

*We must free ourselves of the hope that the sea will ever rest. We must learn to sail in high winds-*Aristotle Onassis

Have you ever been in a situation where someone knew it was you? Let's say you were talking in a back room at a party. You're laughing and joking. At some point you return to the kitchen for a drink. A friend looks in and says out of the blue "I knew that was you." How did they know? Was it your laugh? Maybe they heard a distinct voice or word from you. Clearly, they thought of you as they listened to the voices in another room.

The most amazing part of that is the distance. Sometimes it's a practical joke. After it happens people always ask "who did it?" Everyone knows who. Yet again, there is distance. Your presence is felt across rooms. It can be across the city. We all knew it was you. I sent flowers to my wife. She said "I knew it was you." That was an easy one. I had done it before. I do believe we all leave an imprint on the places we visit or the people we know.

I have a way about me. People can recognize my voice, work, and humor. Hopefully it's not the smell. Maybe a woman dresses a certain way. A man likes his polo. How often are we reminded of someone by certain actions? My wife said she posted a Patrickism. What's that? I love posting puns. It reminds her of me. She had a bad experience with a guy named Bob. I love bugging her with that name. She hates it. Commenting on driving is my wife's thing. We all have unique things that make us who we are.

I believe that God made us that way. He said that he made us as individuals. It's a good thing. Lemmings are creatures in a game that follow each other. The point of the game is to

avoid having them all fall off a cliff at the same time. We don't want to be lemmings. Individuals go their own way. They do stuff we never thought of. Thank God for the individual.

Relationships are formed by individuals. Certainly, I love to people watch. The wife and I plan on sitting in the mall one day and rate couples. Do we think they belong together? It's fun to rate people based on their choice of a mate. Sometimes it's "yes" they go together. Other times it's "oh, God no!" Most likely though, there is no clear-cut formula for finding a mate. Some people just click and break all the rules.

So, what are the rules? Should we pick someone in the same career? Should they both want children? Is one a little bit country and the other a little bit rock and roll? Do they make a good match? I know a guy who loves to travel to one place. His wife wants travel to other places. They have been married for over two decades. A match? Apparently, it's been working for some time now. Yet, deep inside, there are vast differences. My Ex and I are polar opposites. I never knew that until after the divorce.

It has got me thinking about how we are built. What makes a good choice in a person? Family might be a big one. Yet, I am nothing like the others in my family. We all love sports, but I am the religious quirky one. Certainly, my own life experiences have changed me. My brothers have lived different lives. It seems odd because we grew up in the same family, yet, we are very, very different.

Maybe, our relationships are geared towards taste? I believe it. Imagine loving Mexican food and your wife hates it. Sure, my wife does not love everything I want to eat. Yet, down the middle is all the food we both love. That's the fringe food. Small stuff that binds us together. It's the same with music. I love my blues. She loves her pop boy bands. Down the middle is country,

rock, and Christian worship. I love adventure movies. She loves disaster movies. Our taste in small things has attracted us together.

Far too often though, we build a relationship on what I call these fringe tastes. Again, what are fringe tastes? It's that place where we eat together. Maybe, it's in a special group or event that drew us together. Did you meet at a party celebrating a special run of a sports team? Was their tragedy that bound a community together. I know a couple that met at an AA meeting. We agree in "the moment." People fall in love with "the moment." It draws like-minded hearts together. Yet, these are fringe moments in time. It's a mirage, covering the core of our relationship.

We cheer a victory together but isn't romance more than a special moment? What about sports like skiing or baseball? You do those things together but once the game is done, what then? I knew a guy who played ball. He met his partner there on the field. At home 10 years later, their relationship is a ghost of what it was. Fringe tastes sucked them into believing love was real. They are moments outside of real life. I call them fringe.

Most certainly, many people pick someone in the moment. We meet in a bar. Two people find love on a ski trip. Even high school makes sweethearts. I do think all these encounters are romantic. I love it. Yet, they say about 95% of high school romances end in divorce. Is a 5% success rate in surgery romantic? Would you take a chance on a surgeon that succeeded 5% of the time? Real successful romance and relationships go beyond fringe delights.

I know a couple who dated in high school. For four years they studied together. Every day they rode the bus, ate in the cafeteria, and so on. They were the talk of the school. That looked like love. These same two are not together today. Yet, they were so sure in the moment.

Actually, we all were so sure. They tasted a portion of their life together. The problem is with the rest of it. You can't feast on a moment in time and ignore the other meals of the day like bills, and work. Fringe tastes are not meat. They are only the crud on the meat.

It's these types of examples that made Joshua Harris write "I kissed dating goodbye." He did not quit dating. Instead, he took a break to work on himself for a time. To create the best mate for his future wife. He wanted a relationship that was stronger than feelings. Stronger than moments and events. Far too often, what binds us, is really small and frail. We need to build something better.

I know people struggle with this. Can you put aside sexual preference? Could you put aside gender? How about putting aside race. It's been glued into our brain to desire those things in a mate. I was watching a video series on being a godly man. The pastor made the point that in the past there were two types of people: kids and adults. In the last 100 years we have created a new category called adolescence. He claims that people get stuck in adolescence and become adult kids with big toys, money, and bad habits. Possibly adolescence want fringe tastes over real meat?

He might be right, and it has made me wonder. What if there was no transfer to adulthood? What if there was no rite of passage? Instead, adults are just older reckless teenagers. That could explain our poor relationship ratings. Teenagers are notorious for not thinking first. Do we really pick the best spouse or do we tend to pick an "in the moment spouse?" Possibly, were having too much fun trying fringe tastes.

On social media people tend to define themselves by race, gender, or sexual preference. We tell the world that it's the most important thing. As a person, we are starting to add social tags to

our identity. Are you African American? Is she asexual? Female power is the energy source of Hollywood all of a sudden. Yet race has divorce. Gender has baggage. Sexual preference has misunderstanding, cheating, and communication issues. Why? They are still people.

We are a mixture of human complication. Race, gender, and sexual preference can't fix human traits. Unfortunately, we have muddied the relationship swamp by diversifying who we are. People hate defining a girl as a woman. We struggle with calling a man masculine. Imagine calling an African American and American? We can't do that. Recently, some have tried to blame genetics for our problems. Mother nature or God got the sex wrong. In the end, a person is standing there. Strip away the titles, social tags, and origins and all you have to an alien is a human being.

So here we stand right back where we started. In front of the mirror. Relationships are made up of humans. They usually do things. We go to movies, concerts, and dinner. We have common human traits but were not the same. Who really orders the same food? Don't we usually have a rule "your turn, then my turn?" Yes, in a relationship we are two individuals.

Fringe tastes are fun, but they are not what makes us human at the core. Why is it that we pick relationships based on taste? If we come in as a human with clothes on. Then why do we love doing fringe things with them so much? What if we picked a mate based on looks, smarts, and character? Sure, you can throw in a little taste like music and food. Yet, the bulk of our pick should be the person.

I said this already but I never really tried to know my Ex in 12 years. It's stunning. I know a guy who is living with a girl who works on a different shift. They met under tough circumstances. Yet, each one found something in the others character they admired. Honestly,

they are together because they fell for the person. The fringe stuff like work shifts and baggage were secondary. They would work it out. Each of their character is worth fighting for.

Recently, work has made them two lovers passing in the night like ships. Working opposite shifts is not a relationship. I feel the reason it will succeed is directly because they want the person over the fringe tastes. Two people who love to ski could divorce if you take skiing away. Two people in love with each other regardless of their fringe tastes are harder to split. It's you and me that are the most important thing in a relationship. We need to break away from loving our fringe tastes more.

I believe what killed my first marriage was not wanting to know the other deeply. We did not come together because of mutual admiration. How do I know that? It's because these days the both of us are a vague shell of who we were. All the things she is now, I am not. Her hopes and dreams are vastly different than mine. Again, it's stunning the difference. I am positive that both of us were never in that relationship for each other. Never!

Yet, we were trained to look first. Family does a poor job of growing character. I suppose that parents don't feel it's their job to train children to be adults. Oh, many say they do, but school and the social media has taken over. Years ago, it was the churches responsibility for social reform. They fought prostitution and child labor laws. In the last fifty years or so, that responsibility has been acquired by the government. Schools have been taking over parenting for some time. Hence the church and family have become redundant.

What's left at home to guide us? Who trains us to be the best person possible? I mean honorable, companionate, and respectful? Social media? School? God help us, the government? Instead it's a watered-down family. We live together, but (in reality) we don't live together. How

often does the modern family eat together, watch TV, or even go to a show? No wonder that my Ex and I never talked. The modern family never trained us how.

So, if our family atmosphere trained us then it's not all roses. People are not told to change, shape up, or pick good character. How do I know? Who is at home enough to tell them? The modern family are just ships passing by. It just might come back to adolescence. Those kids on a cognitive level can only see a few days into the future. Their minds have not developed the ability to reason, plan, and evaluate. Imagine what would happen if they were never trained to go beyond adolescence?

It looks like this. A reckless person moves on from one person to another. They are chasing, searching, and trying out everyone in-front of them. Criteria? Na, it's just one taste after another. All along, they are gathering more baggage and crud. Eventually, all we have is a 30-40-year old that is single and damaged. Trust me, I see Facebook and twitter littered with relationship staved people. The problem is stopping the cycle. The question has become "what cycle." This new generation has no clue how to break out of dysfunctional family training. Why? They believe there is nothing wrong. Hollow relationships are the norm.

Suddenly, were fighting an uphill battle with one another. There have been pushes to cancel Mother and Father's Day. A drive to cancel Valentines' day. A concerned effort to change Christmas. Why? Sure, it could be on religious grounds. Maybe sexual orientation plays a role. Yet, I fear it's deeper. Who wants to be singled out? Who likes to be picked on? To top it off, who wants to be labeled different, baggage, or mistake ridden? It's become a fight to ignore the problems and sanitize the results. I truly believe we do relationships worse today than ever before.

I fear were trying to crush the individual by adding social tags. Putting individuals into groups. Then nobody is responsible for their individual choices and actions. The group is the victim. The social tag gives you lenience and special rights. What's lost is you and me? We are schooled to love fringe tastes and ignore the real meat of what makes a relationship. What if we want to be different? What if were sick of social dysfunction?

There is a way to combat this norm of relationship dysfunction. What if we knew ourselves better? What if our parents took the time to teach, train, and school us into adulthood? If we had a rite of passage to adult, what could happen? Maybe, someone would help us work on problems and flaws. Possibly, there would be inspiration, encouragement, and affirmation. A celebration of who we are. Dreaming of who we could be. The fringe tastes? It becomes secondary to knowing and encouraging others to be the best they can be.

*Proverbs 22:6 "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it."*

What a crazy plan. Train children to be individuals. Have them look in the mirror with admiration? That's nuts. Imagine them having someone they adored in a relationship? Imagine them adoring the spouse for who they are and not what they do? They could pick someone more closely related to themselves. Wow! Pick a partner that does what we love. Imagine sharing the same life goals. Sounds doomed doesn't it. Actually, it doesn't.

Oddly enough, this plays out in different arenas. Many companies try and pick workers that fit the business. Volunteering is generally done by those who love people (not always). Places like a church have the grumpy people counting money while the happy people are greeters. Even the internet knows. Over the years my Facebook has changed a little. I have less



friends who hate what I like. At-least the ones I still have respect my beliefs even if it's not theirs. Like-minded people get along better.

I feel my social media is geared towards the group at the expense of the individual. You know, the politically correct thing. My high school group has shrunk to those who loves us more than themselves. Equally, each one of us feels free to be themselves within the group.

I was stunned at work. I had worked in a depot for 14 years. Worked with many of the same people too. Then I decided to try a new depot. I was shocked to find that I missed what I had. All those years, that depot was being molded a certain way an I never knew it. I never realized that I was part of a like-minded people.

Sometimes we need a shake up to know the truth. My divorce caused me to face what good and bad relationships are really like. I never knew that while I was on the inside of a bad one. I did not know a good depot until I left. I miss the good relationships I had. What I have learned is that I need to accept me for who I am. I also need people who accept me for who I am too.

Good relationships are hard to find. How can we get there? It came by looking hard into the mirror. It came from looking hard at the destructive relationships I had. Good friends believe in me. God has affirmed that he believes in me. That has been my rite of passage from being a kid to adult. I hate saying that but it's true. I am doing ok.

The most important thing we can do to gain good relationships is value you and me. Put so much value on the mirror and your true friends. I can't say it enough. If you find worth in "you" then it's my hope you will protect and nurture "you." Congruent to that, you will nurture

and protect your dearest friendships. With that in mind, we can take that care and strength into other parts of our lives.

Leaving my depot for another has taught me something. One of the best places to practice relationships is at work. Most of us work. Now, do we pick the right job? Do we stay at the right place? There is no place that fosters more hatred and comradery than at work. With that said, it has the ability to make or break us. Work is more than money. Many people find a life mate through work. Let's look at the life of relationships in a job.