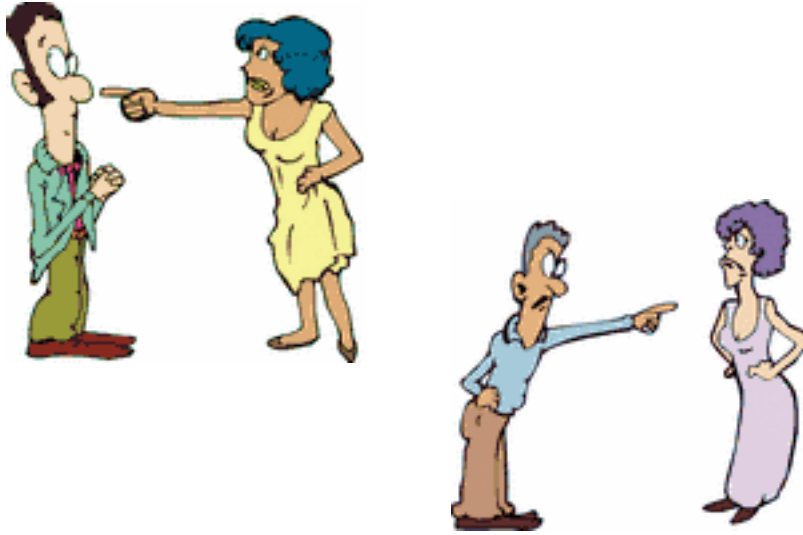


# God, Why Did You Put *That* Person in My Life?



**Answers To Why You Find Yourself Having  
To Deal With Difficult Relationships**

*By Chris Simpson*

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“God, Why Did You Put *That* Person in My Life?” Does someone in particular come to mind when you ask that question? Is it because of them that you decided to read this article? Without a doubt, we’ve all come to God at times with frustrations concerning people in our lives. Hopefully, in the next few pages, you’ll find some answers as to why you may be having to deal with certain difficult relationships. First, consider something Jesus said along this line:

*“You have heard that it has been said, ‘You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.’”* (Matthew 5:43)

This verse really makes sense. Why? Because we all like to have people around us who are compatible with us and who make us feel comfortable. Isn’t that right? If we had our way, we’d probably ask God to let us pick and choose the types and temperaments of people we have to deal with every day. We’d probably end up, though, like that guy in an old “Twilight Zone” episode. He was given an opportunity to pick the people he liked to be in his life - but every one of them turned out to be exactly like him. What a nightmare!

The truth is, if it’s at all possible, we tend to avoid incompatible and uncomfortable people. We would spend time, if we could, with only those people (now be honest!) that make us feel loved, that make us feel good, and who tend to encourage and exhort us. Am I right?

So, really, this verse makes sense, “...love your friends and hate your enemies.” Now look at the next verse:

## The Guts of Christianity

*“But I say to you, ‘love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.’” (Matthew 5:44)*

What Jesus asks of His followers no other religion asks, not Hinduism, Buddhism, or even Islam. In fact, Muslims observe something called “jihad” (holy war), which means you get a ticket to paradise after you’ve killed your heathen enemy. Jesus asks the opposite – to *love* your enemies! And to bless, do good, and pray for those that curse, hate, use and persecute you.

This is the guts of Christianity. In fact, it’s an area that very much determines one’s maturity or immaturity. To truly love someone when they treat you poorly is, honestly, anything but easy. Why is it then that this is such a core part of the Christian faith? Consider the following verse:

*For we also were at times foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. (Titus 3:3)*

Let me ask you, does this verse in any way describe your past? The truth is – most *have* grown up in such dysfunctional environments. Anger, abuse, fear, and insecurity are often the result of unhealthy relationships with parents, other authority figures, and with peers, particularly during the time of puberty. As a result, many young people long for the day when they can escape home and carve out a life of their own. However, because of past hurtful relationships, they often start out their adult life careful, cautious, and controlling when it comes to close and intimate friends. Why? Well, for them to simply keep from being hurt any more than they already have been so many times in their life.

Now, we may not go about consciously being cautious and selective in picking our friends. It's not that we would say to different ones, "Well, I want you for a friend, but I certainly don't want you!" It just kind of happens. You may find yourself endeared to certain people because you know they're safe - they're not going to hurt you. At the same time, you may find yourself throwing up walls with others - because they remind you of those that hurt you in the past.

This isn't at all fair to them, yet people do this all the time. It can get to the point where you might do all kinds of drastic things to get away from those that have been the source of misery in your life (or from those that remind you of those who hurt you). Many have fled into (or out of) marriages or jobs, or even have moved to get away from someone that reminds them of the pain of their past. The apostle John wrote:

*There is no fear in love. But perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment. The one who fears is not matured in love. (1 John 4:18)*

Many have never 'grown up' in God's love. While they may have matured in knowledge, in spiritual giftedness, and in talents and abilities - they've never really learned what God's love is all about. It's all about loving someone *in spite* of everything, as opposed to most of our loves and affections where we love others *because of* something.

### Learning To Love the Hard-To-Love

Loving the unlovable, or the unloving, is difficult. Jesus said (in so many words), "It's easy to love those that love you. Do not the publicans do the same? But I say, love those who hate you, persecute you and despise you. Pray for them. Go the extra mile for them. If they smite you on your cheek, turn to them the other

cheek.” Jesus left His disciples really only one command: to love one another! He said that whatever you did to the least of His brothers, you did to Him. In fact, He said that you fulfill the whole Law when you love your neighbor as yourself.

The problem today is that so many say the words, “Lord I love you; I’ll follow you; I want to do your will,” while, at the same time, they nurse bitter or critical attitudes in their heart. Satan’s finest achievement is to bring someone to the point where they’re religious on the outside but full of hypocrisy and phoniness within. The apostle John said:

*If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. (1 Jn 4:20)*

This business about loving the ‘hard-to-love’ is the fine print no one told you about when you went to the altar to be saved. That was certainly true for me! In the early days of my walk, the Lord led me down the pathways of righteousness, showing me that He was my Shepherd that would meet all my needs (as described in Psalm 23). Then, He led me by the green grass of His Word and by the still waters of His Spirit, all the while seeking to restore my wounded soul. It was only much later that He called me to the second stage: the valley of the shadow of death.

And, I’m so glad it’s just the valley of the *shadow* of death, aren’t you? Nevertheless, it’s a place you must go if you’re ever to learn how to truly love. The greatest incentive to go through the valley, however, is to get to what’s on the other side. God spreads a table before you in the presence of your enemies, He anoints your head with oil, and He causes your cup of blessings to overflow!

The Lord wants to take you from contentedly chewing on green grass and sitting by quiet waters to the place where you’re feasting at a rich table in the very

face of your enemy! A mature believer is one who's no longer intimidated by the roar of the enemy; rather, the enemy is intimidated by them! Also, in the midst of the valley the tense changes from 'He' to 'You' - from third person to the first person. Up to that point David said, "He makes me; He leads me; He restores. But, in the valley he says, "I will fear no evil for *you* are with me." Deep intimacy with Jesus is found only as we discover Him faithful and comforting in the midst of the trials of life.

### What is the Valley of the Shadow of Death?

Now the question to ask is – just what is this valley of the shadow of death? I believe it's the place where God exposes and heals the hurts, fears, and insecurities that have been with you all of your life. How? Well, one way is by putting certain people in your life - the very ones you would not normally choose. In fact, if you had any say about it, they'd probably be the last ones you would invite to your party. But what does God do? He puts them smack dab right in front of you. Who are they? Well, it may be your boss, a co-worker, a neighbor, or even your spouse or child – someone who is just not comfortable, compatible or easy to get along with. They may have the type of personality that you would studiously avoid at all costs. But - God places them in your life as gifts.

You might say, "What do you mean – gifts? At times they seem more like a curse!" But the truth is, just about everyone has someone in their life that would qualify as a "gift." Do you? You know – that person that finds it too easy to annoy you, use you, or talk about you behind your back. God allows those people to be in your life to teach you how to really love. It's those kinds of people that push you to your knees in desperation, particularly when you see all the negative stuff coming up in your soul when you're around them.

King David, one of the Bible's most fascinating characters, had plenty of "gifts" in his life. David, known as a man after God's own heart, had to contend with many difficult relationships, including his older brother, Saul his king, his own son and members of Saul's family. Let's look at these in particular.

### David's Older Brother

David was sent by his father to visit with his brothers who were fighting in Saul's army against the Philistines. When David arrived, he saw the soldiers greatly intimidated by Goliath, the Philistines' prize warrior. After asking why the Lord's men were afraid of this Philistine, his brother had some things to say:

*When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the other soldiers, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle." "Now what have I done?" said David. "Can't I even speak?" (1 Samuel 17:28-29)*

David was innocently asking questions, and his brother Eliab verbally slapped him down. Eliab was probably embarrassed that his little brother was out there in the midst of the battle, exposing the soldier's fear of the a Philistine warrior Goliath. Like so many of us, David suffered with critical, judgmental family members. If you suffer from the same, then you're in good company. Look what Jesus had to go through:

*Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." (Mark 3:20-21)*



Ever dread going back home, like at Christmas time, to be with your family? It can be like a time warp. Suddenly, you're fourteen again: "Sit up." your mother says. "Take your elbows off the table." "Hey mom, will you lighten up? I'm forty years old!" Jesus had a similar problem. His own family didn't respect Him. They wanted to treat Him like a kid. Consider David's relationship with King Saul.

### David's Relationship With King Saul

*When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David. The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the harp, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice. (1 Sam 18:6-11)*

David not only had problems with his family members, but he also had a problem with his abusive and angry authority figure – King Saul. Saul, a very insecure and dangerous man, actually tried to stab David in a fit of jealousy. He spent years chasing David, trying to kill him. Let me ask you – have you ever had an angry or abusive authority figure? Maybe a boss who operated in insecure control, whose favorite book was called "Management by Intimidation." Maybe it was your father who didn't know the difference between correction and rejection – always punishing you with anger. Or maybe it's been a husband or wife with defensive, controlling anger. The spears they throw are words that are meant to hurt and wound. David also had an awful experience with his son Absalom.

## David's Son Absalom

*In the course of time, Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses and with fifty men to run ahead of him. He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone came with a complaint to be placed before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out to him, "What town are you from?" He would answer, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you." And Absalom would add, "If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that he gets justice." Also, whenever anyone approached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him. Absalom behaved in this way toward all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he stole the hearts of the men of Israel. (2 Samuel 15:1-6)*

Through subtlety, deceit and a revengeful heart, Absalom succeeded in stealing the affections of many Israelites away from his father, the king. This literally raised a rebellion and insurrection, and, but for God's mercy, David would have lost his kingdom and probably his life. And we think we have problems with our kids! Finally, as we will see, David also struggled with one of Saul's relatives.

## David and Shimei

*As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the same clan as Saul's family came out from there. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he cursed as he came out. He pelted David and all the king's officials with stones, though all the troops and the special guard were on David's right and left. As he cursed, Shimei said, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel! The Lord has repaid you for*

*all the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned. The Lord has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. You have come to ruin because you are a man of blood!”*

Now this ranks right up there as one of those supreme acts of stupidity. David is surrounded by his mighty men, who all had swords and spears, while this guy was casting rocks and cursing him. This one man, apparently full of resentment at David having inherited Saul’s throne, kept saying, “Hey David, you’re a loser! Look at you, running from your son!” Abashai, one of David’s right-hand men, then said:

*“Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head.” But the king said, “What do you and I have in common, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the Lord said to him, ‘Curse David,’ who can ask, ‘Why do you do this?’” David then said to Abishai and all his officials, “My son, who is of my own flesh, is trying to take my life. How much more, then, this Benjamite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for the Lord has told him to. It may be that the Lord will see my distress and repay me with good for the cursing I am receiving today.” (2 Sam 16:5-12)*

Abashai would have none of this man’s cursing and wanted David to let him cut off his head. David rebuked him for this. In some ways, Abashai represents a normal response to someone attacking you or putting you down. That’s exactly what our initial response usually is – off with the head of someone who curses me!

### Learning To Acknowledge God In All Your Ways

At this point David could have asked the question we so often ask, “God, why did you put this person in my life?” David, however, was a man after God’s own heart. He understood what it meant to love your enemies and to bless those that

curse you. In fact, he acknowledged the Lord in this dire situation and appealed to God to deal with it. It was his son Solomon who later wrote the following:

*“...in all your ways acknowledge God, and he will make your paths straight.”*  
(Prov 3:5-6)

Unfortunately, many today instead acknowledge *the devil* in all of their ways. The first thing believers will often do when things go wrong, or bad situations arise, is to start rebuking Satan. Now, Satan *may* be the force at work and *may* need rebuking – but you must first recognize that God is sovereign. Whatever the enemy is doing, you can be sure that he can't do it apart from the knowledge of God. There are times when God allows the devil to operate in certain lives and situations. Why? Because sometimes that's the only way he can get our attention. Paul tells us that it's the kindness of God that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). But, he also says that when God's kindness isn't effective, He'll send His severity:

*Consider therefore the kindness and severity of God: severity to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.* (Rom 11:22)

The bottom line is that God will do whatever is necessary to bring His sons and daughters to maturity in Christ – even if it takes attacks of the enemy to wake us up concerning our sins or attitudes. This is a quite an unpopular notion – that God can use the devil to accomplish His will. However, scripture affirms this fact from Genesis to Revelation. Consider the Book of Job. Job was undoubtedly a faithful man, as God attests in the first few chapters. However, Job had a pride problem: he was self-righteous. All of Job's sufferings were sent to bring him to the point of seeing and turning from his self-righteous attitudes. He steadfastly refused to do so. In fact, even after 32 chapters, we still find Job stuck in this sin:

*So these three men stopped answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. But Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became very angry with Job for justifying himself rather than God. (Job 32:1-2)*

It took God's direct rebuke (that lasted for 4 chapters) to bring Job to realize his prideful state and to truly repent:

*"My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:5-6)*

So it is with us. The Lord will speak to us concerning an area in our lives that's displeasing to Him. However, as is so often the case, we may ignore His gentle voice and continue the attitude or behavior – believing that it's not "that bad," and, after all, "God will forgive me."

The Lord will put up with this for a while. But, eventually, He'll do whatever it takes to help you see what you've been steadfastly ignoring. He often does this through relationships. When God puts someone in your life that causes emotional stress and discomfort, you'll inevitably come to Him for relief. It's then that you'll tend to be more open to His correction – because you'll find yourself mightily offended in others by the very thing that God finds offensive in you!

### Jesus Had His Own Relationship "Gifts" As Well

*It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus, knowing that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God, got up from the meal, took off his*

*outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. (John 13:1-5)*

There's something truly revealing in this passage where it says, "Jesus, knowing...that he had come from God and was returning to God..." In other words - Jesus was secure in the love of His Father, knowing where He had come from and where He was going. And, because of that, He had the capacity to love those that His Father had given Him.

One reason God puts "people gifts" in our lives is to bring to the surface all of our insecurities - the very things that keep us from being loving to hard-to-love people. It's only by facing those deeply buried fears that we're able to really surrender them to Jesus. The more we release the hurtful issues of our lives to the Lord, the more secure we become in every other relationship. Let's consider what happened to Jesus the night He said those words:

*After He had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." (John 13:21)*

One of Jesus' chosen disciples, one of His intimate confidants - was going to betray him. Talk about a "people gift!" Yet, Jesus washed Judas' feet along with all the other disciples. In fact, when Judas came with a crowd to arrest Him in the garden, Jesus' first word to Him was, "Friend."

*Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. (Matt 26:50)*

## My Relationship “Gifts” Experiences

I believe Jesus hoped that Judas would repent and turn from his evil ways, even up to the last minute. He truly loved Judas to the very end. I’m slowly learning in my own life what it means to say “friend” to a betrayer. It hasn’t always been so. For a long time I did not have the capacity within me to do that. My response was often quite unloving, given the hurt, abandonment, and rejection that had its place in my life. But, God is faithful. He has faithfully allowed me to experience trusted friends turning against me, slandering and betraying me, and even making it their business to try to destroy my ministry.

Today, I count it a privilege to have gone through those ordeals, though I didn’t at the time. Only by facing such difficulties in relationships have I begun to learn what it really means to love, to return blessings for curses, to turn the other cheek, and to go the extra mile. Such trials are really precious gifts from the Lord – we share in the fellowship of His sufferings.

Those “people gifts” in your life are from the Lord. God wants you to stop yielding to those Abashai tendencies of wanting to “cut off their head!” Paul said it best in this passage in Romans:

*Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:19-21)*

This is what being a Christian is really all about! The more we give thanks for those that God has placed in our lives, the more we’ll see our own lives changed and transformed into the gentle, loving nature of Jesus.

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