

Attachments

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I had a panicky situation a few weeks ago. I never thought it would happen. I forgot my cell phone. For someone who never used one until about three months ago, I unexpectedly got attached to it. It has inserted its way into the same category as the billfold, briefcase, and checkbook.

Attachments are very powerful in life. They can be people, pets, or things that we hold on to for comfort and security. We need them in order to grow and develop as children. We become attached to our parents, a brother or sister, or a grandparent so we can feel safe enough to risk, grow, and become more independent. We have all probably had a family pet, a favorite toy or blanket, or some object that represented someone we loved and trusted. I can remember a bicycle and baseball glove that represented my dad when he was overseas and away from the family.

One problem with attachments is that *they go away*. They die, get lost, or are taken from us. Victims of natural disasters or brutal crimes often lose everything dear to them – their families, possessions, or health (mental, spiritual, or physical). A second problem with attachments is that *we need to outgrow some of them or let them go*. When a couple gets married, it is appropriate to change the attachment to their parents or past partners. It may be appropriate to let go of a philosophy, a pattern of behaving, or things that crowd out the ability to grow and change. A third problem with attachments is that *people or things can become our gods*. We become enslaved to them rather than having them under our control. Some get so attached to alcohol, drugs, pornography, work, or other addiction that there is a lost feeling without it.

I belonged to a running group in Japan. One Saturday we ran through some streams and woods, and I ended up with leeches on my legs. Someone had to burn them off because they attached themselves so deeply. Sometimes God will use experiences in our lives to refocus our attachments or to “burn” them out of our lives so they can be replaced with what He gives to us in a healthier and appropriate way. Loss of someone or something dear to us is always painful. However, if we have someone to walk with us through the loss it can be a very affirming and growing time.

What so often brings people into therapy are the attachments that are so powerful and cling so tightly that they cannot let them go, or change their function without some caring assistance. It can be the loss of someone we love, the destruction of all we held dear, things that interfere with a healthy relationship, the dreams and visions we have for our lives, as well as many others. Take some time this week to think about who or what you are attached to. It might just be a life-changing event.