

Judges  
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Jeremiah 2:1-13

Jeremiah 2:1-13 is a warning from God about forsaken love, muddy water, and leaky buckets. I promise to explain that.

Opening: What are some factors that cause spouses to drift apart in their marriage? What are some steps couples can take to avoid or repair that drift?

Greg and Erin Smalley and Focus on the Family conduct marriage conferences called "Resist the Drift." I thought of that title as I read Jeremiah chapter two. In this text God used the metaphor of a spouse that has drifted to describe the fractured relationship between Himself and the people of Judah. He remembered when they were like His young bride and their relationship with Him was close. Then, through Jeremiah, He called them out for drifting from Him and His love.

While the warning was specifically for Judah in Jeremiah's day, it's also relevant for followers of Christ today. Here's the point: Our relationship with God must be nurtured with focus and effort. Without that effort we may begin to drift from Him and His love. We may drift so far we begin to accept dangerous, unhealthy substitutes for what only He can provide. The warning for us in our relationship with our Heavenly Father is to be proactive in "resisting the drift."

Let's begin with verse one, reading in the New Living Translation.

**1** The Lord gave me another message. He said, **2** "Go and shout this message to Jerusalem. This is what the Lord says: "I remember how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness. **3** In those days Israel was holy to the Lord, the first of his children. All who harmed his people were declared guilty, and disaster fell on them. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

- The New Testament teaching that the Church is the bride of Christ draws deeply from the Old Testament image of Israel as the bride of Yahweh. Isaiah 62:5 declares, "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you" (NASB).<sup>1</sup>
- Often couples reflect on their early days of marriage by saying, "*We didn't have much money, we were just living on love.*" Though they had their moments of rebellion, grumbling, and the "golden calf" incident, even when Israel was going through the wilderness, they were devoted to God.
- God recalled the early days when Israel was "holy to the Lord" and He protected them as a bridegroom would protect his young bride (V.3.)

- Wiersbe: "...[O]nce they conquered the Promised Land, their hearts lusted after the gods of the nations around them and they sank into idolatry (Jud. 1–3)."<sup>ii</sup>
- The Lord, the perfect "bridegroom" was (and is) always loving, always providing, always protecting, always comforting and yet Israel drifted away.

**4** Listen to the word of the Lord, people of Jacob—all you families of Israel! **5** This is what the Lord says: "What did your ancestors find wrong with me that led them to stray so far from me? They worshiped worthless idols, only to become worthless themselves. **6** They did not ask, 'Where is the Lord who brought us safely out of Egypt and led us through the barren wilderness— a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought and death, where no one lives or even travels?' **7** "And when I brought you into a fruitful land to enjoy its bounty and goodness, you defiled my land and corrupted the possession I had promised you.

- God rhetorically asked, "*What did I do wrong to cause you to stray?*"
- They forgot how He delivered them safely out of Egypt and when they arrived in the fruitful land of bounty they stopped seeking the Lord.
- Isn't that a familiar pattern? "*Lord, if you'll just get me out of the jam I'm in I'll love you, trust you, and serve you!*" Then when the heat is off the fire for our relationship with Him dies out.
- The truly sad fact was their leaders were the first to drift.

**8** The priests did not ask, 'Where is the Lord?' Those who taught my word ignored me, the rulers turned against me, and the prophets spoke in the name of Baal, wasting their time on worthless idols.

- Religious training and titles don't make a Christ-follower "drift-resistant."
- Jesus said, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.' **Matthew 15:8 (NLT)**
- Even spiritual leaders can drift if they don't nurture their personal relationship with God, but let's not pick on them. Every Christ-follower is responsible to "resist the drift" in our daily walk with the Lord.
- To get Judah's attention, God said He would take them to "court."

**9** Therefore, I will bring my case against you," says the Lord. "I will even bring charges against your children's children in the years to come.

- Why would the children suffer for the parents' spiritual drifting?
- Spiritual drifting has multi-generational consequences just as spiritual leadership brings multi-generational blessings. It saddens me to hear a parent say, "*When it comes to religion I don't want to influence my kids. I'll let them decide for themselves.*" The fact that God allows them the free will to decide is the VERY REASON we must influence them biblically.

- Some of the same parents who are concerned about nutrition, education, and safety for their kids (all good things!) are AWOL when it comes to spiritual leadership of their kids.
- In verse ten God said Judah was actually worse than some of their pagan neighbors.

**10** “Go west and look in the land of Cyprus; go east and search through the land of Kedar. Has anyone ever heard of anything as strange as this? **11** Has any nation ever traded its gods for new ones, even though they are not gods at all? Yet my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols! **12** The heavens are shocked at such a thing and shrink back in horror and dismay,” says the Lord.

- Isn't it sad to see those who worship false gods are more faithful in practice than those who claim to follow the One true God?
- Verse thirteen is a key verse in this passage. In God's "court case" against his unfaithful bride (the people of Judah) He spells out the charges.

**13** “For my people have done two evil things: They have abandoned me— the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!

- Marital drifting can lead to the temptation to look for a substitute spouse, and spiritual drifting can lead to looking for a substitute for God (idolatry.)
- God said His people had forsaken Him for a toxic, unreliable substitute.
- A cistern is a rain collection device. Today it would be a rain barrel; in those days it was a stone reservoir. Some ancient cisterns were elaborate and some were very primitive kind of like a birdbath.
- God said His people had dug for themselves cracked cisterns that were not reliable when they needed water. God's supply of everything we need never dries up and yet we can be tempted to turn to substitutes (idols) that don't "hold water."
- Beyond the risk of an empty cistern, there's a more dangerous problem.
- Why should you not drink standing water from a rain barrel or pond?
- God said Judah had abandoned the "fountain of living water" to drink from a nasty, contaminated mud puddle. The picture is ludicrous!
- We know you can't live without water for more than about three days. At that point you must find water somewhere. Let's say you were lost in the woods and after three days you discover a bubbling natural spring or a mud puddle, where would you drink? Easy answer, right?
- The problem is that Satan has the ability to make contaminated toxic water look clear and clean. Ever hear of "Montezuma's revenge?"
- The only foolproof way to avoid a dangerous substitute is to stay connected to the fountain we know is the true source of "living water."
- Spiritual drifting can eventually lead to spiritual substitution where we've walked away from the source of living water to sip from Satan's sewer.

- So, how can we “resist the drift” as the bride of Christ? Let’s talk about it.
- Think back to the factors that can cause “drift” in a marriage relationship and some of the steps we can take to keep the marriage strong. What are some similar steps to take in our relationship with God that can keep our relationship with Him loving, vital, and growing instead of drifting?
- Think about things like: distraction, lack of time together, lack of affection, lack of conversation, going through the motions, and (if carried to an extreme) the risk of drifting toward a “substitute” relationship instead of our first love.

#### So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Forsaken love, muddy water, and leaky buckets.
- In this passage God looked back at the early days when Israel (and Judah) were his “young bride.”
- When I thought about keeping a marriage relationship vibrant, the words of an old song by The Turtles came to mind:

*Imagine me and you, I do  
I think about you day and night, it's only right  
To think about the girl you love and hold her tight  
So happy together*

*If I should call you up, invest a dime  
And you say you belong to me, and ease my mind  
Imagine how the world could be, so very fine  
So happy together*

*I can't see me lovin' nobody but you  
For all my life  
When you're with me, baby, the skies'll be blue  
For all my life<sup>iii</sup>*

- Those words apply to both a marriage and to our relationship with God.
- Do we think about Him “day and night?” Do we cling to Him?
- Does it ease our minds to know that we are His?
- Do we imagine a life “so very fine...so Happy together” with Him?
- Have we committed to never see ourselves “lovin’ nobody” but Him?
- Just like a marriage relationship, our relationship with God must be nurtured with focus and effort. Without that effort we may begin to drift from Him and His love.
- We may drift so far we begin to accept dangerous, unhealthy substitutes for what only He can provide. The warning for us in our relationship with our Heavenly Father is to be proactive in “resisting the drift.”
- To resist the drift we need to work hard to do the things that keep our relationship with God vibrant with “honeymoon love.” If we’ll do those things He has promised we will be “happy together” with Him forever.

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<sup>i</sup> Miller, J. E. (2016). [Bride of Christ](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>ii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [Be Decisive](#) (p. 25). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=happy+together+lyrics&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>