



SIEBENQUELL

»Let me sing for my beloved a love song« (Part II)



When our relationships break part, we often pose critical questions to ourselves. But what if it was not our fault? What happens if there was no lack of commitment on our part? What happens if it was not a matter of our flawed behaviour or attitude?

At this point, I need to issue a clear warning. Not only Isaiah, but Jesus himself, presupposes that relationships can fall apart, without any guilt on our part. »As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.« (Mt 10, 12-14) After all, Jesus prepares his disciples for this scenario before sending them out in pairs. He warns them that there will be cases where they will need to shake the dust from their feet.

In such cases, there are steps to be taken; however, we are seldom inclined to carry them out. Because we cannot admit that a relationship has failed through no fault of our own, we keep on trying all manner of things. But this scenario is real, and we know it. And it is time to admit it and follow the wise steps of the prophet.

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1. **Remove the protective hedge:** The area of fruitless relationship may not be constantly protected. We do that often. We hold a protective hand over relationships that make us ill, that are death-dealing. We have worked at them for so long, that it has become second nature to us, even after this has long ceased to bring about any change for the better.
 2. **Break down the wall:** This has to happen in order for us to get to the truth. A wall is standing that no longer protects anything. A wall is standing, but there is no life left for it to protect. We have built a wall for a vineyard, and now it encircles a cemetery.
 3. **Admit the wasteland before you.** The Prophet speaks of the vineyard as a wasteland. We, too, need to speak plainly and admit what is really happening. We need to free ourselves from self-illusion. In this moment we need to honestly admit to ourselves that nothing is going to grow here, that no life can blossom here and no life can be expected here.
 4. **It will not be pruned or hoed:** Here the owner refuses to invest more. He will no longer constantly work at a relationship that cannot be saved.
 5. **»I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it«:** That which is within me; that which is at my disposal; that which serves fruitfulness and brings it forth; these things I will not longer waste where they can bring about nothing. Instead, I will let love, justice and goodness rain down, where they and bring about something, where fruitfulness has a chance.

We should take out relationships as seriously as God does. On the one hand, we do this when we do not treat out relationships flippantly and prematurely given them up when the going gets tough. On the other hand, however, we do not take our relationships seriously when we hold fast to them long after they are dead. We must not allow ourselves to be forced into relationships that will psychologically, spiritually and physically destroy us by social and ecclesiastical conventions that lack any biblical foundation.

Yes, the relationship to a sister or brother is something holy and worthy of protection, but not at any price. And sometimes people need to leave a community or be removed from it. That is true of every place where the atmosphere is utterly poisoned by a fruitless relationship.

Indeed, the relationship between parents and children is something precious, but here, too, there are cases where children need to break with their parents or parents with their children.

We need to become more courageous and consistent in this regard. When all means are exhausted, then we cannot hide behind an idealised conception. How much time, energy and strength have we already wasted on cases, where deep within us we have long known that the relationship will never bear fruit? And in communities that have grown smaller, in which we must live more intensely, where internationality and multi-cultural living will demand far more than in the past, we cannot afford to waste our spiritual strength within our members where nothing will grow. Isaiah demands it of us. Jesus demands it of us.

We know how this story ends. God does precisely what Isaiah describes. Yes, God acts in this manner when the future of life and vitality are in jeopardy, And then God builds up a new vineyard in which we and the house of Israel can take our place. Had he not done so, had he lingered in the dead and fruitless relationship, then Israel would not have won life, we would have received no life and God would have been left behind as

the watchman of a cemetery. And that is not a very good task for one, whose passion is the planting of fruitful vineyards. That is not how resurrection comes about.

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