



## Time to Say Goodbye – Ending Relationships

### P<sub>review</sub>

We are blessed if we have life-long relationships with people who are dear to us, but each of us has had relationships we had to end.

### P<sub>raise</sub>

Read **Deuteronomy 31:6-8**. Unless we choose to end our relationship with God, He will stay with us for the rest of our lives and throughout eternity. Does anyone want to share a time when Jesus was there for you?

### P<sub>arable</sub>

It is possible for a sweet relationship to turn sour. A toxic relationship will destroy our hearts and minds, and sometimes even our physical bodies if the other person is abusive. Here are some biblical examples of toxic relationships that had to end.

1. Sometimes the “sour” one severs the relationship.

Samson was crazy about his girlfriend Delilah. He didn't know Delilah's true love was money, not him. She accepted a fantastic bribe from Samson's enemies to discover the source of his strength: his uncut hair. She cajoled Samson and when he caved, she whacked off his hair while he slept. Samson ended up blind, grinding at a mill like a slave.

Samson had known his relationship with Delilah was trouble. She was a Philistine, not an Israelite. His parents had begged him to stay away from her, but he chose her in spite of their pleas. Even though Samson was foolish, God stayed with him until Samson gave his heart back to God. In the end, Samson's strength was restored and he killed more of God's enemies on the day of his death than he had during his entire life [**Judges 16**]. Sadly, Delilah hadn't ended the relationship until it was too late for Samson to survive.

2. Sometimes the “sweet” one severs the relationship.

King Saul embroiled young David in a cycle of abuse. At first the king loved David, then when the people praised David for his victories, the king became insanely jealous and tried to



kill David. The king would apologize and relent, only to repeat the cycle and try to kill David. He finally began hunting David like prey.

David was loyal to Saul because he was the Lord's anointed. But David didn't have a choice; if he wanted to survive, he had to end his relationship with Saul. Saul's son Jonathan agreed and told David to "go in peace." David left to begin a life apart from Saul's family. If he hadn't, he never would have fulfilled God's plan for his life to become the next king, the first of an everlasting dynasty [I Samuel 19; 20; 24; II Samuel 7].

### 3. Sometimes God severs the relationship.

Eli the priest had two grown sons, Hophni and Phineas. They were priests too, but they were evil. They bullied worshipers who came to sacrifice and grabbed choice cuts of meat from the sacrificial animals. They slept around with women even though they were married. Eli chided them about their behavior, but they blew him off. Eli figured it was hopeless; it was easier to let them do what they wanted.

One day, a prophet of God confronted Eli with a message of judgment because he had tolerated his sons' vile behavior. The family's place in the priestly line would be cut off. The prophet warned that all three of them would die on the same day. I Samuel 2:22-35 and 4:16-18.

Eli was sitting anxiously, awaiting news of the battle with the Philistines, when the news came: His two sons were dead, and the Ark of God was taken. Struck by fate, Eli fell off the bench backward and died.

## Present

Most of our relationships don't have physical life-and-death consequences like the ones in the Bible stories above. But our relationship choices do have spiritual and emotional consequences. They affect what careers we choose, who we marry, and most important, the condition of our heart and soul.

## Practice

Take inventory of your relationships. Draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper. On one side write the names of all of the people who are good for you and why. On the other side of the paper, write the names of all of the people who are bad for you and why. [Keep



these confidential.] You have the choice of who you allow in your life. Make choices that lead to a good life.

## **P**ray

God, thank You for all the good relationships we have. Help us to deal wisely with the bad choices we have made. Give us strength to end relationships that are toxic.

## **P**lus

Go home today and pray about your relationships. Is there one you need to sever? If you need to, talk to an adult you trust who can help you.