**Avoiding Toxic People**

**Gary Thomas, shannonsgrotto.com, openbible.info, Peter Kuskie**

**Goals**

1. strengthen my defence by learning the difference between difficult people and toxic people
2. find refuge by knowing God has the solution
3. discern when to walk away
4. recognise evil in me
5. grow inner strength
6. see the need to invest in reliable people
7. fulfil my mission.

**Difficult vs Toxic**

Toxic People are difficult, but not all difficult people are toxic.

**Difficult** - monopolize, always the center of attention, complains , non-committal, irresponsible, lies, ungrateful, unappreciative, uncooperative, insensitive, rude, demanding, inconsistent, drama, critical, self-absorbed

**Toxic** - Abusive, controlling, easily angered, bully, gossips, negative, always the victim, lies, manipulative, unreasonable, twist your words, ulterior motives, no boundaries, leaves you feeling worn out, unbalanced and bad

**Introduction**

* Time is wasted trying to meet the needs of unhealthy people.
* Toxic people frequently seek to frustrate our life’s calling. We seek first God’s kingdom, they seek first to distract and delay.
* We need to quit attempting to mollify toxic people and dedicate our energy to investing in reliable people.
* Only when we learn to say no to bad patterns can we say yes to the good work God has planned.
* 206 bones in human body.
* For our body to function at its best, it needs all its parts. (ie removal of hip bone or 7 bones in neck)
* Scripture has a helpful skeleton

1. Creation - good and holy
2. Fall - presence of evil and sin
3. Redemption - has begun but not yet complete (keeps us from despair, gives perfect spiritual eyesight). Without evil, there is no need or purpose for redemption.

* Each essential

**The Nature of evil**

* We don’t go from creation to redemption, and pretend evil doesn’t exist.
* Evil has been dealt a serious blow, but it still packs a punch.
* Evil seeks to penetrate, spoil, and destroy every creational design.
* Don’t give evil more than its due.
* Without evil we are not seeing whole picture (marriage, parenting, friendship, business, government, and church life)
* Nothing is untouched be evil

**The Evil Within Us**

* We need to be wary of the evil within us.
* We live with fallen desires.
* If I forget evil, I will find some noble way to characterize it.
* I’ll defend dangerous desires with “freedom in Christ,” or I’ll see my controlling behavior as “well-intentioned.”
* It is evil to forget we can act in an evil manner.
* We’re are created, fallen and redeemed.
* We recognize our bent desires, but as we surrender to new life in Christ and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, we learn to fight against our bent desires rather than give in to them.
* Evil motives difficult to admit but Holy Spirit conviction is purest, most definitive awakening of love
* To be washed and forgiven feels like amazing celestial hug.
* God understands, heals, and does not condemn.

Stay alert: example - Skin cancer – diagnosed, successfully treated, stay alert

**Remedies**

**Recognition**

* Recognize evil rather than dismiss it
* It is a horrific thing for a man or woman to finally admit that they married an evil, toxic person.
* Only makes sense when apply correct label
* If we speak only of “authority” we risk enabling rather than confronting evil.
* Ignoring toxic people is to pretend the fall never happened and cooperate with and protect evil rather than confront it.
* Recognize God’s power to overcome evil, and embrace church’s call to confront and resist
* Recognise rather than dismiss, deal with it, and confront it

**Admission**

* Admission demands severe remedies
* It can take years to admit obsessive “concern” may be evidence of controlling toxicity rather than genuine care.
* Nobody wants to admit that they have a pact of any kind with a toxic person.

**Support**

* Need the church’s support not “Try harder and pray more, and your marriage will get better.”
* Our job is to help people understand God’s creation and the effects of the fall (and thus the need to break from toxic people).
* To go straight from creation to redemption, we risk leaving people unprotected and unnoticed
* Christians need to keep a tender heart
* Do not seek out
* Examine yourself Ps 51:10 “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”
* Pray Lk 6:28 “Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.”
* Exercise wisdom Mtt 7:6 “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you” Mtt 13:58 “And rhe did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”
* Love (ie Judas – thief, Jesus washed feet , ate with ie broke bread. In Middle East eating with is accepting)
  + Mtt 7:12 “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets