# MEN'S FRATERNITY

## *Knights of the 21st Century*

## Trail 20

**KEITH:** It's your wedding day. Two lives committed together, blending into one. I mean it's beautiful, it's exciting, all the possibilities are just amazing. You're in love. You can't imagine ever not being in love. And on Trail No. 20 we're going to talk about the challenge that relationships bring. We're going to talk about the fact that it's not that easy. It's hard. We're also going to talk about the fact that the relationships that you're going to have are why you want to be a defender in the first place, why you want to live in the flow, why you want to be the man who makes good choices, why we want to be who we are. So if you guys don't mind as we walk through this particular trail, I'm just going to tell you my story. Some of it feels pretty dirty as I look back on it. Some of it feels pretty cool. That's my story. It's my story in which we're going to look at two very different parts of the challenging aspects of relationships. There are actually a number of challenges we'll look at. We'll look at some more next week. But we're going to look at two and so if I you don't mind, just come on in and I'm going to share with you my story with my bride and my life and our journey together.

I meet Lynn, I'm seventeen years old. She is knock dead gorgeous. She's fifteen. I'm sitting on a hayride with another girl. Now I've been knowing her off and on for a significant portion of our life and we're dating

and Lynn comes sliding up on the hayride, lands in my lap and the first words out of my mouth to her was my name's Keith and I love you. She was no more impressed than you are with that line so she got up and went to the back of the hay wagon. A few minutes later she comes flying up again, lands in my lap and I said this is fate man, the gods must be with us, you and I. So she sat down next to me and through a long series of events I end up getting her phone number. I'll give her a kiss. I'll call her the next day. I'll come and see her. I say, hey, this is Keith. I thought about you all night, couldn't sleep. She goes, well I slept just fine, thanks. And I go well you won't when you get to know me and I said can we get together tonight. She said I have a date. I said, break it, it will be worth it. She did and I was to be honest with you, in love. As a matter of fact I remember I went home the night I met her on the hayride and I told my dad, dad I found the girl I'm going to marry. My dad laughed because any girl that moved at any time down the street was the girl I was going to marry and I said, I'm not kidding, Dad. I'm serious. This is it. This is the right girl. She was the first girl. She was the first girl to ever say no to me, actually. Oh, did I mention to you that five years before I met her I started my addiction to pornography. Did I forget to bring that into the story, did I? So when I was twelve I was with a good friend of mine and we found more Playboy magazines than we knew existed in a changing booth in an abandoned swimming pool. Now you don't think about that

when you put the union candle together, do you on your wedding day? But it will go with me to my wedding day.

I'm twelve years old and I remember her saying to God, I didn't even trust God or didn't even believe in God at that point. But I remember praying if you're real, please don't let the place burn don't, don't let me forget where it is. And so for the next five years I play and dabble in my addiction to pornography. I would like to tell you that on my wedding day when the candle was blown out, it went away. It didn't. I had learned as we dated from seventeen to I was twenty-one; she was nineteen when we got married, I had learned that this girl who said no to me, I would be subtle and I would be smooth but we would become sexual in some form or another along the way but I was in love.

She will learn to love me. She actually didn't start loving me. She stated feeling like I was sort of a rescuer in a bad family situation for her, but she wasn't sure, but she becomes more sure and on our wedding day, twenty-one years of age, a graduate of Bible college, a youth pastor, I'm addicted to pornography. Challenging relationships.

In fact, look at I. Relationship Challenge No. 1. He is in relationships with people who are imperfect just as he is. Relationship Challenge No. 1 means this guys, I have stuff, Lynn has stuff. Guess what I don't know about Lynn? That beautiful woman right over here, she was sexually abused at the age of five and a little beyond that, not protected by her mother who knew it was going on. She'll bring that into

our relationship too. We'll get married, two imperfect people and I'm pretty sure that I'm the better of the two. Now you say, you're addicted to pornography. Yeah, yeah, I know. But you know what, marriage was about me. It really wasn't about us. It was really about me and my desires and my longings. This imperfect guy brings into this relationship this stuff. Lynn is also bringing in hers. I don't need to talk to you about hers. Let me talk to you about mine because every relationship has it.

Look at A. The people with whom he has relationships have shadow elements which can destroy them as well as others. A man's shadow will destroy him and others by: one, seeking power and attempting to control others with whom he has relationships. That is me. We're going to talk about this issue of control next trail, but this is me. I'm the guy who came from a healthy family. I'm a guy who is spiritually sort of above Lynn. I'm the guy that everybody says, wow, he's really this amazing communicator. I'm this guy and I'm going to control this relationship. Now Lynn will control it in certain ways too, far more subtly. But to be honest with you, early on if I desired it, Lynn did it. That wasn't just sexually, that was in every way. She had no model of what a good family was like and she sort of trusted that I was the model because she saw a pretty good family in my mom and my dad. We enter our relationship and we have this stuff. We all have it.

Look at No. 2. Your shadow is going to deny responsibility for the negative behaviors and choices that affect others. Our shadow is going to

say to us, it's not a problem, just keep it a secret. On our wedding day, just so you know, on our wedding night Lynn and I had not had sex yet by the traditional term of intercourse. So from that point of view this is a first experience for us. Although we've been very active this is going to be kind of this new thing, but she doesn't know about pornography. And to be honest with you, I don't know about her abuse. We deny the responsibility that this negative thing. That's the shadow speaking into that, guys.

So that shadow speaks to this. Look at No. 3. Being so self-focused that there's little room for the feelings and viewpoint of others. Now guess what? I got married and sex was about me. Guess what pornography teaches you? Women take care of men, right. Pornography teaches that it's all about you. It's not about relationship, it's about what you want. It's about satisfaction, personally not corporately. It's not about anything to do with relationship and so I'm self-focused. Now Lynn is self-focused to another degree but to be really honest with you, nowhere near like I am. My self-focus, I'm the center of the universe. My dad was the center of our house. I should be the center of our home. It's all about me and my shadow lied and lied and lied.

Look at 4. Ignoring the LARGE CARE which you know what those things are but let's go over them – listening, attention, respect, genuineness, energy, communication, affection, responsibility, empathy. These LARGE CARE love skills are required to maintain loving

relationships. I got to be doing all those things with her. But why would I do all that because she takes care of me, right?

Now, I'm by three years into our marriage, four years into our marriage, I'm teaching marriage seminars. Not listening, not valuing, not loving, not – but we have this good marriage. We have this kind of cool looking marriage. She's beautiful and I have some degree of dynamic and so everywhere we go people are listening to us. I'm addicted to pornography.

5. The shadow demonstrates ambivalence regarding the high level of honesty and vulnerability that true intimacy demands. It's inevitable, right. One day she'd catch me. It was before the internet was invented. It was before you would do it that way. For me it was movies and magazines and one day I just didn't return a movie in time and at that point they were VHS. Interestingly enough, that lack of honesty that had been hidden for years now, speaks deep into her wound. I didn't even know about her wound. But if I had, would I have stopped, would I have been honest, would I have been vulnerable, would I try to clean up? I mean I was asking, to be honest with you guys, I was begging God to get rid of pornography in my life but I kept on falling into it, falling into it, falling into it. Selfish, all about us, right.

6. Failing to recognize that his shadow will cause him to treat the imperfections of others that are similar to his on his own with less grace. He often criticizes the same imperfections in others that we don't want to

recognize in ourselves. Guess what I'm criticizing? Guess what I'm criticizing my bride about? Not sexual enough for me. Abused by men, finds out her husband is into pornography. What a jerk.

Now if you've been with me all these years, you know I've established my jerkhood pretty well, right. But in my marriage I wasn't facing her, I was facing me and my desires.

No. 7. Developing a pseudo intimacy with others which emphasizes certain aspects of each individual in the couple while ignoring other aspects of who they are. So now, Lynn and I are having to live with this world, right. Her hidden world, my now revealed world which is still hidden from most people, and we are having this intimacy that both we are buying into and certainly everybody else is buying into, but it isn't truth, it isn't real intimacy. That's the danger of these relationships when you and I do not go where it's supposed to go.

Look at No. 8. Overemphasizing what others can do for him while overlooking the importance of the emotional connection within the relationship. Other people become simply a function in his life. We're seven years into our marriage now. We're pregnant with what will become our oldest son. I am desperate to deal with this area of pornography because I don't want to generationally hand my sin off to my son. But our relationship has become something where we've had this all about me ism to my side of the relationship where Josh, as Josh is being born, Lynn is

falling out of love with me. Why? We haven't been connected for a pretty long time period.

I want you then to consider what happens. Because I was scared that my son would have my pornography issue, I was scared that I'd keep hurting my wife, to be honest with you, I was afraid it would come out and I would be ousted in the profession I was in. I was desperate man to get this dealt with. I mean I wanted it more than you can imagine. Through a very amazing encounter with God and James 4:7-10 and when I was 27 years of age, God broke the hold that I had made with pornography. It was an awesome time. Some of the most precious experiences of my life was the meeting with God in that encounter. It was unbelievable. His grace, His mercy, His love, His strength, His healing, it was overwhelming. Guess what happened? I took my chair and for the first time I turned it towards our marriage. I turned it to us, the unity that we were designed to have. What I didn't realize was that Lynn was beginning to turn her chair this way.

Look at B. A knight can deal with another person's imperfections by: Look at No. 1. Not approaching the relationship partner with any more judgment regarding their imperfections with how he judges himself. We're two years into Josh's life. We're doing okay but then we get pregnant with Joel and we're still doing okay, but she's moving her chair and moving her chair and moving her chair. By the time Joel is one year of age, she is no longer in love with me. She wants out. What's wrong

with me? What's wrong with who I am? I find myself sitting here going, alright listen. I used to be this guy, but I'm not that guy anymore. I'm this great guy now, come on (Clapping sound) baby, respond. I still didn't know about her abuse. I still didn't know much about the history that was haunting her life. But I did know she was moving, moving, moving away. You know what I didn't do? I didn't judge her. I didn't feel like she was a mess. I realized the man I had become. Now the man I had become in Christ and how I was changed and something really interesting happened.

Look at No. 2. Accepting that an ongoing state of mutual forgiveness must exist in the relationship like grease is a necessary component of all relationships where two shadows are present. She would have to forgive me. She couldn't. Whatever inadequacies I felt like she had had, I had forgiven it until one day she said to me, I'm leaving you. I'm leaving you. That's way out here. I'm leaving you means everything starts to move in our life. She's leaving. I mean this is not like we're not going through a rough time. It's like it's over. Lynn was struggling with forgiving me, believing in me. So I had another encounter with God and I asked God to show me who I was.

We're living in Ocean City, New Jersey at the time and I was a pastor and I got real, real down and dirty with God. And boy, He was – another one of those encounters. I said show me who I am and He showed me who I was and it wasn't pretty. Even though I was free from pornography, there was still self-centered stuff and God forgave me. I

came down to Lynn and I said to her – her bags are packed. She's literally ready to go and I said to her – I have a one year old and a four year old – and I said, Lynn I'm never going to ask you to love me again. She goes, that's good because it's never going to happen. I said but I am going to ask you to fall in love with God and she goes, that's not going to happen either. I said, well I'm going to fall in love with God. I'll never forget it, she sat down, put her bags down, she still had her coat on. She said, I will stay and watch you fail at that. It won't take very long. I didn't fail this time. I fell in love with God. In hindsight, the roots of what we now do as knights was beginning to be born.

Look at No. 3. Demonstrating a willingness to take ownership of his own shadow-generated feelings, thoughts, behaviors, motivations, followed by a very specific apology. I knew that her movement was on me. I knew that where we were in our relationship, what was going on was on me. I knew that I had to take ownership. Guys, the cool part about relationships is it's not your job to make them take ownership. It's your job to ownership. They'll follow your lead or run from it, but you have that choice. So I, I said, I'm the one that's messed this up. I did fall in love with God. You know what's really amazing? This beautiful, wonderful, gracious woman came back. She never really left physically and she came back to the commitment of the relationship. We started I mean falling in love maybe for the first time. Certainly for me at the highest level I had known.

Look at 4. Seeking God's forgiveness regularly for the past behaviors and choices that were shadow-driven and ask for guidance and power in eliminating the shadow's effect on his relationships. We're suddenly now in unity. I mean it was coming in. It was moving tighter and tighter to us and we had this relationship. These were some of the deepest days of love I'd ever known. I mean it was just so much fun to be together.

We'll lose a baby along the way after we move to the Lancaster area of Pennsylvania. But we'll still be in love and I'm pretty sure that we're going to live happily ever after. I still don't know about her wound. I still don't know about this pain as a child, but we're going to be just fine because I got it together.

Look at No. 5. Developing accountability relationships with other men where regular feedback occurs, social support is provided, relationship challenges can be discussed and principles of living are established. Now I flied through that, but I'm going to read it again. Developing accountability relationships with other men where regular feedback occurs, social support is provided, relationship challenges can be discussed and principles of living are established. I'm going to ask you guys, who are those men in your life. Because something else happened to me. I'm going to give this to you quick, but you need to know that part of my history are three guys that I trusted who failed me. See it's not just Lynn and I that are in a relationship. We're in a

relationship with people. If you're going to be a defender, if you're going to be a knight, if you're going to be a man, you're going to need to know that people are going to be there and when you get with people, it gets messy. It's difficult. There are challenges that go with relationships.

One guy I wanted to be like more than anything. It happened while I was just getting free or just working at getting free from pornography so about 26 years of age, I wanted to be like him. He was the best speaker I had ever known. My students were challenged by him every year. And he made a choice to leave his wife and having an affair with his secretary. We were getting together. I mean we were meeting together on a regular basis and one morning we meet in the morning and he said, I got to tell you, I've been asked to leave my organization. It was his organization. How can he be asked to leave and he tells me he was unfaithful. I knew his wife. I knew his boys. Men. I mean I love her. She's awesome. But I'm not sure about men, so I become part of that organization, the very organization he left. I became part of it and another person within the organization, not only did they betray me, they betrayed their marriage and they tried to cause my wife to betray our marriage. Remember I told you about the time when Lynn fell out of love with me. There was some stuff going on in the background. Another man, sexually failing and now wounding me and more importantly my mate. Now this all happened before Lynn and I had fallen back in love. This all happened years

earlier, but I want you to know it all fits in what I'm talking about in point 5. What is it is this.

Two years later, a guy I had mentored who was going to – he took my place as the youth pastor of the church I had left years earlier, he wound up having an affair. In fact, he'll have an affair, catch it, deal with it, go repent, go home and then do it again. Three men, three strikes. They're out. I don't trust men anymore. I didn't even know this happened. I didn't even know it had taken place. I didn't trust me. There was no accountability.

Lynn and I are in love. We're doing really well but I have no men in my life whatsoever. I'm very successful in what I'm doing at that particular point but I have no men. I am wide open. I am vulnerable. I am alone. You see where this is going to go, don't you?

Look at II. Relationship Challenge #2. Both people in a relationship have previously relationship histories that influence the present relationship. We both will have stuff. Lynn, her abuse. My chair is going to change, guys. My chair is going to start to go this way and this way and this way. Let me explain to you how it went this way. We're pregnant with now our third child and then our fourth – fourth and fifth is you count the one that is in Heaven and Lynn becomes very busy taking care of boys. She's not responding to my needs anymore. She's not responding to who I am and to be honest with you, I'm okay with that except that I really want to talk with her and she's busy. And she's hiding something

anyway. She's hiding some pain from her past that I know nothing of. I start to play with the possibility of a relationship with another woman. I'm not going to go sexual. That scares me. I just start to play with what would happen if I could just talk to somebody else. You see, we have history and if you ignore the history, things happen.

I want you to look at A. The chain mail filters of the participant in any relationship are negatively scarred with contributes to a less than perfect belief structure. I had chain mail I knew nothing of. I had not figured, I had not figured in to what was in Lynn's past, but far more importantly, I hadn't figured in what these guys and their choices, their moral failures had done to me. I trusted my boys. I trusted Lynn. I trusted no one else but because I couldn't talk to my young boys about the things I was feeling and Lynn was busy with them, I found somebody else to talk to. She listened well.

Look what happens. Look at No. 1. Both partners have a desire for their mutual love to mean more, help more, prove more, heal more than is humanly possible. I wanted something from Lynn. It wasn't possible so I started looking somewhere else. I'll tell you the end of the story so you don't panic. We don't have a physical affair. But I had an emotional one. I was strong enough that my chair was truly facing this way, truly strong enough that there was a deep risk in this, that maybe, just maybe, this might be blown out.

Look at 2. Pessimistic and distrustful beliefs hinder the joy in the relationship. This often happens as a result of past relationship failures. Lynn starts picking up on something. Where's she picking up on this from? Where's she seeing this? She has stuff in her past where she's been hurt and used by guys, from very early years. A father that failed, a mother that wasn't there for her. Man, she has stuff, right. I'm not trusting people and I'm getting something from her, and I'm not trusting guys, but she was inviting, she had things to say, she seemed to be engaged. That's where my joy was starting to go.

Look at 3. Distorted, unrealistic beliefs exist within the relationship. All of a sudden Lynn couldn't make me my needs. She couldn't. And to be really honest with you, we don't have affairs with people that we're going to marry. We have affairs with people that are just like us. It's easy. It doesn't cost anything. I know better than to have a sexual affair. I know better than that. I know what it says in the Bible. You don't commit adultery, although Christ says if you look at a woman with lust, you've done it. There's certainly lust involved. There's certainly edges that are played on. There's certainly things that are shared. If she could only be like you. I know you guys are living on some of these edges. I know some of you have jumped off the bridge. I know that relationships get difficult. There's challenges and we sometimes push away from the one we should be in and move to the one we shouldn't.

4. The way that significant people who were part of their earlier life expressed their love and organized forest life should be what occurs in all relationships. For me, my mom was always about my dad. She's caught up in the boys. She has no model for what's supposed to be and this person seems to be caught up in me and sort of I'm the center. Why don't you love me like my mom does or did?

Look at 5. Relationship partner is expected to make up for the personal weaknesses of the other partner making self-responsibility and self-development less necessary. I expect her to take care of this stuff I'm going through right now and she's not, so here I am. Do you see where this is going? Do you see where the game gets played and how it gets messed up? I'm not giving, I'm taking. I'm not caring, I'm not loving, I'm not being responsible. I'm wanting – I'm back to pornography, right, aren't I? Yeah, I'm not in pornography but this is a new form. Listen, I'm not the center, I'm the shadow. I'm the center. The thing I said I would never be to God I'm becoming all of a sudden again. I'm not in love with Him. I'm in love with someone else.

6. Because of their commitment, the relationship partner will be expected to tolerate behaviors that are not shown to others. All of a sudden I'm spending hours away from the house. All of a sudden I'm traveling a lot. All of a sudden some things are starting to happen, conversations are taking place. Things are happening. For in the modern day, you guys are texting and tweeting, and you're doing all this private

stuff at all these private meetings and you're lucky to have me, girl. I'm still in love with me. I'm not sure she's in love with her though.

Look at 7. Forest life will not be difficult because the relationship partner will be there to prevent problems from occurring. You have this delusion that, you know what, we'll be able to kind of live in both worlds maybe, or the forest shouldn't be that hard because, you know, this person is going to take me and they're not, so therefore this person will. Guys, women don't take care men. Men take care of women. My job is not the one to be taken care of. My job is always to take care. In the flow, making choices, be strong.

Look at 8. The relationship partner's spiritual relationship with God will make a personal walk with God less necessary. I'm not connected to God anymore. Well I am. Actually to be honest with you, I'm having devotions, praying, doing all the things I'm supposed to be doing because I want to justify this but there's no connection, right. And Lynn is feeling the strain and the tension on this thing. Remember I told you about the moment where I woke up with pornography and what in the world am I doing? It's the same thing here. I wake up one day and go what in the world are you doing?

Can I tell you that this is not a very pretty chair, not a very pretty noose. She's not the problem. I'm responsible. God doesn't say, oh man, if you just, if there was just better women in the world, Keith, you'd be find. There's nothing wrong with this person.

So, B, remember how relationships are. A knight can assist with his chain mail issues and those of his relationship partner by the following. No. 1, accepting the fact that one individual relationship cannot make up for the past relationship deficits and that each relationship must be understood and accepted for what it is. What I'm about to do is this, Lynn is now starting to pull in. She's starting to feel like she can't trust me, but I'm taking responsibility for my choice. I can't fix where she is right now, but I can make a choice back into the relationship. So I cut the relationship, turn from the wrong like I had turned from pornography and turned back to the commitment and turned back to my love, my responsibility, my responsibility.

No. 2. Accept the reality that each partner in a relationship needs to mourn and do their own grief work regarding their past losses. They won't understand why I cried for a few days, breaking off that relationship. She actually knows some of the relationship. We've shared a little bit but it's at this point that Lynn begins to share with me her pain, her stuff, her mourning, her grief. You know what's so amazing? I felt like a jerk when I started to realize what she had been through. She had grief, she had to mourn. We'll mourn the mutual loss that we've had, but she started to have to deal with her stuff.

Look at 3. Discussing the need that each of them has to be encouraged to change and be willing to let go of some of the negative history that is between them and become clean. Lynn tells me her story, I

tell her mine. Nothing hidden. This is when I start to tell guys, guys start to get involved in my life again. I start telling them my story. I probably should have told you that I will build relationships with men coming out of this relationship and that will cause me to be comfortable enough to tell Lynn my story. I want you to be open and honest with your mate but do it with a couple of guys first. Let them guide you. Sometimes you wound the very person that you love in honesty so you got to be very wise at this particular point. The negative history between us, when I start to deal with it, changes it. Let go of some of the things you can't change.

4. Recognizing that a positive, supportive relationship is much more about the journey together than reaching a specific point in a relationship, which is defined as having arrived. I hope by now you figured out, we've been in a journey. At this point in our marriage, I'm not even sure how many years we were married, probably eighteen, nineteen at this point. We hadn't arrived, we were committed. I hurt Lynn. She had hurt me a little bit but we were in it.

It's interesting, I'm going to tell you a story about a guy who let somebody down in your Knightly News. His name is John Mark and John Mark will be like those guys I told you about earlier. John Mark said I'm with you guys, I'm in, and then failed to be moral and failed to be right and deserted Paul and Barnabas. He hurt that relationship between those two men, Paul and Barnabas because of his failure. John Mark, look at your books, it says, John Mark he made a choice that negatively impacted

the relationship and the calling of two other men. John Mark had made a choice that hurt somebody else, right. Paul and Barnabas were responsible for theirs. John Mark was responsible for his.

Lynn and I are each responsible for our own choices and it impacts our relationship. Maybe I'll zip to the end of the story. We are more in love now than we've ever been. More deeply committed, more aware, it's pretty cool. But relationships are challenged. I know right now you're feeling like she doesn't love you guys. I know you're feeling like she understands and she doesn't. I know you're feeling like there's something else out there. It might be a woman but it might be some other affair you're having with something – power, economics, whatever it is. Until you learn how to deal with these commitments of these relationships, until you figure this out, you're going to miss so very much _____.

The hardest thing I'm going to ask you to do in all of these trails is to build strong relationships and work through the pain. I will tell you that these few things we've been going over, go over them and over them and over them and over them and ask God to reveal you and reveal her and reveal not just your marriage but all of your relationships this way. You have to work it out on every kind of level. I'm doing it with my marriage in this story, but guys, we do it on a lot of levels.

Look at No. 5. It will kind of help us on this. Understanding that the couple's initial attraction was partially related to having equal levels of identity strength. When I met Lynn I was wounded by my own choice in

pornography. When I met Lynn she was wounded by her non-choice to be abused. We met each other at the same identity strength. That's where we came into our relationship at. The person that you're with now, if you're married, if you're engaged or seriously seeing somebody, you're coming in at the same identity strength. You're not up here and she's down here. I thought I was up here and she was there. Straight level, straight level. That's where we meet. That's where we build relationships. Keeping that in mind, you're not better than, or you're not worse than.

Look at 6. Choosing to celebrate the differences in their personalities, genders, history, and interests by embracing these differences as learning opportunities. I love Lynn as she is. For years I wanted to love Lynn as I wanted her to be. Let me ask you something guys. We're going to spend a lot of time about what makes your heart come alive. What makes your mate's heart come alive? What makes your mate's heart come alive? Find it out and be part of it, because it's one of the greatest joys because it will be different than what makes your heart come alive. I hate to tell you, she's not going to say you, it's whenever you walk in the room, my heart just flutters and comes alive. Find what makes her heart come alive. Find it out.

I bought my wife a six shooter for her birthday, a six shooter. You know why? It helps her to shoot a bear when she's on a trail in Colorado. She was more excited about the gift than you can imagine. Now that was not a gift suggestion for your wife's birthday because you buy your wife a

six shooter and you haven't talked to her about what makes her heart come alive, you might receive the other end of that six shooter, so be careful. That's part of it. Celebrating the differences.

Look at the next one. Spending time together on a regular basis, having fun or dating which is a necessary ingredient for healing energy that is needed for the inevitable rough spots that occur within relationships. Lynn and I a couple years ago got a hot tub. We spend – we're in there every evening and if we're not in there, we're going for a walk. About five years before that we started going for a walk every night. No phones, not anything else. We spend some time talking, starting dating, started making sure that we had getaway times throughout the year, just fun together. Not trying to figure out how to pay a bill, not trying to figure out how to raise a kid, not trying to figure out how to deal with cancer, just celebrating life. You need to do that. She's worth that. This is worth that. Relationship is worth that.

8. Recognizing that healthy conflict adds depth to the relationship and is the result of willingness of each partner to be authentic and share themselves honestly. Guys know that you're going to have some conflict. Roy was talking about that in our roundtable not too long ago, and we'll actually have a trial. We'll just make sure you understand how to do healthy conflict. Honesty is always going to have some conflict to it. Don't be afraid of it. It's good. That's depth. It will take you deeper into your intimacy.

Look at 9. Strengthening himself enough that the weaknesses in the relationship partner are less threatening and the effects of these weaknesses are irrelevant. Do I believe that I'll never fall into pornography again? Yeah, I actually believe I probably won't. But you know what, I could. Do I believe I'll ever go to another person? I don't think so but I could. So what am I doing? Strengthening myself. I don't fall into the same stuff that hurt her before, hurt our God, hurt me, hurt others. What a difference we can make.

Look at 10. Showing that he values the relationship partner in the same way that God valued each of us by seeking the spiritual strength to love them as God loves us. Do you guys remember when I told you about a time when Lynn was going to leave and I asked God to show me me and I said I was going to fall in love with God? I want you to know something. When I was twelve years of age looking at Playboy Magazine and using the very women that God had created in, when I was seventeen and met Lynn and I hid it, and I was twenty-one when I married her, right up until I was twenty-seven and gotten rid of that addiction, do you know that God loved me? Do you know that when Lynn was abused and wounded and scarred and hurt, in the middle of those moments God loved her. And when I chose to go after someone else instead of my mate, do you know that God loved me. Did He like what I was doing? He hated what I was doing.

I believe that one of the highest honors you're ever going to have as a man is to have the courage to reach down and say I know this is hard. I'm not going to let you go. We're going to grow together. We're going to be together, and I'm going to love you as Christ loves the church.

Do you know what's really neat? This candle is still burning, thirty-eight years later, not because I have it together, but because God of the universe does. So, that's about marriage. I know some of you guys are single, some of you aren't married, but the principles apply in relationships. Look at them and look at them well. I work on these with my sons. I work on these with the guys that I'm connected to. There's aspects of what we've talked about that's affected there. This is mostly directed at your marriage. If it's broken, go heal it by God's grace. If it's questionable, start figuring out what it is and if you're in love, fall in it more deeply. See you next week for Trail 21.