

# Roadblocks to Maturity

Before we can practice Biblical love we need to identify the roadblocks we have developed which will prevent us from practicing love effectively. Wrong attitudes need to be removed and replaced by Biblical attitudes.

## **I. Road Block: Self-Image:**

e.g. Bad self-image--how we view ourselves. Let's be clear about this--The Bible assumes that we love ourselves. Eph 5--"no one even hated herself", or love one another as we love self.

So we're not talking about learning to love ourselves--we're talking about learning to accept certain things about ourselves we don't like.

Self-image is closely tied to:

1. Physical appearance--looking in the mirror are there things you'd like to change. Height, shape of features, face, hair, body shape, etc.
2. Parents--embarrassed by them, their input was negative--put down.
3. Talents--not the ones which are currently popular, or spiritual gifts.
4. Environmental factors--poor family, uneducated, no status in the community.

These four things closely related to self image and yet self image is not determined by these things, but by whose evaluation of these things we respect and seek their acceptance and approval.

These things need not dictate your evaluation. If we take God's evaluation and understand the purpose all these things have in our lives then we will be able to build a proper self-image.

--a healthy acceptance of how we are.

--a proper anticipation of how we can be used.

It's because we have accepted other people's evaluation of our figure, hair, looks, backgrounds, talents--their exaggerated, distorted view and acceptance based on that false view produces a negative self-image because no one can measure up to the world's so called perfection.

Often our perception of how these people evaluate us is way off--they may not be evaluating you negatively but you are sure they are so you develop a negative self-image based on your false perception of their view.

~~With a negative self-image you will have:~~

1. Inferiority complex with others

2. Insecurity

3. Sense of rejection by others

4. Fatalism about what life will hold for you

5. Strong tendency to live with a self fulfilling prophecy--if you view yourselves as losers you'll make sure that negative outlook controls your lives and convince others.

Even if you have a positive self-image it's probably based on world's evaluation--that's dangerous. Because you will change and lose these looks--man's evaluation basis will change and you'll be out of sync with the world system--then what will you do?

"Mid-life Crisis" occurs because especially a man's self image was built on human evaluation of looking good, muscular, having physical powers, being young and virile. The things they based their life on they no longer measure up to--they panic and get a young girl. This is everyone's problem not only men.

#### Women--Consequences of Negative self-image:

1. Inability to trust God, even a deep seated suspicion or resentment and bitterness towards God.

2. Doubting God's love when looking in a mirror.

3. Resisting and resenting authority figures--parents, bosses.

4. So through life feeling cheated--God owes me something--a floating bitterness towards authority.

5. Devastating hindrance towards developing love relationships because of self-focus is negative. Focus of things about ourselves we don't like and relate with people in a way to get their approval rather than give to meet their needs.

e.g. Boasting constantly--get approval

e.g. Always talking, knowing everything, never listening, "pushy"

e.g. downgrade ourselves to get sympathy.

This never works--only drives people away--thus fulfilling our negative view of self. As long as we are living to please each other we can't tap into God's view of us and relate with Him. Man's evaluation of us leads us to materialism--spend all kinds of time and money on clothes, make-up, body--all external and expensive.

#### II. Road Block: Bitterness:

Bitterness equals unresolved conflict with another another person's offense toward us and our wrong response--takes root in the form of bitterness. Usually toward a "key" person--like your parents.

e.g. Father who was never pleased with you—never did enough or mother put you down all the time.

This is the principle upon which bitterness operates. I have been deeply hurt and offended and that person has to pay. Vengeance principle.

### Symptoms:

1. Remembering and ruminating over the offense, nursing the sense of hurt and injury. Carrying on a dialogue as you tell them off.
2. Punish the other person by silence or withholding what they want from you or lashing out at the person.
3. Nearly everyone has a root of bitterness toward someone—sometime in life.

 This will effectively stonewall your ability to love. We think our bitterness is only toward the offending person. That's not true—it effects our relationships with all people and the Bible says it "defiles" all our relations.

### Results:

1. Often have physical problems—many diseases are traced to unresolved bitterness.
2. Always have emotional problems. More or less chronically depressed—because drain our emotional reserves. We have a finite amount of emotion which is drained and depleted by anger and bitterness. Depression results—exhaustion from bitterness. Unable to cultivate love relationships with others. Many people remind us of the person we are bitter towards.

e.g. Dad strong and controlling therefore you are bitter towards any strong authority figure. We repel others because of our bitterness—we exude negativity on face and body language. Then we wind up becoming just like the one we are bitter towards—we focus on the one we are bitter towards and become like them.

3. Spiritually—1 Jhn 2:9; 4:2—darkness as a result of bitterness. Inability to love God when in hatred—bitterness. Losing our experiential sense of forgiveness from God, feel alienated vulnerable to accusation. You relate to others on a works mentality—you did x—I will do x to you. Law produces sin. No one pays more than you when you are bitter. Health, emotional problems, no love relationships, function under law, eventually your personality and looks drive everyone away.

### III. Road Block: Fear:

 We know something is wrong with us and we become fearful—fearful of exposure (like Adam and Eve). So we use all sorts of means to hide our fear—but fear multiplies like cancer—fear intensifies and multiplies. Fear spreads to include money, fame, power, position, things, boyfriend, marriage, home, etc.

Subtle strategies—critical spirit, self-assertion, dogmaticism, shyness, withdrawal. Anything to keep from exposure—we protect ourselves in layers because of fear. Inspired ingenuity—jokes, illness, manipulation, quietness, sickness, depression—to keep our real selves safely hidden from sight.

Superficiality results—real relating does not exist when we layer ourselves over with self-protective words or activities. C.S. Lewis once said "The basic laboratory for knowing God is the Christian Body of Christ."

When it is surfacey through fear of openness we fail one another. e.g. Women—girls—can project friendliness and be delightful—only to cover and protect themselves from being real and open. Fear motivated graciousness keeps people at a distance—never make deep relationships.

Unwillingness to express anger, confront and be real is often not love but fear of losing a relationship—being a "man (woman)-pleaser." It is most natural to maintain a commitment to our own interpersonal comfort, a commitment that creates a feeling of uneasiness whenever we are tempted to risk real involvement in someone else's life. Most of us are simply afraid to threaten our sense of comfortable well-being. Sins of omission.

Only when I accept what I fear, resolving that I am willing to endure whatever may happen, will the fear lose its power. 1 Jhn 4:18—"Perfect love casts our fear." When I obey God I will be freed from the entanglements of fear. Holding onto anyone, self or anything but God is really idolatry—our fears often make us hang onto situations, things or people because we don't trust God to be good to us.

God is the one who loves perfectly. Perfect love casts our fear—and you can trust your life and all your secrets to Him—He will not rip you off. He'll do what's best for you and make you completely fulfilled, joyful, giving you the desires of your heart.

#### IV. Road Block: Manipulation:

Manipulation is essentially our sin area. We women are the originators and perfecters of masterful manipulation. In thinking about why females are so adept at manipulation I came to the conclusion it is because we are the weaker sex—the responders. So rather than punch people out to get what we want (like men do) or confront straight forwardly we have perfected manipulation to get what we want, to get even, to willfully control others, to run peoples lives for our benefit, to build our own kingdom, to insure our children will always be emotionally dependent on us, to be the admired center of attention. I could go on and on. But it's so depressing.

Possibly we manipulate more when we have a low self-image and have been rejected. But it's clear every temperament has its own special method of effective manipulation.

It's also clear that we know we can get our own selfish way with men when we become expert manipulators—they can be fooled every time—only later do they realize and resent our manipulation.

This sin is probably the ugliest one and the most destructive (subtle) of all our sins. It certainly leads to the greatest alienation and distrust between people—men and women, women and women, parents and children. Manipulation requires layering, layers of fakey covering to protect the secret plans we have.

It also requires extensive time periods to think out and carry out these plans.

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In addition usually more than one person is required to carry out the elaborate schemes--so that means more people are hurt--they are used and discarded as needed.

Finally God is completely left out of any manipulations--how can you trust God when you are orchestrating your own selfish plan for your own self-aggrandisement or desire or attention.

To trust God and obey His world is immediately out of the realism of manipulation. He will bring to pass, not our manipulation and He won't use our manipulation rather He will expose it.

This afternoon we will be studying in depth the reasons for and the ways in which we manipulate. So let me just give a Biblical example. Sarah as she manipulate Abraham to have a baby by Hagar and lived to suffer the results to Hagar despising her, etc. Tamar.

#### V. Road Block: Judging Motives:

The closer you get to people the more clearly you see their idiosyncrasies, bad habits, sin problems and that frustrates and angers you since your own identity is now tied in with that person.

e.g. Husband, boy friend or roommate. They bug you and they embarass you, irritate.

How we response to this is just as crucial as the previous areas we've discussed. Little offenses pile up and we judge the person. Matt 7:1-5 identifies the wrong response. This passage is about how you view others--the way you view others is going to tend to determine how they reciprocate. This judging doesn't mean we can't judge the morality of a person's offense--we are to judge the right or wrongness of the person's offense--But we separate the person from her offense and don't use the offense as an excuse to write her off, despise her, ignore her--in other words, Judge her.

Wrong way to judge is by punishing her with silence, anger, etc. Depending on temperament.

This is a natural, instinctive response--we are all fallen sinful. But this starts the cycle of reciprocity--which eventually erodes trust, respect, love--the relationship breaks apart.

Vss. 3-5 What's the log? It's judging the person--my judging their person and sin is much more damaging sin to me and our relationship then the person' sin. i.e. Hate--judging it; mental murder Matt 5.

Quite often we are guilty of the very same kind of sin we judge in others--that's why we so quickly recognize it! We are used to it in our own life!

Truly this log is hypocrisy--imposing on others a standard I refuse to live by. We want others to deal with us under grace but we reserve the right to deal with them under law.

The log vs. speck refers not only to the magnitude of my sin vs. theirs, but also the priority in dealing with mine before theirs--my own sin is the one I'm most responsible for.

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Right way to deal with Log—acknowledge and depend before God. Attitude. Log keeps you from even dealing with speck. God will make us decide—do we want to come out on top or do we want the relationship.

e.g. Going to parents to ask for forgiveness for holding bitterness, anger, etc.—not in order to change them.

Now after dealing with our log we can deal with the "speck". Now my attitude has changed from using the speck as an excuse to judge her to wanting to help her remove it.

We may even find that the "speck" doesn't exist—we just misinterpreted what she did or said. We judged the motive instead of having concrete proof of sin on her part.

But usually there is a "speck". How do I remove it? Like an eye-surgeon. With care, sensitivity, patience.

#### Guidelines:

Deal with concrete specific issues and attitudes—not vague "I don't know what you're talking about".

Don't judge motives—ask!

Appeal to scripture, remember to power of the Word.

If you meet with resistance give her time, even though this is an immature response. Pushing it through causes defensiveness.

Be constructive—have a plan that will overcome the problem and replace with Biblical action and attitude.