

Vital Signs Session 2

One time several years ago, my wife (pregnant at the time) and I were on the way home and we were new to the area and a little unsure of how to get home. I made a phone call to a friend and he suggested any road that went east would get me back to the road home. I graciously took his advice and found myself 1 mile down a slippery soaked caliche road. We eventually ended up stuck. I phoned my same friend again and he went to my home and brought my 4X4 truck and to keep a long story short, we eventually got it stuck as well. Now having 2 vehicles of mine stuck, we hiked back to the main highway and were taken home by my friend's wife. A few hours later, I received a phone call of someone aware of the situation saying they could help out. Now having a third party join the fun with a larger 4X4, we set out to get both my vehicles, and somewhere in the wee hours of the morning, between 12 AM and 2 AM my truck was freed. As the third party eagerly bounced his truck into the bar ditch to turn around to pull out the first stuck vehicle, he blew his engine. Yes, this is a true story! We eventually had to call an old farmer with a large dual wheeled tractor to come and free us all. I bundled up what was left of my pride and took my mud-soaked self to the house after a long, long night.

Isn't this a picture of what relationships look like? Everything going along just fine and then one wrong turn causes us to be in a world of muck, mess, and perpetual mire spinning our wheels with one another going nowhere.

Joy and Carlton courageously allowed us a picture of their mess, their mud, their relationship. I want to go back to something very critical. Obviously, Joy was carrying scars of her abuse, but where did the walls begin being built? Remember what Joy's mother said, "Let's not ever say anything about this." WOW! If you are in an abusive relationship or have been abused, use your voice. Tell your story to someone. Emotional and spiritual health will never be achieved by covering and hiding. Erwin McManus tells us that we cannot compartmentalize our emotions, so eventually the hurt, the malice, the envy it all bleeds into other areas of our lives. I like to say even the smallest pebble thrown into a pond still makes a ripple.

We are masters of wearing masks at church. We can put on a show for a couple of hours a week while we are being torn apart on the inside by the ripples of our emotions, or by the symptoms of our spiritual sickness. What do we do?

If the measuring stick of our spiritual health and growth is fleshed out in our relationships with others, we must turn to the core of who we are as believers. We must ask for and engage the help of the Holy Spirit as we restore our emotional health. Speak truth in love with others, set healthy boundaries in cases where there is abuse, seek out a trusted friend to confide in and walk with you. Engage God's word as a tool to sharpen you and grow in maturity. Affirm someone just by hearing them out. Don't just "tend to" our spiritual health. Change habits, patterns, and lifestyle to make our spiritual health a priority.

Relationships are messy. Let us be aware that there is beauty and freedom on the other side of the mud and mess. I pray as an individual and for the church that we begin to be measured in our spiritual health by the way we deal with people.