

*And I swear you're just like a pill Instead of makin' me better, you keep makin' me ill- Pink*

I witnessed a relationship that was fake. Weekend after weekend, we drove home jealous. They pawed each other. They talked about sexual stuff. In public they boasted of all the things they did in bed. I looked at my wife and she looked at me. Match that romance baby? What were we doing wrong? Oh, the couple I knew had answers. The sweet talk between them was awesome and sickening all at the same time. The perfect relationship.

Then came the news that they split up. What? If their relationship was over then what does that say about mine? They were the best, so it seemed. It looked that way. To make matters worse, the woman commandeered my wife to ruin my marriage too. Then those two helped crush a third marriage. What is going on?

There are different types of relationships. People pick someone to cohabitate with. Maybe we take a job that we think would be great. Possibly, we take up a hobby. They are all relationships. It's a pill we can swallow with joy. Then people enter the picture. It reminded me of the chorus by Pink. It becomes a jagged little pill that is hard to swallow. Possibly it's making us ill. Relationships often start so well. Do we really think they end badly all on their own? Do we really need a pill at all? Would that have saved it?

People should be with someone because they like them. We don't need a pill. On the other hand, we can't blame anything but ourselves for the messes we make. The victim card is a slippery slope. Instead, we should look at relationships as if we are the pill. Are you a good one or bad one? An aspirin or a jagged little pill?

All I know is what I see. Sometimes we don't get to look under the hood. Three nice ladies turned into marriage busters. Who knew? The poor men. Really? I thought men cause all the trouble in marriages. It's one thing to be in a marriage. It's another to be a witness of a bad marriage. I can see it more clearly now that I'm out. Why is it like that for so many? Time after time I hear those words "*if I knew then what I know now.*" Then we blame it on something beyond ourselves. Yet, were guilty of participating in a divorce. We walk into relationships with wide eyes. Then we leave with eyes wide open.

That's it. Hindsight is 20/20. It's like the lyric "*I can see clearly now the rain has gone.*" By Johnny Nash. Are we really that blind in a relationship? For the first eight chapters I wanted to paint a picture. People are a wide range of things. If we infuse that into relationships, then of course, all hell breaks loose. People are people. I'm not really being pessimistic. It's just reality. For many people, we can clearly see good, bad, and stupid people for who they are. Yet, we don't. It is what it is. Love is blinding.

Inside a relationship, a phrase comes to mind "*I see said the blind man.*" I have heard stories of Nazi soldiers being oblivious to the carnage they caused. While in the war, they did "what happened." I know that seems like an excuse. It's also bad English. No, I meant it that way. You see, the soldier was commanded to fight. Through all the blood and death, it overwhelmed them. How long did it go on? How many died? What was their role in the battle? Councilors found that these soldiers seriously did not know. These men and women seemed more like witnesses to "what happened", even though they were part of it. Blind?

That's it. They did it. It's what happened. Yet, in the aftermath, they had no clue they were there. That's also a pretty good description of a relationship. How did we end up divorced?

Why are we not friends? Two people meet and so it begins. The relationship continues to grow. Then they become blind. One day, a fight happens. A difference of opinion festers. A long lingering fight ensues. Then the question becomes “how did we get here?”

It becomes a circle of death. Many couples don't talk? Why? For fear of being wrong and for fear of offending their spouse? In our head, we love them. Yet, in our hearts, we begin to resent the silence. On and on it goes until were handing over the forms to sign in the presence of a lawyer. Months later were sitting with a friend in a coffee shop. The friend asks “what really happened?” You reply “I really don't know, we just grew apart.” That is blind talk.

People can be reckless in love. I knew a guy who racked up his visa on hotel rooms. He was secretly sleeping with a lady. Even the bill astounded him. How did he owe that much? Relationships are intoxicating. It's not so much that were blind, as were blinded by the shiny new toy. Who builds a foundation first in a relationship? Who reads the manual to a new toy? Very few. It's sex first and talk later. What goes south first: sex. That's why some say that sex first is reckless. It's a hard reality that what you begin with, you end with.

The sad truth is talking later can't save most relationships. Many people do not make it a priority in the first place. Poor commitments towards understanding, compromise, and humbleness invaded their souls from beginning to end. The relationships ship is sinking. Most of the time without our knowledge. In the Titanic movie the captain knows the icebergs are out there. Yet, he gives in to the owners wish to go faster. In the recent movie I could see it in his eyes. It's great acting. A slight pause like he is hesitant. Yet, later he is asked to abandon ship, he pauses yet, again. How did we get here?

There is always a chance to save a marriage. Talk in the beginning before sex: a slight pause. Theoretically, if things go south you know how to talk. What you don't want is no talking and the separation complete with a slight pause of reflection. Why did this happen? There certainly is no talking after it's over either.

I feel that people are observed in the beginning of a relationship. We know that man is rough. We know that woman is unpredictable. I know someone who believed his pastor parents were wrong. He lived an ungodly life to prove them wrong too. That person is divorced and they are not. Who is right now? I know another guy who married a woman that loved to party. She cheated on him. Go figure. Were these people blind. Oh, no they knew. They were just willing to be blind.

It's like the cliffs of the Grand Canyon. We stood there for hours just marveling at the beauty. Then, like everyone else, we inched closer to the edge. Eventually were sitting two thousand feet above death. On the cliffs edge, we were trying to be brave, in awe, and raptured by the canyon. Yet, we are one sneeze away from certain death. Sometimes relationships are like that. How close to the obvious will you go?

It all seems fine. Sex is good. People are nice. Danger is subjective. Were fine unless we fall. I'm not going to fall. Just one harness would help. Maybe a railing. But no, we want the edge. That's where the excitement is. The chance to fail. We see a dangerous and reckless relationship. The warnings flood in from family and friends. In the Bible it says we are always given a way through our circumstances. A warning and good path are always there for the taking. Yet, over and over we want the edge with no harness.

Relationships should be healthy. Why do we pretend, it's healthy, in a bad relationship? People take their time getting out. My goodness, they take their time deciding to talk as well. I don't think I ever cared enough to know my Ex. We were not talkers. That seems so rotten, but it's true. I don't think I ever knew her. We knew sex. We knew money. No wonder we never traveled together that much. It was all wrong because we did not begin with talking.

People are not that blind. We can see relationships a mile away. It's not like you don't know. I had a friend who was going through a troubled marriage. One day she said that if she was half drunk, she could do me right on the spot. I ran away for a whole bunch of reasons. She was too pretty. Too willing. So was I. So why run? Just have fun. however, I could see it this time. It's anger from a failed marriage. It's passion that she was not getting. It was many things. If I chose to step in, then I would have blinded myself to what I saw coming. A troubled relationship. It would have not begun with talking either, I guarantee it.

There is a I know man in a long marriage. Actually, I know two. Hm... Maybe I know three? In each case there are two people in each relationship. In each marriage, I know the relationship is distant. If they say that time heals all wounds, then why are they growing apart? It's like their saying "I'd rather be distant and frustrated than talk." Why is it like that? How can two people who joyfully said "I do" now say "I won't?"

How are you described? Would your spouse describe you honestly? Maybe they would say it sarcastically or heaven forbid, derogatory. If things are different now, why are they? Maybe you allowed blindness to creep in your relationships. I have been treated poorly at Canada Post for 32 years. Yet, I stay hoping it get's better? I knew a lady who told me after 28

years she was raped by her husband. For the first time? 28 years! Don't tell me we can't see the relationship. It just might be what you think it is. A relationship that won't get better.

Describe a bad relationship. Then describe yours. What characteristics are similar and different? Honestly, you might have to ignore the similarities. Why? We all do. I know what makes a bad relationship. Yet, is it ever a priority when I begin one? To avoid the bad characteristics? There are other parts far more important like good sex. When good sex turns bland (it always does). What then? Try talking? Doing due diligence in the beginning (getting to understand each other) is never a bad idea.

We see that person across the room and think, dam I could do that. Then ten years in we stop growing. Why? It's because we did not make a list. A list of what we want in others. A list of the best traits in ourselves. We never looked under our own hood. I know so many failed second relationships. In those instances, I could see that they did not do the self-check beforehand. Instead, they just recklessly moved on to the next. We see something we like and just go for it. Blindly in most cases. I feel we tend to grow relationships on un-fertile ground where nothing will grow. Why do relationships die? Duh!

Unfertile ground? In the Bible Jesus mentions four types of ground to grow in. It's an analogy. There is a path that is trampled, well-trodden, and hard. Then he mentions rocky areas with little dirt. Thorny ground that chokes seed, and good soil. Relationships begin in various ways. What kind of ground do you want the seeds to grow on? The more I read this the more it scares me. How many relationships begin with fertile ground?

Do you have a relationship with yourself? Can you go inside your heart freely? Do you know your character? Your soul? Is it valued to the highest degree? Or, are you willing to risk it all at

the edge of a cliff? I feel that in a bad or failing relationship, we become protectionists and reflect inward. It becomes too easy seeing the hurt and anger. In that moment, it's not that easy to see how we got there.

Half the time, when trouble comes, I feel we retreat into a panic room. In that safe space where they can't get us. Yet, I can see some of what's going on. You know, a panic room has a few cameras. Still, you can't see it all. What if your spouse still loves you? What if they are hurt too? Maybe, the relationship is not as dead as it looks. Possibly, it's been dead for some time. Panic room cameras don't give a complete picture. Convenient, the others outside your locked heart can't see you either.

Let me get this straight. You run into the room and lock the door. There is no way to talk unless you let them in. We can't see what's really going on in your heart. I can't hug you. I can't talk to you. Further to that, you are the only one who can initiate the conversation. However, you feel justified locked up in the panic room. Why? It's because your soul is safe in there. No more risk of being hurt. No possibility of being misunderstood either.

Here is the most interesting part. You won't come out until it's safe. Can you relate to a relationship like that? I sure can. I am sitting here checking my heart right now. I bet I have a panic room too. This chapter is called *Seeing relationships* for so many reasons. The main point is that we can see it coming. In the beginning, we have a chance to test the relationship by talking. Yet, were afraid. I wonder if the panic room is available and well stocked right from the get go. When we see trouble brewing. Yet again, we run and hide. Who wants to be wrong? Who wants to have uncomfortable conversations. Have your panic room ready.

In a dysfunctional marriage, after 11 years, we went to a counselor. Oh, now we want to talk? Why did we last only two sessions? Why did we both have reasons the counselor was a waste of money? It's because the counselor could not bring us out of our panic rooms. We could see the problem. We could see the solutions. Yet, we were blind as a bat to opening our hearts to talk. Trapped in a room all by ourselves, yet in a relationship. Horrifying!

*I bet it never ever occurred to you that I can't say "Hello" to you and risk another goodbye-*

Taylor Swift

I bring this up because the counselor wanted us to talk. He wanted us to trust. People are people. I mean that in the saddest way. I want us both to take a moment to breath. Relationships are hard work. They are also fun and scary. Think of the verse by Taylor above. What are we really risking? Is it just heartbreak? I bet it goes way deeper than that. Do you really want to be an open book to your spouse? We suppose to be, but we rarely do. It's the fear of our relationship not being a best seller.

I think one of the reasons many relationships fail is because of baggage. I doubt we can clear all the baggage before entering into a relationship. They say we should. However, some baggage is hidden like a time bomb. When people move on from a failed relationship, they box up most of the baggage and take it with them. Then we unpack it in another relationship closet. Years later, rummaging around in a counseling session, we wonder why we kept it. I think many of us are unaware of much baggage we have.

I could write about baggage. Yet, a suitcase or trunk is full of something. That something is the all things we have gathered and packed away through life's experiences. In the recesses of our soul is where we might find our baggage. All the hurts, disappointments, joys, and desires.



We can see our relationships through our baggage. We can see the people we've encountered too. How easy is it for us to judge someone else's baggage? Why? It's because we all know what baggage looks like.

I have rolled my eyes at the weaknesses in others. Yet, we are a part of everyone. Each of us has baggage. Yet, what is baggage? Is it weakness, shame, ignorance, failure, and a bunch of lovely adjectives? Let's go through a series of ways we create baggage. Maybe, just maybe, we will see our relationships just a little clearer. Possibly, we could become a little more compassionate towards others hurts.

Seeing relationships for what they are takes time and experience. Second and third relationships groom veterans of heart break and love. These grizzled survivors know what they see in people. Yes, many chose to stay blind. I know they can see; they just chose not to. In the mirror though, it's different, personal. Our fertile ground of a relationship begins in the mirror.