

This Rampant Lie Could Wreck Your Relationships

A conversation between an old youth group friend was becoming a window on old pains. Teenagedom was not easy. (Shocker.)

"I remember this youth group game," my friend told me, grinning. "One of the tasks was a long math problem, and our team just gave up from the start, because everyone knew you'd get the solution first."

Did my face revealed my bemusement?

No, scratch bemusement. More like a tectonic shift of my understanding of the human soul. Some conversations will do that.

You see, I've *never* cared for my intelligence.

They say I'm smart. I did well at academics. Math especially came naturally to me. (Kind of explains why I chose to teach for a living.)

But I didn't get people. I was an awkward teen. Isolated. Blunt. Trying too hard. The sort of thing that bewilders others. Book-smart and not street-smart, I believe, is the phrase.

Adults tried to cheer me up with, "But you're so smart! I never got those grades!" My peers would seek my help with homework, or a Windows 98 dilemma, or the time—because I wore a watch (remember those?). But invites, conversations, someone choosing to sit next to me? Rare. And it hurt. Sure, I got into the Air Force. But it took away my few friendships.

So I came to see my intelligence as my consolation prize. The sweater for Christmas instead of the horse you've eyed for 11

months.

And I learned to despise it.

Fast forward to catching up with this friend. I'd envied him. He had a way with people, a razor sense of humor, the life-of-the-party vibe. At the very least, he could connect.

But sitting there now, I heard of his years of violent struggle. He had an "eh, so what" attitude toward his ability to connect. **He didn't seem all giddy about his gift anymore than I was mine.** It hadn't spared him; here he was sharing a boy-the-years-haven't-unfolded-as-we-hoped chat with *me*.

The shifting tectonic plates uncovered a mantle of truth:

Envy, you are a crock and a filthy liar.

And on multiple levels. First, I'd never learned to treasure the gifts God gave me (which served me well despite my backwards resentment of them).

But I had also fallen for a lie: *This will bring you life. You need this.*

Seeking connection is good. But we can make idols out of anything, even God's gifts, the moment we start believing "You're nothing without this."

Now, thanks to an old friend with a window to the past, the lie is exposed.

Because I'm happy now.

Not because of connection, though I'm learning how to get it (life kind of forces you to). It's a blessing, certainly, although now I worry about keeping it, while in the same breath wanting more.

Brandon = ravenous mess.

But God?

“Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water that I shall give him will become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life’” (John 4:13-14).

Jesus will never disappoint. Never be stolen. Never not be enough.

Now that’s a solution. {eoa}

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