

## Relationship advice from a pastor

Dan Nelson - pastor

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Broken hearts and shattered lives abound throughout our beautiful valley and around the world. Doors of communication slammed shut and sealed tight. Cold looks and frozen stares hardening souls like granite. Promises and covenants of enduring love replaced by appeals for separation, divorce, and lifetime sentences of separation. Teens estranged from their parents, children raised by their friends, family talk replaced by television, and video games indoctrinate the religion of the age: self-satisfaction through submersion in entertainment. And confusion settles in among the youth and they wonder where the world is headed. Global warming is not our biggest threat since our hope for a bright future seems to be melting away in living rooms all around the country.

There is a song on the radio that talks about "How to Save a Life" and tells the story of someone who miserably failed at reaching out to another in need. The lyrics read like a manual of everything not to do if you really want to be helpful in a relationship. You know, things like "Act like you know it all," "Never listen to the other's point of view" and "Don't apologize." The story unfolds the things that kill intimacy faster than tennis shoes on a stink bug.

Americans are filling their minds with the wrong messages. I guess the competitive enthusiasm to vote off a contestant a week isn't stimulating enough. A new show preceding "American Idol" now offers someone the chance to blow apart their marriage, to crush their parents, to devastate the lives of their children for a chance to win \$500K. What amazes me is that this is not fringe television; off-color insanity only watched by late-night sci-fi viewers and people who own their own "Star Trek" uniforms. This is mainstream stuff that viewers are grasping at for their daily dose of tantalizing trash. This junk is allowed into the most precious place we have: our minds and hearts. But can I present a question here? Is a shot for some money and national recognition worth damaging the real-life kinships one has? Maybe I shouldn't be so surprised since people are obviously willing to do the same for a whole lot less. Some are willing to bombshell their family for their right to hold the remote control, pick their friends, feel desirable again, or retain their right to be grouchy. People just don't like to be crucified do they?

That may sound strange at first but let me explain. It's just one week after the memorial of Good Friday and the reminder of Jesus hanging on the cross is fresh in our minds. Admittedly, most people haven't a clue what it was all about. Even less want to handle the implications this critical event has to our lives. Jesus was crucified! We do not want to be! Don't get me wrong; your cross is not two wooden planks, but putting the needs of others above yourself. Even Christians seem to want it to be their own way. Christian marriages fall apart about as often as non-Christian. How is it possible? Selfishness! We do not want to deny ourselves. We like our opinions more than we love the person we say we

love. But Jesus showed that, through death to self-centeredness, a new life can emerge. Jesus resurrected and so can your "connection."

Jesus came to bring life, but God's people are suffocating and dying all around us. Jesus came to find lost sheep, but many lambs are still wandering, floundering, stuck in dark shadowy places, or at the bottom of a huge pit. Some of these were on the good path at one time, but somehow found their way exploring detours, ignoring warning signs.

I want to be a messenger of hope to anyone finding themselves at a place in their life with someone they love where they are wondering, "How did I get here?" Jesus can help! Relationships can be repaired. What is impossible with man is possible with God! The steps are the same as with any spiritual renewal: confession, repentance, receiving of forgiveness and power from God, and humbly seek restoration to the one you love. Might I suggest utilizing the 12 magic words of relationship building? Here they are: "I am sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me. I love you." You might find that God has more in store for you than you ever realized.

P.S.: You've heard the phrase, "The family that prays together, stays together," It's true!

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



**Sunday Worship:**  
**9:00 & 10:45am**  
 Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
 195 Mahoney Ave, Oak View

**Mid-Week Study:**  
**7:00pm Thursday**  
 Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
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