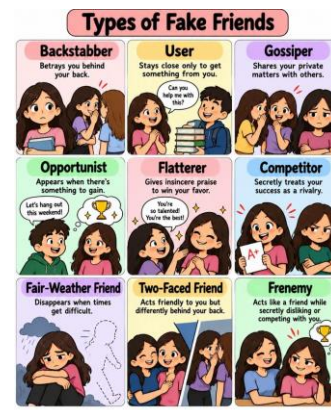


Frenemy

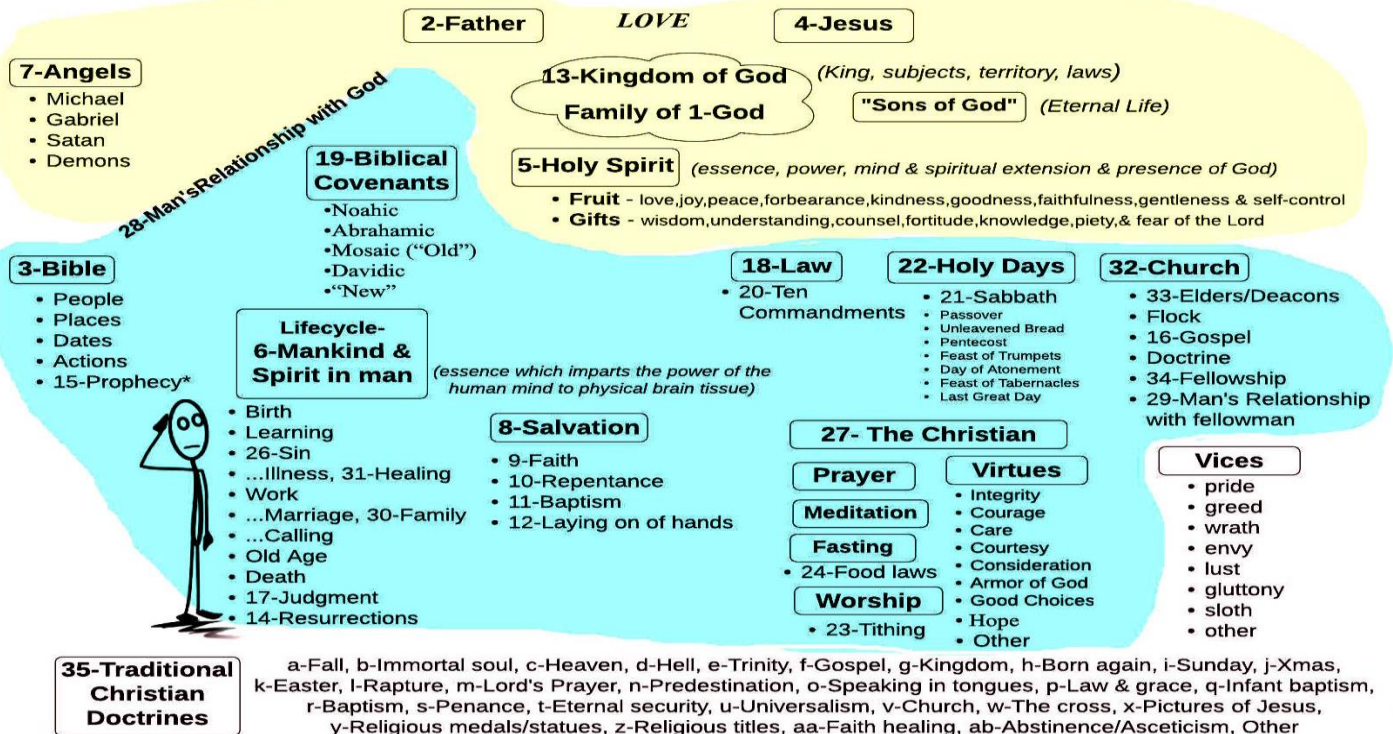
In 1983 a book was published that received some **positive comments** from the Church of God leadership & members. The author was a psychiatrist (M. Scott Peck) who was hoping to start a psychological & moral examination of what the author calls “**human evil**.” Peck argues that destructive behaviour is often rooted not simply in **ignorance** or **mental illness**, but in **self-deception**, **avoidance of responsibility**, **narcissism**, & a **refusal to face truth**.

The title of the book ... **People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil**

The Feast of Tabernacles (& **daily life!**) is an awesome opportunity to meet new people & make new friends but we need to realize that the Kingdom of God is **not** yet here ... & sometimes we need to be **careful** of the people we meet ... and ... we need to be careful of our own motives & actions as we seek to be “good people” -- a “good friend” -- “good brethren”!

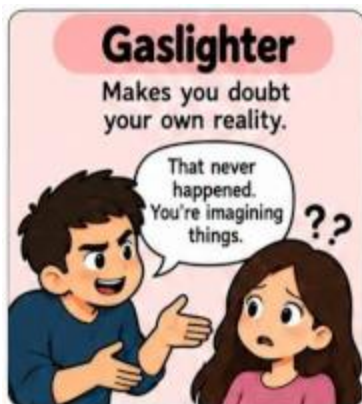


The Plan of God



Second Death - (Perishing)

Time: (Past - History - Creation, 25-Hebrew Calendar ... Present - (World events) ... (Future - 15-Prophecy*) ... Eternity ...)



... people **deliberately distorting reality, denying wrongdoing, manipulating another person's perception, or making someone doubt what they know to be true.**

The serpent — Genesis 3 - The forbidden fruit

God had clearly told Adam and Eve:

Gen 3:3 You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.

The serpent then directly challenges God's truth:

Gen 3:4 You will not surely die.

This is an important pattern:

Truth → contradiction → distortion → doubt → changed perception → wrong action

The Bible provides examples of several recognizable patterns:

- **“That didn't happen”** - Denial of an observable reality.
Cain: Gen 4:9 - (*Where is Abel?*) I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?”
- **“You're imagining things”** - Making someone distrust their perception.
Serpent: Gen 3:1-5 Now the serpent was more cunning...
- **“You're the problem”** - Shifting responsibility onto the person who raises the issue.
Pharaoh: Exo 5:17 You are idle! Idle! Therefore you say, ‘Let us go & sacrifice to the LORD.’
- **False victimhood** - The wrongdoer portrays himself as the victim
Potiphar's wife: Gen 39:14 ... He came in to me to lie with me, & I cried out with a loud voice.
- **Calling good evil** - A particularly serious biblical form of distortion
Many in Society: Isaiah 5:20 “Woe to those who call evil good, & good evil...”
- **Calling truth falsehood**- Jesus encountered this repeatedly from His opponents.
Pharisees: Matt 12:28 If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you (*vs24 Yet His opponents attributed His work to Satan*)

Important distinction:

Not every disagreement, correction, misunderstanding, denial, or mistaken memory is gaslighting. Gaslighting generally involves a pattern of manipulation that causes another person to question their perception, memory, judgment, or grasp of reality.

A powerful anti-gaslighting principle:

Don't automatically believe the loudest person, the most confident person, the person with the most authority, or even the person who appears to be the victim. Examine the facts, hear both sides, test the claims, compare them with God's Word, & look at the fruit.

Biblical Focus: points us away from **“Who sounds most convincing?”**
& toward **“What is actually true?”**

1Th 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

... people using **guilt, shame, obligation, accusation, disappointment, fear, or emotional pressure to influence another person's behavior.**

- **Delilah with Samson - Jdg 16:15-16** ... she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these 3 times, & have not told me where your great strength lies." & it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words & pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death



Notice the progression: Question his love → create guilt → repeat the accusation → apply emotional pressure → wear down resistance → obtain what she wants

The “guilt-trip formula” in Scripture

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. “If you loved me, you would...”
→ Delilah — Judges 16:152. “After everything I've done for you...”
→ Elder brother — Luke 15:293. “Look what you've done to me.”
→ Martha — John 11:21 | <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. “This is your fault.”
→ Adam — Genesis 3:125. “You don't care about me.”
→ Martha — Luke 10:40 |
|---|--|

Important distinction:

The Bible also contains **legitimate conviction** that can *feel* like guilt but is not manipulation.

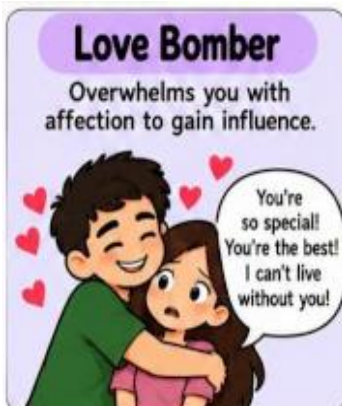
Manipulative guilt:

“I will make you feel bad until you give me what I want.”

A useful biblical test is:

Does the person's appeal lead toward truth, repentance, responsibility, & freedom- or toward shame, fear, obligation, control, & dependence on the manipulator?

That distinction is especially important when evaluating **church relationships, family relationships, leadership, and religious authority.**



... people using **excessive praise, affection, gifts, promises, flattery, attention, or apparent friendship to gain influence, control, loyalty, or advantage.**

- **Absalom:** His sequence is remarkably recognizable:

1. Excessive accessibility - **2Sam 15:2** Absalom rose early & stood beside the way to the gate.
2. Personal attention - **2Sam 15:3** Look, your case is good and right.
3. Emotional identification - **2Sam 15:4** Oh, that I were made judge in the land!
4. Physical affection - **2Sam 15:5** He would put out his hand & take hold of him & kiss him.
5. Widespread affection - **2Sam 15:6** & so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

So, biblically, the key question isn't “**How much affection is this person showing me?**” but: “**What happens when I don't give this person what they want?**”

That question can expose whether the affection is **love, or “influence” disguised as love**

... someone who habitually portrays themselves as helpless, mistreated, unfairly targeted, or unable to take responsibility—even when they have choices

- **Adam — Gen 3:12** Blames Eve (& God) rather than accepting responsibility: “The woman whom You gave to be with me...”
Blaming others for one's own choices
- **Pilate — Matt 27:24** I am innocent of the blood of this just Person (*Attempting to distance from responsibility*)



A crucial biblical distinction

Not every person who says “I was hurt,” “I was treated unfairly,” or “someone wronged me” is a victim player.

The Bible openly recognizes **genuine victims**:

- **Joseph** — Genesis 37
- **David** — numerous Psalms
- **Jeremiah** — Jeremiah 20
- **Job** — Job 1–2
- **Jesus** — Isaiah 53; Matthew 26–27
- **Paul** — 2 Corinthians 11:23–28

The potential **victim-player** problem appears when someone repeatedly uses suffering to:

1. avoid personal responsibility,
2. obtain sympathy or control,
3. justify sinful behaviour,
4. manipulate others through guilt,
5. portray every disagreement as persecution
6. refuse correction,
7. exaggerate obstacles,
8. assume hostile motives,
9. demand special treatment, or
10. make themselves perpetually the innocent party.

Gal 6:4–5 “But let each one examine his own work... For each one shall bear his own load.”

The biblical antidote to both **victim-blaming** and **victim-playing**: **acknowledge genuine wrongs while still taking responsibility for your own response & actions**



... tries to control another person by using **fear, obligation, guilt, shame, rejection, threats, or emotional pressure** to get what they want

- **Saul — shame through family obligation**
1 Sam 20:30 You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame (*Saul attempts to force Jonathan's loyalty by attacking his identity, family honour, & sense of obligation*)
- **The Pharisees - John 9:22** His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that **if anyone** confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue.

Important biblical distinction

Not every strong emotional appeal is **emotional blackmail**. The difference is often **whether the person is seeking another person's good through truth & freedom, or attempting to control the person through fear, guilt, shame, obligation, or deception**



... deliberately withholds communication, attention, affection, or cooperation to punish, control, intimidate, or manipulate another person.

- **The elder brother (Prodigal Son) — “I won't participate” - Luke 15:28** But he was angry & would not go in
(His refusal to enter the celebration communicates his anger without openly reconciling with his father or brother).

A Biblical diagnostic: silence vs. silent treatment

Healthy silence

Takes time to calm down
Avoids saying something sinful
Communicates, “I need some time”
Eventually returns to the issue
Seeks peace
Can listen without reacting
May protect another person from hurtful words
Leads toward reconciliation

Manipulative silent treatment

Intentionally punishes
Deliberately creates anxiety
Refuses to explain why
Keeps the other person guessing
Seeks control
Withholds communication to gain leverage
Uses withdrawal to hurt another person
Prolongs resentment

Important distinction:

Scripture gives examples of wrongful withdrawal, refusal to engage, resentment, relational separation, and manipulative behavior, but it also gives examples of **righteous silence**. The difference is largely **motive, purpose, duration, and whether the silence moves toward peace or toward punishment/control**.

... people who shift blame, avoid responsibility, accuse others, make excuses, or portray themselves as innocent when they are not.

- **Aaron** — “The calf just happened” - **Exo 32:22–24**
Aaron first blames the people's wickedness:
“You know the people, that they are set on evil.”
Then comes one of Scripture's **striking** examples of minimizing responsibility: “And I cast it into the fire, & this calf came out.”
Aaron's description makes a deliberate process sound accidental
Blame-shifting pattern: “I didn't really cause the problem—it just happened.”
- **Korah's Rebellion - Num 16:3** — You take too much upon yourselves
(Accused Moses & Aaron of causing the problem - God chose His leaders)



The biblical opposite of blame-shifting is **personal responsibility & repentance**.

Biblical responsibility means being willing to say, “This is what happened, this is what others did, but **here is what I myself did**—& I will take responsibility for it.”



...situations where someone brings a third person, group, authority, or outside party into a conflict in order to create pressure, rivalry, division, or leverage.

- **Saul → Jonathan → David**

Saul attempts to put Jonathan on his side against David:

1 Sam 20:31 “For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom.”

(Saul isn't simply confronting David. He attempts to make Jonathan's interests compete with David's)

- **Absalom → Israel → David**

2Sam 15:6 So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel

(This is a classic example of bringing a third party (the people) into a father-son conflict & gradually creating a competing alliance)

The opposite of triangulation is **direct, truthful, peace-seeking communication**:

Matt 18:15 Moreover if your brother sins against you, go & tell him his fault between you & him alone

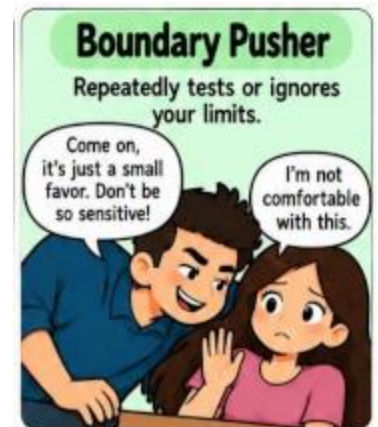
Prov 26:20 Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; & where there is no talebearer, strife ceases

James 3:16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there

Biblical distinction:

Bringing a third person in for wise counsel, mediation, protection, or proper accountability is not necessarily triangulation. The **manipulative** element is the use of the third person to create **pressure, rivalry, fear, division, or control** rather than to pursue **truth & reconciliation**

... someone who repeatedly tests, ignores, challenges, or gradually crosses another person's legitimate limits—especially after those limits have been clearly communicated.



- **Amnon** pressures Tamar & refuses her objections

2Sam 13:2 Amnon was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick; for she was a virgin. And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her. *(Sexual & personal boundary)*

- **Diotrephes** — **3John 9–10** - Church / leadership boundary

(Loves pre-eminence, rejects apostolic authority, & puts people out of the church)

personal ambition → control → interference → punishment of those who don't comply

Important biblical distinction:

Not every disagreement, request, persuasion, or confrontation is boundary-pushing. Scripture also commands appropriate rebuke, correction, persuasion, & accountability (Leviticus 19:17; Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1). The problem is **persistent, manipulative, coercive, or unauthorized pressure that disregards legitimate limits.**



... people who **betrayed, undermined, deceived, secretly opposed, or harmed someone while presenting themselves as a friend, ally, or supporter.**

- **Judas - the classic example - his outward behavior looked friendly while his inner intention was betrayal**
Matt 26:14–15 Then Judas, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests & said, ‘What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?’

Then: Matt 26:49 Immediately he went up to Jesus & said, ‘Greetings, Rabbi!’ & kissed Him
Pattern: Friendship → hidden agenda → secret agreement → false affection → betrayal

- **Psalm 41:9** describes the pain of this kind of betrayal: “Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.”
(Hymnal Page 30 - But as for Me, I’ll Call on God - David’s hurt after being betrayed by Ahithophel)

The biblical picture of **backstabbing: someone who has been allowed close enough to enjoy your trust, friendship, confidence, or fellowship—and then uses that position against you**

... people who **cultivate relationships primarily because they want something—money, power, access, protection, status, information, favors, or personal advantage.**

- **Gehazi — using someone else's reputation for personal gain**
 After Elisha refused Naaman's gifts, Gehazi secretly pursued Naaman
2 Kings 5:20 As the LORD lives, I will run after him & take something from him
 Gehazi wasn't merely greedy. He **used his proximity to Elisha & Elisha's reputation** to obtain something for himself.
Pattern: Association with respected person → borrowed authority → personal gain



- **Simon the Sorcerer — wanting spiritual power for himself**
 Simon saw the apostles laying hands on people and offering the Holy Spirit and tried to purchase that power:
Acts 8:19 Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit
 Peter recognized that Simon's heart was **wrong**.
 This is an important biblical principle: **someone can attach himself to God's people because he sees an advantage in what they possess.**
- **Felix — keeping Paul around for possible financial gain**
 Felix repeatedly summoned Paul:
Acts 24:26 He also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him
 Felix maintained access to Paul, but his underlying motivation was corrupt.
Pattern: Keep person nearby → hope for benefit → maintain relationship for advantage
- **Some of the 5000 Jesus fed - John 6:26** you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves & were filled



... Scripture often describes gossip through terms such as **talebearer, whisperer, busybody, slanderer, backbiter, & one who reveals secrets**

- **Doeg** - 1 Sam 21:7; 22:9–19 *Reported David's presence to Saul, leading to the slaughter of the priests*
- **Sanballat & Tobiah** - Neh 6:6-9 ... It is reported among the nations ... that you & the Jews **plan to rebel**; therefore, according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall, that you

may be their king. & you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you at Jerusalem, saying, "There is a king in Judah!" Now these matters will be **reported to the king**. So come, therefore, & let us consult together. Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say are being done, but **you invent them** in your own heart." For they all were trying to make us **afraid**, saying, "Their hands will be **weakened in the work**, & it will not be done." Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

GOSSIPER

- hears something private
- repeats it to someone who doesn't need to know
- adds interpretation or speculation
- exposes another person's weakness
- creates suspicion
- separates friends
- stirs conflict
- enjoys having "inside information"
- disguises gossip as "concern"
- says, "*Don't tell anyone I told you*"
- damages another person's reputation
- continues repeating the matter

**The key biblical test... is not merely "Is what I am saying true?" but also:
Does this need to be said, to this person, for a righteous purpose?**

... is someone who sees another person's weakness, success, position, need, relationship, or circumstances as an opportunity to gain something for himself—often without genuine loyalty or concern for the other person.

- **Delilah — the relational opportunist**

Jdg 16:5 & the lords of the Philistines came up to her & said to her, "Entice him, & find out where his great strength lies, & by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; & every one of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver



The Biblical opposite of opportunism is servanthood:

Philip 2:3-4 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

So a useful Biblical distinction is:

Opportunist: How can I use this person/situation?

Servant: "How can I use this opportunity to help this person?"



...people who use excessive praise, smooth words, or insincere compliments to gain favour, influence, advantage, or protection.

- **The crowd praising Herod - Acts 12:21–23**
& the people kept shouting, The voice of a god & not of a man!
- **Rom 16:18** For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words & flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple."
- **Psalm 12:2** They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; With flattering lips & a double heart they speak.

Flatterer vs. Encourager

Flatterer

Praises to get something

Often insincere

Appeals to pride

Hides inconvenient truth

Seeks personal advantage

Creates dependency or obligation

Uses "smooth words"

Romans 16:18

Biblical encourager

Encourages to build someone up

Truthful

Strengthens humility

Will lovingly tell the truth

Seeks the person's good

Promotes spiritual maturity

Speaks "the truth in love"

Ephesians 4:15

Is this person praising me because they genuinely appreciate what is good—or because they want something from me?

... people who treat another person's success, position, popularity, gifts, or favor as a **rivalry** & responded with envy, jealousy, opposition, or attempts to surpass or undermine them

- **Joseph's brothers - Gen. 37:3–28** - envied him, plotted against him, & sold him (*because of his dreams & coat!*)
- **Saul - 1Sam 18:7–9** Saul has slain his thousands, & David his ten thousands
- **Haman - Esth 3:1-6** - Mordecai would not bow to him - His personal rivalry became hatred & a plot to destroy the Jews



Phil. 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself

A Biblical definition would be ...

A **sinful competitor** is someone who interprets another person's success as a threat to his or her own status & therefore responds with envy, comparison, self-promotion, opposition, or attempts to diminish the other person



...people who are close when circumstances are favourable, but withdraw, abandon, betray, or become hostile when trouble, cost, danger, or inconvenience appears.

- **Demas - 2Tim 4:10** for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world ... (In Philemon 24, Demas is listed among Paul's "fellow laborers") But ... attachment to the present world can become stronger than commitment to the work!
Pattern: Shared ministry → changing priorities → abandonment

- **Paul's associates - 2Tim 4:16** At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me **Yet Paul adds:** May it not be charged against them This demonstrates *something important* about fair-weather relationships: abandonment does not necessarily produce hatred in the faithful person

A useful test is: "Who remains when there is nothing to gain—& something to lose?"

That often reveals the difference between a **fair-weather friend** & a **true friend**.

...people who **presented friendship, loyalty, or affection outwardly while secretly acting against someone.**

- **False Brethren - Gal 2:4** And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage)
- **Abimelech (son of Gideon) toward his brothers - Judges 9:1–6** Presented a political case to his mother's relatives while he secretly plotted to eliminate his seventy brothers!?!
Jdg 9:56 Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father by killing his seventy brothers.



Major Marks of a Two-Faced Friend in Scripture

Two-faced behavior

Friendly words + hostile intentions

Affection + betrayal

Sympathy + secret ambition

Religious appearance + destructive motives

Biblical example

Judas — Matthew 26:49

Delilah — Judges 16

Absalom — 2 Samuel 15

False teachers — 2 Corinthians 11:13–15

A key scriptural principle ...

Scripture repeatedly warns that **words, appearances, & even apparent friendship are not sufficient evidence of someone's heart:**

Prov 26:24 He who hates, disguises it with his lips, & lays up deceit within himself



... is someone who presents themselves as a friend while secretly competing with you, undermining you, exploiting you, or wishing you poorly

Particularly strong “frenemy” patterns

- **Affection on the outside + betrayal underneath**
Luke 22:48 Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?
- **Flattery + hidden motive**
Mark 12:14 Teacher, we know that You are true...
Yet their purpose was to “catch Him in His words.”

- **Friendship + secret competition**
2 Sam 15:2–6 Absalom repeatedly positioned himself as the people's champion while secretly working to take David's throne
- **Intimacy + exploitation**
Judg 16:4–6, 15–20 Delilah had Samson's trust but repeatedly used that relationship to obtain information for his enemies
- **Trusted associate + eventual betrayal**
2 Sam 15:12 Ahithophel was David's counselor, yet joined Absalom's conspiracy
- **Helping you publicly + damaging you privately**
2 Sam 16:1–4 Ziba appeared to serve David while accusing Mephibosheth of treason

Danger is not always obvious hostility. Sometimes the person comes with a kiss, flattering words, a friendly greeting, an invitation, apparent loyalty, or an offer of help.

... someone who stays close mainly because the relationship is useful - access, money, status, protection, information, favours, connections, or emotional support

- **Rehoboam → young advisers - 1Kings 12:6–11**
They gave advice that reinforced what Rehoboam wanted to hear rather than what was wise

Biblical pattern of a “convenient friend”

A convenient friend often:

Needs something → becomes unusually friendly → receives the benefit → loses interest → returns when another benefit appears.

This contrasts sharply with the biblical ideal:

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times...

Proverbs 18:24 A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother

The key diagnostic question is:

Would this person still value the relationship if I could no longer give them what they want?





... where one person primarily takes, uses, benefits from, or expects loyalty from another without giving comparable love, loyalty, protection, or concern in return

- **Saul → David - 1Sam 18:10–11; 19:9–10**
David repeatedly serves Saul faithfully, while Saul repeatedly seeks David's life.
- **Nabal → David's men - 1Sam 25:7–11**
Nabal receives protection from David's men but refuses reasonable assistance in return

So the fundamental difference is:

One-sided friend: “*What can I get from you?*”

Genuine friend: “*How can I love, help, strengthen, and be faithful to you?*”

A particularly useful biblical test is **reciprocity**: *Does this relationship consistently produce mutual love, sacrifice, truth, loyalty, and concern—or does one person primarily take while the other primarily gives?*

A particularly important biblical principle

Manipulation often works by **distorting something legitimate**:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| • Love → control | • Forgiveness → enabling |
| • Concern → intrusion | • Submission → exploitation |
| • Correction → domination | • Generosity → obligation |
| • Authority → authoritarianism | • Loyalty → blind allegiance |
| • Persuasion → coercion | • Unity → suppression of legitimate disagreement |

Rom 15:2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification

A useful Biblical test is:

Does this person's influence help another person freely choose what is right before God—or does it pressure, deceive, frighten, guilt, control, exploit, or punish the person for maintaining a legitimate boundary?

That distinction helps prevent us from labeling **ordinary disagreement or biblical correction** as “manipulation” while **still recognizing** genuine coercive behaviour

