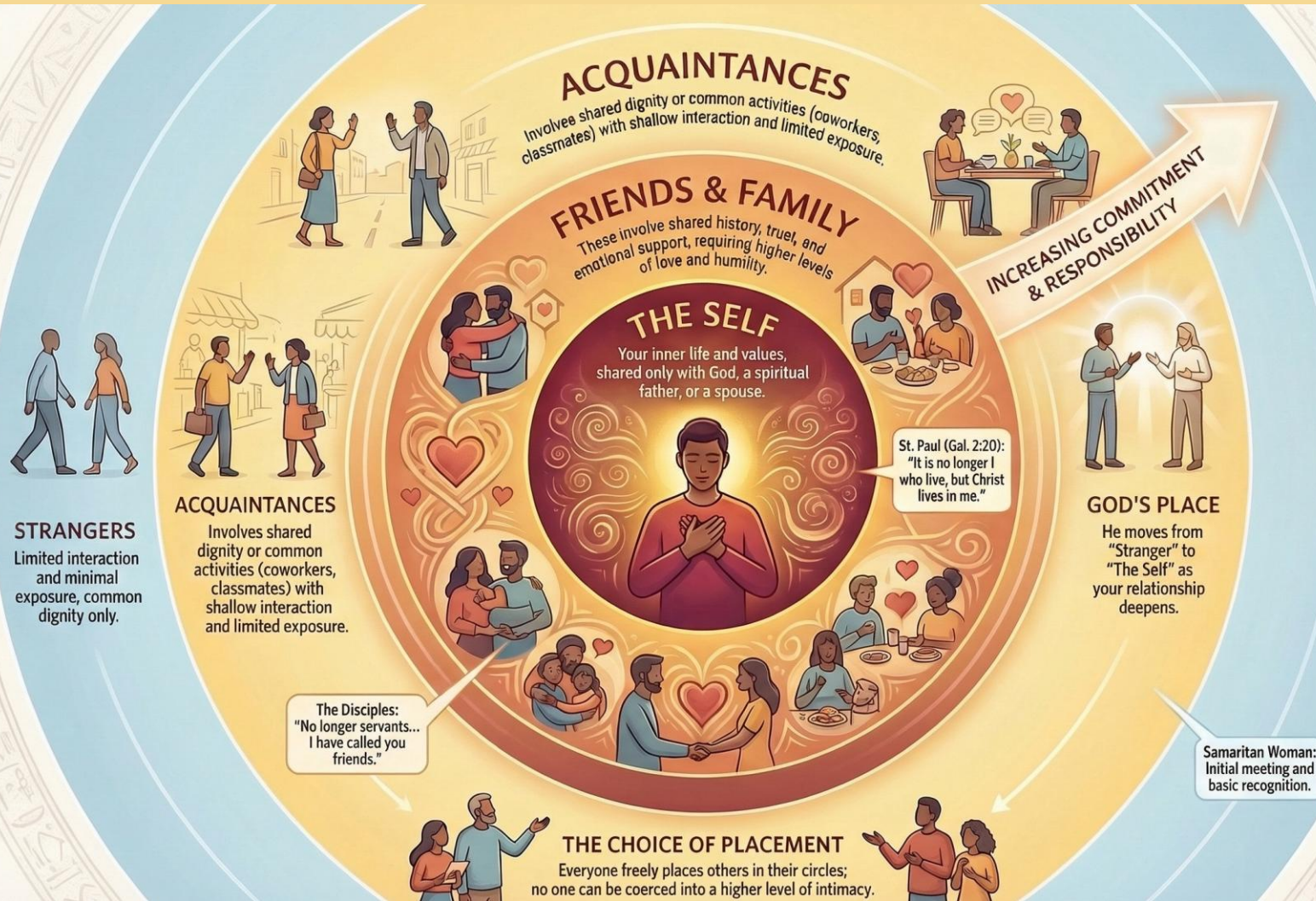
John 9

The Man Born Blind

His own parents abandoned him when loyalty became costly.

Why are our closest relationships sometimes the most fragile?

Levels of Relationships



Principles

- Everyone freely places others in whichever intimacy circle – no one can coerce or force us
- The more intimate = greater commitment and responsibility

Where Is God in Your Circle?

Stranger

- **The Samaritan woman**
- “How is it that you being a Jew ask a drink from me a Samaritan?” (Jon 4:9)

Acquaintance

- **St. Nicodemus**

Friends

- **The Disciples**
- “No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends.” (Jn., 15:15)

Family

- **Saint Mary**
- “Whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” (Matt. 12:50)

The Root of Fragile Relationships

- **“The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”**
(Genesis 3:12)
- Rather than protecting Eve and sharing her burden he blamed her





**What Makes
Relationships
Fragile?**

1. Built on Weak Foundations

- Quick and easy connections are also easily broken.
- Feeding the 5,000
- **“Jesus answered them and said, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.’”** (John 6:26)
- **“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.”** (John 6:66)



2. Jealousy, Envy, and Favoritism

- EX: Saul and David
 - **“Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father’s house anymore.”** (1 Samuel 18:2)
 - **“Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him... So Saul eyed David from that day forward.”** (1 Samuel 18:8–9)
- EX: Joseph and his brothers
 - **“When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.”** (Genesis 37:4)
- Do we sow seeds of jealousy and envy?

3. Unable to Bear an Offense

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- Many relationships collapse because we cannot bear an offense.
 - The offense can be real offense or perceived offense.
 - Perceived offense: Eli the Priest
 - **“And Eli said to her, 'How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!'”** (1 Samuel 1:14)
 - **“Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression.”** (Proverbs 19:11)
 - **“[Love] is not easily provoked, thinks no evil.”** (1 Corinthians 13:5)

4. Bitterness, Resentment, and Unaddressed Wounds

- EX: Absalom and David
- EX: The elder brother
- Years of hidden resentment: **“Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.”** (Luke 15:29)
- **“Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”** (Hebrews 12:15)

4. Bitterness, Resentment, and Unaddressed Wounds

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The remembrance of wrongs is the consummation of anger, the keeper of sins, hatred of righteousness, ruin of virtues, poison of the soul, worm of the mind... a nail stuck in the soul.

— **St. John Climacus**
The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Step 9



5. A Controller in the Relationship

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- Relationships are fundamentally voluntary.
 - Desiring to control another will always make that relationship fragile.
 - Marriage and family are covenant relationships
 - Anxiety – walking on eggshells
 - Shame and inadequacy
 - Resentment and hidden anger
 - The goal of parenting is not lifelong control but raising a person capable of wisdom, responsibility, and communion with God.
 - Parents **MUST** move from control → guidance → counsel → respect for autonomy as the child matures.
 - **"Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."**
(Ephesians 6:4)

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*You cannot change another person.
You can only **love them, pray for them,**
and **change yourself.***

*When you try to force another to change,
you have stopped loving them
and started managing them —*

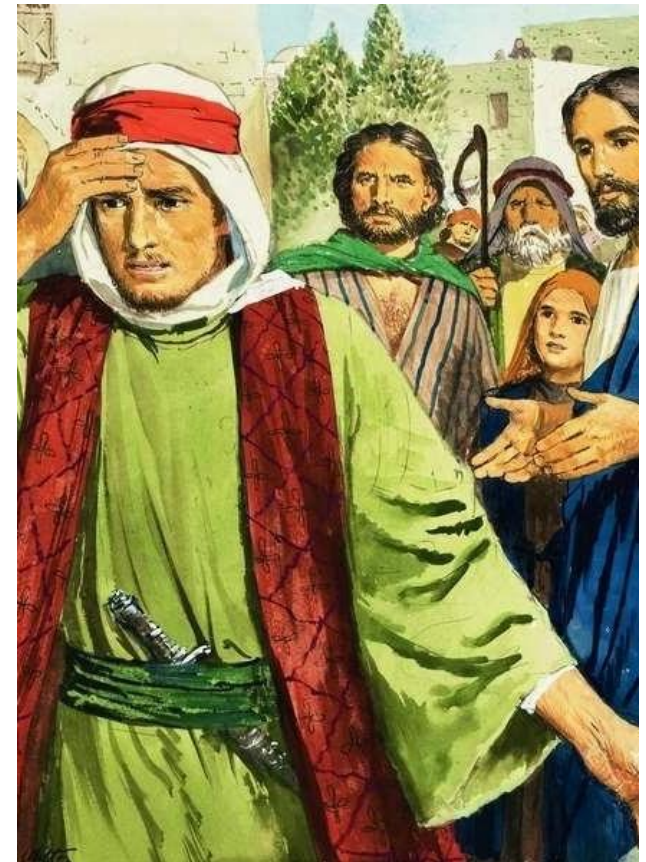
*and no one wants to be managed
by someone who is supposed to love them.*



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6. Avoiding Difficult Conversations

- **“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.”** (Matthew 18:15)
- The Lord had many difficult conversations
 - Rich Young Ruler
 - The Samaritan Woman
 - Speaking about eating His body and drinking His blood
 - Publicly rebuked the Pharisees



7. One Person Carrying the Burdens of the Relationship



- Emotional burden
- Moral burden
- Among friends
- **“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”** (Galatians 6:2)