

People are people, and sometimes it doesn't work out, nothing we say is gonna save us from the fall out-Taylor Swift

We love to run and hide. There is always a secret place to go. It's called the panic room. You could describe it as a bomb shelter. Who is gonna save you from the fallout? Relationships are tough. There are misunderstandings all the time. Our hearts get broken. People are so unpredictable. Do they like you? Are your words acceptable? Do you have a character that people like? Unfortunately, people are people. So, we hide.

I will make a pitch for relationships. It's not all bad. Yet, it's not easy either. In christianity it's all about the relationship. Christians are held to a higher standard. We should love more, care more, and give more to others. Why? It's because God does that for us. Some people like to say the relationship with God is free. All we have to do is believe. That is true, but there is a hidden price. People dislike Christians. They hate God. Further to that, the person changes. All those things make a Christian a target in the open.

For those who want to hide themselves, religion is the worse place. Everyone is looking at the religious. It's all about an open relationship. Christians are to share themselves with the world. The Bible goes to great lengths to call Christianity a light, on a hill for everyone to see. There is nothing to hide. So, it's open to scrutiny, judgement, and ridicule.

Being a Christian is a very good thing. Yet, the mental and spiritual price is high. My son once told me "if I stayed a Christian you know what would happen." Yes, people would push you. God will push you. I have often wondered what it was like to just live without a care for God. The word sin would not exist. Just breathe and live as I want. Instead, I've spent way too

much time thinking about how to behave better. If God is everywhere then where do you hide? Everything is exposed.

For many Christians and churches, it's become the opposite. They hide the bad and parade the good. A church must look clean. A pastor (by no fault of his or her own) does look clean. Is it not their fault? They choose nice words. Many avoid giving their opinion. Religious leadership hides from controversy. Quoting scripture and not quoting their life is the norm. Christianity is not an exposed light on a hill anymore. Christians hide behind doors, the cross, and theology. Why hide in religion? It's no fun being in the spot light.

In a way, relationships are just like the Christian world. Who wants their relationship exposed? Usually, in our conversations we choose nice words. We don't tell our spouse everything for fear of ridicule. We are literally hiding within a relationship. I feel religion was meant to be treated a certain way. It is supposed to be an exposed life. A sharing life. Who would not share a good relationship to the world?

I wonder if how we view our relationships is why we hide them? Take the relationship with God. We honor, worship, and sacrifice for God. Conversely, most people don't read God's word, pray regularly, or attend church. How it should be is not how it's being done. A relationship is similar. We tend to either put too much stock into the spouse or not enough. Middle ground is hard in relationships. We're either over the top or ignoring it all together. Investing in your relationships will make them shine.

Some might say "no, we should not worship a relationship. Really? I think the fact that most people don't give a relationship that type of importance is why divorce and loneliness are so high. Maybe a little worry, care, and devotion to a relationship would not hurt. People get on

one knee to propose. They give an expensive ring. Then we give a vow of love. Isn't that worship in the broader sense? Yet, our default seems to be to keep things normal (the same old).

In the beginning, we begin with love. A new faith is shared because we are excited. It's the same on a wedding day. It's meant to be shared in the open. Behind the scenes is our baggage. Don't share your faults. Keep your feelings close to your heart. I think both religion and relationships veer inward because it's assumed to be corporate. Yet, the individual is still there. Who we are as people with all our baggage and insecurities is at the alter too. We just don't see it in the beginning because it's hidden.

Two things that were meant to be exposed. Yet, exposing your religion or relationship puts the spotlight on you. Who are you in religion? Who are you in your relationships? How many people see a partner and rate them? Are they good for them? Is a Christian doing Christian thing? Is that church all about money? We do watch religion and relationships. No wonder people try and keep them hidden.

I talk about religion and relationships in the same breath because both claim to have a market on people. Yet, people run to and from religion. They also accept and reject relationships. Both institutions have had their share of folly and happiness. Religion and relationships are made up of people. Yes, one has a God, but even he desires a relationship with people. I know both demand attention or they usually fail.

I think that is also part of the reason people run and hide. We can go one of two ways. I was hurt in a relationship. So, I put all I had into a church. A church is a good place, but it has people in it. Some of the meanest people I know are hiding in a church. So, for a time, I ran from church. Equally, I know a boy who has to be with someone, anyone. He runs to relationships.

Consequentially, he despised some of the women in those relationships. Eventually, he ran from relationships too. Could he work on himself? There is no time. He is too busy running into the next relationship. We all run and hide in something. We also run from things too.

What is a safe place in a relationship? I just watched a Taylor Swift Q&A about her life and song choices. Over and over she thought this guy was safe and that guy was right. In a way, running and hiding from one to the next. Recently, her last two albums have depicted the fallout. In some ways it's not about blame, with her. Instead it's a slow drip to insanity. I wonder if there will ever be a song about good relationship choices? Is she hiding from herself within her music?

The greatest prison in the world is in your mind

If were hiding in a relationship it's because we don't want to face ourselves. Loneliness has a way of talking to you. "You're a loser for being alone."

"You look sloppy and that's why your single."

"Nobody will ever want you."

The flip side is a different voice proclaiming "I am fine the way I am."

"It's their loss."

"I don't have to change; they just need to love me for who I am."

Our mind has a million reasons your alone. At home, in the dark, beneath the covers of your single bed, the mind knows what to say. So, we pick the first mate that comes along, or we stay home and refuse to join the dating race. People let their mind find a way to hide in and from relationships.

How to hide your pain? To never be lonely? “The mind as our prison” is such a good description. It’s like our own personal panic room. Surely, you have heard of people stuck in their ways. People return to the one place they desperately want hope in: relationships. These people become repeat offenders. Hoping this time, the relationship will work. What happens though, is they become trapped in a concept in their mind. A prison so to speak.

It’s like Beth Hart singing that a bad relationship is better than none at all. Taylor Swift moving on to the next in hope of a better outcome. They both are running from the reality that a choice in relationship takes more time than they think. It’s never as simple as saying “on to the next.” Most of the time we run and hide because the problem is in the mirror.

Being hurt and going into another relationship too soon is a bad idea. Does the other person deserve to work through your problems with you? So, all the pain and insecurities fall on them to endure, until you get past it? People hide in a relationship to mask the pain. It’s also to avoid the reality that we might have flaws. We might need work. It comes back to chapter ten: *Mirror, Mirror*. People avoid being different, singled out, and flawed. Those are strong words. Dirty words. So, we hide.

Equally, I have seen people run from a relationship. So many people run. Humans, no matter the race or gender are different. So, what’s the big deal? Different does not mean incompatible. Oh, people think it does, but their wrong. In the beginning of a relationship we are in love. Flaws are small and differences seem so unimportant. In time, blemishes in our character seem to grow. It’s an illusion. I realize that not all sour relationships can be fixed. Yet, I do believe most split-ups can be avoided. If we could take the time to see our own flaws and warts. Maybe, your partners differences won’t seem so big.

People refuse to be hurt. We get angry because of a harsh word or mistaken action. What is the first thing most people do? There is anger, resentment, and hurt. That hurt tells you to pick someone else. Try something different. Run and hide in another relationship. I got to tell you; most genders have similar traits. Men shrug things off. Women lead with the heart. Try hiding from men and woman traits? Can you find a new relationship where men don't act like men? Where women don't act like women? You can't find a hiding place when people are involved. Is there really a safe place from hurt and misunderstandings? Not in human relationships.

Conversely. You can't hide in your room. Hearts were meant to be broken. Why? That's how we grow. Nobody ever avoided fire without being burned first. Taylor Swift is a multi-millionaire directly because of being burned. Way too many burned people relate to her songs. How many movie stars look like idiots by jumping from one relationship to the next? It's not because they are in Hollywood. It's because they too are hurting people put into the spotlight. Hurt and hiding does not like the light or a pedestal.

As kids we loved to play hide and seek. It's fun. Imagine hiding yourself in a good spot. You can hear the countdown. How thrilling and scary is that. The anticipation of being caught makes the heart beat faster. Then they find you. That hopeful anticipation of hiding well drops like a stone. That's it! A new relationship that hauls in old baggage is just waiting to be found out. We think we can hide it forever. Wrong.

Here's the thing. Adults are not kids. We have just learned how to hide longer. Adults hide in different places like alcohol, drugs, or another relationship. Adults are clever at hiding, but terrible with baggage. We never fix ourselves. No, we find new ways to mask our hurt. I have a friend whose wife cheated on him several times. He had good reasons to want out. Yet, he

stayed. Eventually, it caved in. Quickly, he found another woman from another country. This was more godly, different, and exciting than his first. I remember him saying that this woman was all the things his previous wife wasn't. He had found the perfect choice. Two years later they too are divorced. Then he met another a new girl...

Is he broken? I don't know. He does not know either. This man keeps hiding in one relationship to another. It's like an airport. Baggage is transferable. Let's make this clear. We all have baggage. Some things are fixable and others are tolerable. Yet, claim your bags. Know what's in them. It's hard to say what's wrong if you don't open the bags. Further to that, claiming their clean or empty is a bad idea. Everyone has something in their baggage. Do you really want your bags going around and around the airport?

Relationships are a good thing. They are bad when we don't know what's under the hood of each other's hearts. James 1:14-15 says *"but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."*

No matter if you're a believer or not, those are good words. We begin by hiding our hearts. One way or the other it will grow into deceit, ignorance, and hiding. From there it will birth into lies. Then further on we become defensive, bitter, and angry. What does that lead to? The death of a relationship. I wonder if hiding our differences is a human pastime. We've just become cute by calling it baggage.

It seems to be in our nature to hide. Who knows why? We will fight, but it's usually against being singled out. I have had the privilege of being in two marriages. Both wives might not like this but much of it was the same. I cannot count how many times I have clearly won an

argument. In the meantime, the spouse had started another discussion to deflect my win. It's not about winning. It's about feeling you lost. Most people can't handle that.

A healthy relationship has losses. Certainly, there are wins. The healthiest ones have win/win. They also believe, within all their being, that a loss is a loss for them both. A good relationship can freely challenge the other to win. Nobody should challenge a spouse to lose. Let me give a few examples.

Imagine your spouse is really interested in medical stuff. Suppose that they are frustrated at not getting a career. "Why not try the medical field" you say. They reply that it's too hard, or expensive to go to school. Yet we see it in them. A good challenge is to be persistent in what you see. Encourage and come along side of them to make their dreams become a reality.

I gave a speech once on this topic of challenging a spouse at church to a group of ladies. They pushed back. One said that if I give myself to making his dreams come true then I might lose mine. That is an unproductive, selfish way to be in a relationship. Back to my first remarks in the beginning of this chapter. A strong "me" might have saved my marriage. Encouraging and challenging a spouse to be great is recipe for a vibrant marriage. A healthy marriage risks losing so the other might win.

The other end is putting someone down. I have a friend whose marriage seems a certain way. I know for a fact that she has several dreams that are not his. In 25 years, I am not sure that neither of them has challenged that marriage. Pushed the other to win. There is sexual and financial frustration. What's the root cause? They are hiding in their own lives. Neither one is willing to sacrifice one inch for the others gain.

So, what will it be? Hiding in a bottle. Hiding in another attempt at love? How about hiding in a belief you're not broken. We all have some form of brokenness. You can't live in this world and not know heartache, pain, rejection, and beratement. Unfortunately, we live a world full of people. People with hurts and insecurities. How do we navigate through it?

Two things. One is that I went through a drive-thru a few years ago and a person I was with had me order. It's no big deal. Yet, they had rules. They wanted pop without ice. A certain size of fries. Further to that they asked for a plain burger minus the crud. Crud? How was I to explain to the speaker what they really wanted? It was full of pauses, hesitation, and unknowns. That incident made me realize people want things a certain way. Even at your expense.

Secondly, that night affected me. I don't trust a drive-thru with others anymore. Get your own order. It's not for me to explain your quirks. I know I'm being a baby, but I like straight talk. Even to a fast food speaker. My wife is annoyed by it. She says "get out of your comfort zone." Now, I usually go inside to order. Obviously, that little experience pushed me. Was there something in me that needed to be tweaked? Maybe the drive-thru sparked something I've had hidden?

What is hidden in my heart? Do I really know it all? Possibly I avoid the drive thru of hurts and failures for a reason. I want to hide too. Get out of my comfort zone? Confront my fears? Yikes! However, that's it in a nut shell. We need to see our crud for what it is. To know what's under our own hood. It's not good to hide in or from relationships.

The religious hide because they don't want people to know they are not as holy and clean as they appear. So, they choose their words and actions carefully. They are not as they appear. Nice religious mask to hide behind. People don't share in a relationship for fear of being

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exposed. They hide their fears, weaknesses, and desires. Why? To hide their failings as people. We're never who we say we are. We are so much more and so much less. So, we hide.

With that said let's move on slightly. I sound like a broken record but people are people. We all have crud that we want and don't want on our burger. That crud affects us. We're comfortable with some things. Other stuff makes us edgy. Why? What crud has changed you? Do we demand that others make our life perfect just to keep our comfort zone comfortable? Let's talk about the crud that changes our lives.