

The Power of Infatuation

A Life and Death subject that all need to understand!

One of my favorite hymns exalts the holy and spiritual emotions of Christian love: “Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love. The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.” What a beautiful sentiment, which describes the unity and closeness of true Christian love in the family of God. What a blessed gift God has given us as Christians! This love is heaven-inspired, and those who experience it receive a foretaste of heaven. It is something all Christians should seek for, and strive to maintain in the body of Christ.

However, for every genuine blessing, Satan has a counterfeit. And indeed there is a cursed tie that can bind our hearts in a dangerous false love. Another word for this false love, which is really a demonic curse, is infatuation. Satan uses this counterfeit of all that is good and noble in love to snare many who are connected with the family of God. In fact, this cursed sentiment may be in operation between members in the congregation of the saints on Sabbath morning!

Infatuation, as is being described in this article, consists of a strong emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction toward someone who is not your spouse and could not morally become your spouse because at least one of you is married to another. (A person who is legally divorced without biblical grounds is still married in the eyes of God.) The reason that we call this infatuation and not true, God-ordained love is because true love always is in harmony with God's perfect will. Satan is the source of infatuation. God would never place true romantic love in the heart of a married person for someone who is not his spouse.

Infatuation is not something to be taken lightly. It is one of Satan's most powerful and effective temptations. The very word connotes a type of insanity, a state of foolishness. It is an irrational deception because that for which they are seeking—committed, selfless love—is not what they are going to find. They have developed a “crush” on someone, and that’s a good term for it, because if it is not quenched, it will eventually crush out all the holy impulses in their heart. An infatuated person cannot clearly discern reality, but enters into a fantasy world where reason is subjected to feeling.

Infatuation is like an addiction, perhaps even more powerful than a drug. Those who have experienced this unlawful attraction know what I mean. It may start with just a small spark but if permitted, it grows and grows until the compelling urge to connect with the other makes it feel like you desperately need a fix. The unquenched spark can be fanned into a consuming flame that stops at nothing until it achieves its goal. Unfortunately, many take this spark way too lightly when it is in the beginning stages, never imagining that they are vulnerable enough to be trapped.

An infatuated person is not generally open to counsel. They are determined to do it their way. When their “special friendship” has matured, they come to believe that they have discovered something so very wonderful that it is worth giving up all that they would have previously considered valuable. Spouse, family, children, jobs, reputation, possessions, church affiliation and even a relationship with God are all considered of less value than this new treasure the infatuated one has discovered.

Because it seems like such a powerful and even spiritual feeling, it is hard to realize that it comes straight from Satan. An infatuated person may believe he or she is experiencing a profound spiritual awakening, reaching a new spiritual dimension. It shows how intense the deception is. Remember Eve in the Garden?

Her "eyes were opened" and she thought she was entering a higher plane of spiritual understanding. We simply cannot trust our feelings, because they will inevitably betray us.

The devil has many ways of stirring up this sentiment of infatuation in unguarded hearts. It generally starts out innocently, and appears to be based on genuine caring and kindness. These are noble character traits, and should be encouraged toward all. However, when this loving interest toward others starts to focus on one particular individual, with whom a romantic relationship would be immoral, that is the moment that one who is watching and praying will recognize danger, and guard their affections and not allow that thought to develop. When the unlawful feelings of closeness are enjoyed and allowed to remain, a bond begins to develop that will not be easily broken. This "special friendship" has become a dangerous friendship.

Sometimes these unholy friendship bonds go on for years without any seeming wrong. The relationship is comfortable and pleasurable, and does not seem to be immoral. This is where the devil manifests patience in order to secure his victims. He bides his time until the setting is just right.

There is a term, "undue familiarity" that has become outdated somewhat, but it is still used by government agencies in referring to inappropriate connections between prison guards and prisoners in the penal system. It is listed in their rules as being prohibited because the guards are not allowed to become personally involved with the prisoners.

This term is used in the Spirit of Prophecy to refer to this immoral bonding and inappropriate interaction between members of the opposite sex. Ellen White referred to "undue familiarity" and other similar terms numerous times, equating it with "love-sick sentimentalism."

The only safety for men and women, married or unmarried, is to shun love-sick sentimentalism, and all undue familiarity. These things have produced great evil in the world. {Special Testimonies B16 4.1}

She gives strong warnings against this worldly tendency:

This is a subject to which we must give heed. We must guard against the sins of this degenerate age. We must stand aloof from everything that savors of commonness and undue familiarity. God condemns it. It is forbidden ground, upon which it is unsafe to set the feet. {Signs of the Times, October 15, 1885 par. 5}

If this "undue familiarity" is so evil and dangerous, we certainly should know what it is, so we can guard against it. Apparently, there are those who don't understand the danger, and try to justify and excuse it.

All frivolity, all undue attention of men and women, must be condemned and discontinued. Some, even married men, who have indulged in this trifling familiarity, have endeavored to excuse themselves, and escape censure by claiming that they have done no moral wrong. {Special Testimonies B16 6.2}

What exactly is this undue familiarity and attention that we are to carefully shun? Ellen White calls it an unsanctified connection:

How many, even in the ranks of Sabbathkeepers, are forming unsanctified connections. Men who have wives, and women who have husbands, are showing affection and giving undue attention to [those of the opposite sex]. {Testimonies on Sexual Behavior 191.1}

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This undue attention can be manifested by trifling, jesting, joking, and paying flattering remarks. In today's terms, we call it flirting. It also consists of just "hanging out" with the opposite sex needlessly, to be "much in their company."

When one who claims to be teaching the truth is inclined to be much in the company of young or even married women, when he familiarly lays his hand upon their person, or is often found conversing with them in a familiar manner, be afraid of him; the pure principles of truth are not wrought in his soul. {Evangelism 680.2}

Ellen White counsels young women to strongly resent all undue affection from men, and for men to tell forward women to keep their hands off of them. Here is how men should react to those flirtatious women:

Let men, both single and married, say: "Hands off! I will never give the least occasion that my good should be evil spoken of. My good name is capital of far more value to me than gold or silver. Let me preserve it untarnished. If men assail that name, it shall not be because I have given them occasion to do so, but for the same reason that they spoke evil of Christ--because they hated the purity and holiness of His character, for it was a constant rebuke to them." {Adventist Home 335.2}

It is common in our culture today, especially at church, to observe much unnecessary touching and attentions taking place between members of the opposite sex. Some men are frequently seen hugging women in greeting them. Some women place their hand on a man's arm or shoulder when they talk to him. They may think, well, that's just my warm personality. I mean nothing by it. It just shows I'm a loving person.

However, they should consider: can they know the thoughts that are generated in the other person with whom they are interacting? Of course they cannot. Can they know what feelings they may stir up in a vulnerable person? No. Also, can they know the effect on those who are watching, especially impressionable youth? Absolutely not. They may be encouraging immoral sentiments which are stirred up in the recipient of their "undue familiarity." By their inappropriate affection, they may be encouraging others who are struggling with an unholy alliance with someone who is not their spouse. Therefore, it is wise to always maintain a holy reserve in our interactions with the opposite sex. Unnecessary touching and personal attention given to those of the opposite sex may constitute "undue familiarity." We must be on guard.

This familiarity that is "undue" is noticed by others. Those who have strict integrity and high moral standards become concerned. We expect husbands and wives to speak privately together, to sit together, to give special attention to each other. When this type of interaction is observed in an inappropriate setting, especially in church, it brings an immoral taint, and grieves the Holy Spirit.

Our probation is short, at best. We have no time to spend in indulging corrupt impulses. The familiarity of married men with married women and young girls is disgusting in the sight of God and holy angels. The forwardness of young girls, in placing themselves in the company of young men, hanging around where they are at work, entering into conversation with them, talking common, idle talk, is belittling to womanhood. It lowers them, even in the estimation of those who themselves do such things. {Special Testimonies B16 6.1}

Once the thought of an immoral attraction has been planted in an unguarded heart, possibly through this undue familiarity, there is a strong temptation to nurture it, because it is so pleasurable. There is a desire for further interaction and conversation. Perhaps a man and woman are involved in a project together, even a ministry at church. They start enjoying the companionship of each other. So they try to arrange more

opportunities to connect. They notice each other. They seek each other out. They acknowledge the spark. Danger is ahead.

Satan is a master at fostering a special closeness and emotional intimacy in an unlawful relationship. This incredibly wonderful feeling increases in intensity. As it grows, it seems much superior to other friendships they may have. It can even escalate to the point where Satan makes them feel that this relationship is the ultimate level in the realm of love. He tells them that this is what God wants for them, and that they would be a fool to turn away from this relationship.

Satan keeps his victims in the trap of infatuation by causing them to believe his lies. He tells them that they are so happy and that they are really doing themselves a favor by pursuing this relationship. And when they listen to these lies and repeat them to themselves, they become self-hypnotized, as it were.

Infatuation is a manipulation of one's emotions by Satan. A relationship in which one feels pulled and drawn against their better judgment and against their moral principles is not a good, healthy relationship. The pull is a weapon in Satan's hands to destroy them. True love is a choice, which takes logic, reason and moral principles into thoughtful consideration. Infatuation is an overwhelming pull that leaves one without a choice. Infatuation makes one into a slave to their own emotions.

Even when one gives in to the pull and enjoys the strong feelings, they are still slaves. They may think they are in control but it is a deception. The uncontrollable pull and those overwhelming feelings are not desirable in any relationship. They have become a puppet if they are following their impulses over their reason. That is obviously not a healthy emotional situation.

Infatuation is an extremely consuming emotional experience and it creates a euphoria that is powerful and deceptive. Satan is capable of causing us to experience some incredibly intense feelings. If an infatuated person consults their feelings alone, they will become controlled by those feelings.

Women are more likely to be drawn into an infatuation because of her emotional needs that she may feel are not being adequately met. A man is more likely to be stirred by a lustful attraction especially toward a woman who shows interest in him. But whatever the individual weakness, infatuation can only thrive in a heart not submitted to Jesus, which is a carnal mind. If we want to safeguard our souls from this trap, we must die to self continually, and maintain a close connection with Jesus.

With Satan's attack on marriages, and with society's increased focus on our needs and rights and desires in our relationships, all of us are vulnerable in some area of infidelity and immorality. None of us is exempt. None of us can break the rules and escape unscathed. Each one of us needs to watch and pray continually that we may not fall into temptation. Satan has a specially designed temptation for each one of us with our specific weaknesses.

How can you know if you're on the road to marital infidelity, or in danger of causing your special friend to become unfaithful? Can you relate to any of these experiences?

- There is someone of the opposite sex who you find quite interesting and attractive.
- You find that you enjoy conversing with this individual more than you do with others.
- You find that you have a lot of things in common with this person.
- You find or make opportunities to be around him/her.
- You become aware that you are developing a special friendship with this person.

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- You assure yourself that this friendship is totally acceptable and beneficial, and that it is enriching your life.
- You find yourself to be more "alive", animated and happy when you are in the company of your friend.
- After talking with or spending time around this person, you have a warm, happy feeling.
- If you are a spiritual person, you share spiritual thoughts with your friend, and feel that this is a spiritually beneficial relationship.
- You find that you prefer to relate to this person on a one-on-one basis.
- You find yourself thinking about your friend even when you are not in his/her presence.
- You think of things you would like to talk about and share with your friend the next time you see him/her.
- You think of various activities that you would enjoy in the company of your friend.
- You find yourself opening up and sharing your inner emotions with your friend.
- Other people begin to be concerned about this relationship that is developing.
- You continue to tell yourself and others that this friendship is OK, you can handle it.
- You find yourself a bit annoyed and resistive to other's concern and counsel.
- You feel that others cannot possibly understand this friendship, so they really can't advise you.
- You soothe your conscience by telling yourself that you have no intentions of committing adultery or divorcing your spouse, but you just happen to have a special friend.
- You find yourself wanting to be close to this person, and rationalize this feeling as acceptable.
- You think of ways to show this person that he/she is special to you: a special smile, a knowing look, kind attentions, small tokens of affection.
- If you are married, you find that you enjoy your friend's companionship more than you do your spouse's.
- You begin comparing your friend with your spouse.
- You are or become discontented with your marriage relationship.
- You begin thinking about your friend during intimate moments with your spouse.
- You begin to feel trapped in your marriage, and feel that your spouse and you haven't shared the special closeness you have with this friend.
- If you are single, you find yourself wishing you could draw this person away from their spouse, and you imagine what it would be like if they were exclusively yours.

If you find yourself involved in a friendship that is characterized by even a few of the above descriptions, you are definitely heading down a dangerous road. You are not unique, my friend. Your experience is not a rare, incomprehensible one that "nobody else can understand." Many, oh far too many, have traveled down this road before you, and have found themselves bruised and broken on the rocks at the bottom. It seems like such a lovely journey, a delightfully pleasurable experience, but "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12)

Here is a little test that you can give yourself to evaluate your "special friendship" which you have been justifying. How difficult would it be for you to cut off all unnecessary interactions with this person? Would this be emotionally challenging to you? No more deliberate eye contact, no more smiles, no conversation, no special acknowledgement of their presence. How hard would it be to simply avoid them whenever possible? Not going where you know they will be. Not sitting near where they sit. Not planning ways to connect with them. Not thinking about them at all. Would that be hard for you? Would you be willing, if

necessary, to change your job, move to a different location, transfer your membership to a different church, or do whatever it took to break away from this friendship?

If we are honest with ourselves, most of us must admit that we have had inappropriate feelings at some point in our lives for those of the opposite sex. If we allow the Holy Spirit to examine our hearts, He will bring conviction. We must not stifle these convictions, but respond to His promptings.

If you are married, consider this: When you married your spouse, you promised before God to forsake all others, and keep yourself only for your spouse, that he or she should be the sole recipient of your romantic affections. This means more than just sexual love; this includes the male/female bonding of companionship and shared emotions.

If you are single, but your special friend is married, consider the vows that your friend covenanted before God to keep with his/her spouse. Are you willing to encourage them to break these vows?

If you have developed a male/female relationship that includes a one-on-one camaraderie and personal sharing of your emotions, then you are already outside the boundary God designed for marriage. You or your friend's marriage vow is being violated, and your conscience is being numbed. By continuing this involvement, you are incapacitating your mind for clear thinking and reasoning. You are spiritually destroying yourself.

And if you find yourself discontented with your marriage, and even hinting or outright expressing this fact to your friend, you are on positively dangerous ground. Or, if your friend confides in you regarding his or her discontentment in marriage, and you have listened and showed concern, you have aided them in violating their marriage vows.

This close friendship with your special friend is dangerous and spiritually deadly. Until you are willing to admit this to yourself, it is impossible for you to escape from the trap of infatuation.

In the effort to rationalize and justify a "special friendship" which is really an unlawful relationship, all of us can think of others who seem to have "gotten away with it." They had an affair, left an unhappy marriage and seem to be very happy in their new marriage. Perhaps they weren't disfellowshipped; they are still allowed to hold church offices. Some may even be pastors or leaders with high positions who have "pulled this off." They seem to have experienced few negative consequences. Let us remember that the final chapter has not been revealed regarding the destiny of these individuals. Without heartfelt repentance for all sin, no one can be saved. All sin will eventually bring bitter remorse and deep self-loathing in the judgment. If you are serious about your destiny, and your eternal salvation, is this worth the pain you will bring upon God? And how do you know that you will ever experience true repentance if you deliberately walk into Satan's trap?

Let me assure you, the writer of this article knows the intense struggle of withdrawing from an infatuated relationship. Oh, how I wish I had understood the information shared here. This article is written with deep compassion for those with a similar struggle. It is out of deep love for you that I share these principles regarding the purity God desires us to embrace. If I can spare one person from the turmoil and agony I experienced, it will be worth the effort.

Jesus, our precious Redeemer, knows our danger as humans. He gives us straightforward counsel when we are faced with a potentially dangerous temptation: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already

committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell." (Matthew 5:27-30)

Jesus is warning us, and pleading with us to avoid any potential danger. If you are attracted to or emotionally bonded with one who is not your spouse, Jesus would urge you,--cut off the relationship, and sever it completely! No relationship is worth running the risk of losing your eternal life. If any relationship stands in the way of your 100% commitment to the pure and holy principles of God's kingdom, you are putting your own will before God's will. If you break one of God's laws, you are guilty of breaking them all, separating yourself from God.

God's moral law is for our own benefit and protection. When we esteem a human relationship higher than our relationship with God, we become idolaters. When we even think longingly about physical or emotional intimacy with one not our spouse, we are committing adultery. When we desire a relationship that is not morally lawful, we are coveting. This leads to stealing affection, and defrauding the one we "love." We end up violating the whole law of God. And if we have crossed the boundaries of appropriate relationships, we are also hurting all of our brothers and sisters by our example.

Dear friend, are you willing to give up the relationship that is pulling on your heartstrings? Yes, it will require a struggle. Satan will bombard you with an abundance of reasons, justifications and rationalizations why you really don't need to give it up.

But God is able to empower your will, and make you willing to give it up to Jesus. He is the only One who can pull your feet out of the miry clay, and set you upon a solid rock, establishing your steps in safe paths.

Here are some spiritual strategies that you would be wise to implement in this intense spiritual battle:

- Pray for romantic aversion between you and your special friend. (Genesis 3:15) Pray that you will come to call sin by its right name, and abhor sin, and experience heartfelt repentance.
- Pray for a one-flesh bonding between you and your spouse, and/or between your friend and his or her spouse. Uphold the godly principle of marriage. (Matthew 19:5,6)
- Deliberately avoid all unnecessary interaction between you and your friend. Resolve to deliberately avoid all possible contact. Determine that the relationship is over, the special friendship terminated. This will take much prayer and firm perseverance. Recognize your weakness, and Satan's ability to cause you to rationalize and justify your desires to maintain the relationship. Do not give the devil a foothold to keep the spark alive.
- If you are married, intensify your efforts to restore a healthy marriage relationship. If you are not married, focus on other friendships and activities that will redirect your interests.
- Spend more time with God, asking Him to purify your heart and cleanse all the impure longings from your mind.

The way to be free from the tremendous power of ungodly emotional entanglement is to tell yourself the truth, allowing God to reprogram your mind with the holy and pure principles in His Word. Jesus has provided you with the POWER to be free from the shackles of sin in your life! Believe that He is giving you the victory. Claim His promises for power over infatuation.

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If you choose to receive the mind of Christ, beholding the purity, self-sacrifice and holiness of Jesus, He will transform your mind and sanctify your affections. He will reward your obedience. You will be released from the bondage of unlawful affection. If you are married, God will set you free to love your lawful spouse as He designs that you should love. He will give you a sense of acceptance and security so that you are not dependent upon the affection of another human. Those strong longings for the companionship of your friend will fade away. You will find your romantic attraction to your spouse increasing. Your spiritual discernment will be restored, and you will praise God for rescuing you from the path of destruction.

Dear friend, God is trustworthy! He loves you! He wants to see you face to face someday, but remember; only the pure in heart will see God. Your only safety is in walking in God's counsel without delay. May God give you courage and strength to defy the enemy of your soul!)~{

Editor's Note: It is interesting to notice the rules and guidance that we were to have in our institutions to raise a barrier against the dangers of infatuation. The rules that they were to have in the schools and sanitariums are what we would consider today to be ridiculous!! And yet, look at what has happened to people today! Families are a mess; marriages break up and people switch partners like they change their coats.

"The guardians of the institution must ever maintain a high standard and carefully watch over the youth entrusted to them by parents as learners or helpers in the various departments. When young men and women work together a sympathy is created among them which frequently grows into sentimentalism. If the guardians are indifferent to this, lasting injury may be done to these souls and the high moral tone of the institution will be compromised. If any, patients or helpers, continue their familiarity by deception after having had judicious instruction, they should not be retained in the institution, for their influence will affect those who are innocent and unsuspecting. Young girls will lose their maidenly modesty and be led to act deceptively because their affections have become entangled. . . .

"The young should be taught to be frank, yet modest, in their associations. They should be taught to respect just rules and authority. If they refuse to do this, let them be dismissed, no matter what position they occupy, for they will demoralize others. The forwardness of young girls in placing themselves in the company of young men, lingering around where they are at work, entering into conversation with them, talking common, idle talk, is belittling to womanhood. It lowers them, even in the estimation of those who themselves indulge in such things. . . .

"Let not those who profess the religion of Christ descend to trifling conversation, to unbecoming familiarity with women of any class, whether married or single. Let them keep their proper places with all dignity. At the same time they should be sociable, kind, and courteous to all. Young ladies should be reserved and modest. They should give no occasion for their good to be evil spoken of. . . . Those who give evidence that their thoughts run in a low channel, whose conversation tends to corrupt rather than to elevate, should be removed at once from any connection with the institution, for they will surely demoralize others." Counsels on Health 294.