MEN'S FRATERNITY

Knights of the 21st Century

Trail 21

KEITH: Guys, it's Trail 21 and we're really getting down to it. How do we defend? How do we care? How do we help those that are valuable in our lives? One of the things we need to understand is this is where our strength starts to rise. This is where our strength is so strong, strong enough that we're able to help others find their strengths. That's when relationships go where they need to do. So keeping that in mind, this is demonstrating your strength. Trail 21.

In demonstrating your strength, here's the situation. This is like you and your bride or you and anybody in your life, I need to know that you know what your strength is. What makes your heart come alive? Do you also know what makes their heart come alive? That's not a separation of a relationship. It's allowing them to become strong and you to be strong. Do you know what makes your children's heart come alive? Do you know what makes the guys in your life hearts come alive? Do you know what makes your employees hearts come alive? Do you know what those who are under your care, your protection, your provision, do you know what does that? That is what responsibility of a man is when he's going to be a defender.

Now we're going to talk about some really key areas about relationships here and part of it is to walk in your strength. You're going

to demonstrate your strength by be willing to do the hard things, the tough things, but also to help them discover who they are. So I ask you as I did last trial, what makes your wife's heart come alive? Do you know? Do you know what makes your wife's heart come alive? It's really important. Do you know what makes your children's hearts come alive, especially if they're old enough for them to be able to recognize it? Do you know what makes the guys in your life hearts come alive? Do you know what makes those that you're engaged with as a way of life, do you know what makes their heart come alive? That's part of the strength and are you willing to do the tough work to help them get there?

When a woman gets wounded, she builds a wall and a moat. When we get wounded we just throw it in the closet and ignore it, but when a woman gets wounded, she builds a wall and a moat. Inside that wall and a moat is the opportunity for her to get healed and become all that she's supposed to be especially with Christ, the real bridegroom involved in her life. Your job is to guard that, be strong enough and help her discover what makes her heart flourish. When the people around you start to flourish, you begin to realize it's not just about me.

There's an interesting verse in Corinthians that talks about this. It talks about the fact that God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and man is a head of woman. For a long time I thought this is what it meant. I must be in control of women or at least my woman. Well if that's my job, I'm incredibly bad at it. If Christ is in control of me or you

and I as men, he must be really bad at it too because men do most of the criminal activities in the world. And if God is the head of Christ, are they really one at all? So it gets really confusing. You read that passage, here's really what it means. God says I'm responsible for Jesus. Jesus says I'm responsible for you as men. And we say I'm responsible for the woman in our lives. What that means is that I'm going to be strong enough to let them be an individual, not controlling. We're going to try to rip away the concept of control and start to add to it some very key areas, some key elements of development of the strength of the person that's involved in your life. So we're going to spend some time talking about demonstrating your strength.

Look at No. III. Challenge #3 is focused on the fact that each person we have a relationship with is different from us. As a result, conflict is inevitable. You see, the moment I'm willing to go for Lynn's strength it means that my strength doesn't dominate. Her strength is going to be involved as well. You're going to have some conflict. For the longest time she would say her heart comes alive in Colorado and I told her she was nuts. Your heart doesn't come alive in a place. That means if you're not in the place, your hearts not alive and I would tell her she's crazy. We're flying out to Colorado, about five years ago – six years ago – and we're going to meet with a couple about some concepts in ministry that we share a mutual feeling with. As I'm flying out there, God says just so you know, Colorado makes Lynn's heart come alive. Well that's really

great because now I got to admit that I've been a jerk for a couple of years, fighting her on the fact that her heart doesn't come alive there. But more importantly, it began to make me realize that what makes my heart come alive is not the model for what makes everybody else's heart come alive. So we're going to be different. Conflict is going to be inevitable. You're going to need to work through that.

Look at A. If conflict does occur periodically, it is an indication that, one, at least one of the partners in the relationship is not truly being themselves – authentic. Roy mentioned this the other day when he was talking about the whole idea of conflict. If we're not having a conflict, one of you is unnecessary, right? I mean really. What you need is somebody that's going to be truthful and say what does it for you doesn't do it for me or what made you feel so good did not actually make me feel good. That's where conflict starts. That doesn't just happen in a marriage. It happens in all relationships and you got to be willing to go there. That's the strength of a man who knows how to be a defender. You're confident of who you are and willing to discover who they are and help them go that process while keeping them within the moral fiber of your responsibility to care for them.

Look at No. 2. The relationship is not sufficiently close in terms of sharing ideas. This is again, if you're not having conflicts, feelings and struggles for the natural differences in the relationship to become apparent. If I'm not close and we're not close enough, we're just sort of

doing life parallel together, we not going to have a conflict. When you raise children, you're going to have conflicts about how to do that as a parent. If you're involved with several guys together, even what you want to do for dinner, you're going to have conflicts and you're going to have to be willing to have those relationships close enough that it can rub that way. Another reason for conflict.

The lack of it is No. 3. There is an inability to work through conflicts by dealing with them in a healthy manner. This creates a desire to find another relationship in which to be real and to establish intimacy. If I don't have a healthy relationship with you in which conflict is taking place, then I'm going to look for another one. Especially obviously that gets very, very tricky in marriage because what's happening is that I'm looking for something real, I'm looking for something genuine. If we're under ground, if we're not really dealing with who we are, be strong enough in who you are to let them be strong enough in who they are. That's the responsibility that Christ is talking about when He says, this is who is over who and all that goes on. Not control, but rather the opportunity of relationship.

We're going to spend some time thinking this through and each of the guys will share some concepts with that.

ROBERT: Thanks Keith. Point B. No one likes to lose all the arguments in their relationship. When this happens, a person will naturally seek to either even the score or disconnect his or heart from the

relationship. We're going to start talking, guys, about you know when we're feeling like we're maybe losing the argument, the sense of wanting to even the score. Let's see what happens, how guys tend to react.

Point 1. Many males do not hear the specific messages their spouse is trying to communicate to them. Like sometimes guys when we start feeling like we've been losing a bunch of arguments or that, you know, we just haven't been paid attention to correctly when we've been talking, we tend to act like, you know what, we become closed minded and we act like no one else has any other, you know, input into the situation. We kind of just close our ears off. We don't listen and we tend to just concentrate on our own point. Even when the other person, especially our spouses are trying to make their point, and maybe they have a valid point, we still stay in this world where, you know, it doesn't matter, I'm right and I'm right. We got to be careful that we don't act that way.

Another way the guys tend to act, No. 2. Many males do not hear the messages that their children are giving them until the relationship is lost. Look at this first bullet, guys. Sons get discouraged and leave. Now listen, there's an old song called "Cat In the Cradle" and it really refers to this kid who is always trying to get his dad's attention. He's trying so hard, you know, dad when are you going to be home? I want to spend time with you and the dad is so busy, he says, no, no, no. We'll play when I get home and we'll have a good time then. You know we're going to have a good time then but yet it never happens. What ends up

happening, guys, when sons don't get that attention from their fathers, they begin to really disconnect. What you end up having is a frustrated male on your hands. We hate it when we get frustrated. You can imagine our child. The only person they really have as a male example, that male comradery is us.

Look at the next bullet. Our daughters, they choose another man to love them. Now I was given this example. We call it the Mongo example. Let me explain. So imagine, especially for those of you guys that you have daughters, imagine you have a daughter and you know, she's spending her whole life, she's growing up in your home and stuff, but if you're so busy you can't give her the time, you know you're getting work done, you're doing good things. Maybe you're being stability at the home because you're providing and you're doing the honorable stuff but you never dedicate yourself or time to have that relationship with your daughter. What ends up happening then is your daughter grows up. She never got that love from dad and well eventually when those years come that she starts to look at other guys – I know, trust me as the father of a five year old I hate the thought of that, but there will come a time when your daughters will have feelings for other boys and well later on in life she brings a guy named Mongo who is the absolute opposite and could not be more insulting to your very nature. You know what I'm talking about. That guy that you're just, you want to make Mongo salsa out of him, right. That guy named Mongo, that's who she brings. And you're

like wait a minute, no, no, no, no. Hold on sweetheart, you feel the crisis so now all of a sudden you want to connect with her. You want to show her that you love her. You want to show her that you care for her but by then it's kind of too late because you spent her whole life telling her, well yeah I love you but you're not important enough for my attention and my love. Now I'm going to give it to this guy who is telling me he will love me and showing me. Very, very scary guys. If you want to keep those relationships healthy, you want to raise a daughter that's going to understand how she should be treated and understand how she should love a man. Invest while you still can. That's why I spent so much time on this point. It's very important.

Let's move on. No. 3. People respond to impressive relationships by – now we're talking about impressive relationships here. Look at this first bullet. They respond by withdrawing their efforts to make the relationship work. You've sent this. Anytime a person feels like, you know, things aren't even, like they're just in a relationship where they're constantly losing, where they're constantly just not ever having any input, well they just begin to withdraw. You know what? It's not worth it. Sometimes we have friends, you know we haven't been treating our own friends right. We've kind of been the oppressive ones. Our friends tend to like kick back, they withdraw from having any input. This happens with our relationships sometimes, sometimes in our intimate relationships with our wives. If we are constantly the oppressive ones, well then you know,

they have no input, you start feeling like there's no connection there. It happens in any relationship, even our daughters, our sons, all across the board. That's how people tend to react. Be very careful about this.

Second bullet. Acting sick which can be a passive expression of their anger and frustration and the negative effects of the relationship. Now listen, human beings emotionally sometimes can become like emotional punching bags. In an oppressive relationship, the one who's being oppressed, you know, they can only take so much and after awhile just like a punching bag, there's going to start showing the bruising, they're going to start showing the affects. And what ends up happening a lot of times in relationships is that that person who's being oppressed begins to act out in a form that is sick. Whether it's consciously or unconsciously, whether they mean to or not, they get into a position where they no longer really feel healthy, really feeling like they can contribute. And really the only way that they can manipulate control back towards them is by creating a situation where they're sick. And that means that now you, the oppressor, has to alter your game plan and you see what ends up happening is that there's a lot of manipulation going on. Oppression on one side and then that other side is trying to manipulate back. It's a mess, guys. This is why oppressive relationships aren't good. We got to be aware and make sure when we see these little signs, we begin to change our behavior.

Defender

Look at the next, third bullet. Developing a private life. When there are oppressive relationships, we see it all the time, that oppressed side, the side that's being oppressed sometimes looks to another party to fulfill their emotional needs. Whether it be through an affair, maybe it's just an emotional affair, maybe it's just in private, you know, doing stuff you're not supposed to do, maybe it's drinking or an addiction of some other sort that nobody needs to know, you just kind of keep it private, it's very important that we don't oppress, you know really recognize when there's an oppressive relationship going on so that these things don't happen.

Then this last bullet. In an oppressive relationship, there is a pretending to care. Kind of like we talked about where, you know, someone begins to withdraw, there's all this stuff happening. There begins to – an act begins to happen, you know, where people begin to pretend to care. Think about it. After a while, if you just – that person is constantly oppressing you and constantly over you and you really have no real input in a relationship, well you don't want to look like the jerk but instead you just pretend to care. You know, you just go through the motions. You say, yeah, I love you and then go back to what you wanted to do. Be very careful guys. It's very important that we are aware of oppressive relationships that we avoid the symptoms and these effects. Roy.

ROY: As an employer of a number of individuals, it's a myth to believe that I am in charge. Reality is that if they don't feel hurt, they're

going to live a light on. I wonder who pays the bill. They're going to have a good idea, I wonder who would benefit from that. In a culture of the history of our country there was a time that for plantation help and a number of other reasons, a bad time in our history occurred whereby we decided to oppress another group of individuals, whereby they were, in their world living the way they were, and we thought we can take from them. So folks went over and they captured individuals and the whole slave trade became a part of our country's history. Sadly in many different ways, even presently, throughout the world slavery exists. Now in slavery you would think the master is in charge. You can dominate. As some men historically have felt, this is my house and God has made me the leader of it.

4. It is true for employees or slaves, it is no different for a relationship partner. Human beings seek to have equal power in a relationship. It is part of humanity to want to be equal with the other. So when you look at the history of the Breadfruit tree, it shows us how a group of individuals that were going to be slaves and dominated expressed their human freedom and individuality just like the people around us will naturally do. In Jamaica, they would bring the various slave trades to Jamaica and other islands and they would split up the different tribes so as to control the chances of rebellion so that when a plantation owner bought slaves, he bought them from different tribes so as to keep them from being able to collectively communicate and rebel.

The human essence of dignity that's parted all our homes, that natural God-given wanting to be free and follow God's plan and calling for each person's life, caused several things to occur.

The first one is, the slaves began to create a language called Gala whereby it was a mixture of several other languages so that they could learn to communicate with one another. So the slave trader says or the master says, I'm going to dominate you and the human spirit of ingenuity that needs to be fed and heard how each person's created within our home, created its own language. The second thing the slaves did was the slaves were constantly fed this bland fruit – I ate it – tasteless called breadfruit. And it had all the nutritions to keep them alive and it was all on the trees around Jamaica and it kept people alive, but man, it had not taste. And they fed the breadfruit to them in the morning and they fed the breadfruit to them in the afternoon and guess what they had for supper? You got it – breadfruit.

Now the problem the masters figured out in a short period time with breadfruit was just one thing. The problem was if a slave ate too much breadfruit for too many years, there was a chemical you know in breadfruit and it started to affect the slaves' hearing, so a 30 or 40 year old slave, if he ate enough breadfruit or she ate enough breadfruit couldn't hear. What we know today is there's no chemical in breadfruit. You see the slaves said, we've had enough and the longer the slave they

- the longer the individual was a slave, the more they convinced the master that eventually I can't hear you because you fed me breadfruit.

5. Often the dominate person, the one who appears to be in the driver's seat, does not realize the cost of winning every argument. So many times I've sat in the counseling office with a man whose wife has left him and taken off, sometimes with another, sometimes just to escape for freedom. And the man tells me about winning every argument for years just dominating, dominating, dominating. And now he's in tears, shocked at what happened and most of the time these guys at this point will be honest and say, man, Roy, I really, really blew it. I've just not been there for her. And I sit with this man, and he says it's too late, what can I do? And yet he wants to try to love her. Will she look back? You know, I've said to these guys, it's almost like, you know, picture yourself on a big long open plane and the woman gets in the tank and starts heading towards the man slowly and says, now you better change or I'm out of here. And he goes, yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm the man of the house. And she takes another step and she says, you know, you better stop this and she's moving this tank towards this guy and saying I'm going to shoot you in the relationship if you don't give up and change and start to hear and meet my needs. Now all of a sudden the gun turret is against him and she says I'm telling you, I'm leaving you soon if you don't start to meet my needs. And you know what we men often do, we go, yeah, you're right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Now the man is laying on his back and

he can see written on the tread one inch from his face, made in Japan and he looks over and he says, hey Roy, I think I got a problem. We have to hear what the people in our families are saying and the people around us are saying before we get to the tread. Made in Japan is way too late.

6. We have to be willing to lose at least one-half of the arguments in our relationship if we expect the other person to continue to be invested in this relationship. We men do not like to lose. We don't like to lose. We don't want to lose and yet part of manhood is to, we recognize that that person if they lose every one, we're heading to made in Japan. It's going to be over. They're going to somehow want their freedom. Part of manhood is the willingness to say, you know, I've got to keep that person's spirit alive and to do that, I have to face the pain of losing at least half the time.

In my case, one of my losses, this man said there will be no more dogs in my house because we've had dogs. Dogs are your hobby. It's not my hobby. No more dogs. My wife's spirit comes alive with dogs. Sometime when you're by my house I'll introduce to Ethel and Charlie.

T.C.: That's pretty good Roy. I'll probably look at your pain the same again. My wife would love to hear that part so she can run a tank over my face. Alright, (laughter), we need to expect that we may not be happy when we lose an argument. We must choose what to do with our unhappiness. That kind of speaks to a lot of the things the guys have been saying. Part of trying to make sure you win the argument is, you

know, we think that the only way this thing ends well is if I'm right and I get my way. You know, if I don't get my way, we're going to have a problem. Well sometimes like Roy said and like some of the others said, you won't get your way and you got to figure out what you're going to do about that problem. Some people say you shouldn't go to bed angry. You got to get it all figured out and I've learned over the years that sometimes it's good, you know, just relax, give her her space, give yourself your space and understand that you know what, I'm going to have to find another way to deal with this round and maybe sit back and process the whole discussion and say, hey, is there something I could have done differently? You go to figure out how to process the fact that it may not get settled tonight and it also may not get settled in the way you want it to get settled. Now that takes a little bit of discipline, but you'll find yourself coming out better on the other side.

Let's look at the next one. No. 8. When we acknowledge that we must lose some of our arguments, our self-preservation instinct decreases. Arguing and defending our position becomes less. Here comes the bullet. It becomes – arguing our position becomes less important. For some guys, look, for a lot of us, we have to win. That's just the way we figure. I don't know who we're competing against, ourself, how we're going to be viewed, you don't want to admit that you lost to your wife, however you want to put it. You got to get to the point where you're like, look, I actually don't have to win, like you know I don't

have to win this. We have to just come to a resolution and it's not about who is winning. It's about what's best for the two of us at the moment. So it becomes less important to win. Like that's not the driving force anymore. I don't have to win. That's pretty freeing just knowing that you don't have to win. That way when I lost, I'm not embarrassed when I talk to my buddies.

The next one, the next bullet is, it becomes less frequent. You know, I don't have to win all the time either. So first, he's like I don't have to win. That's not the goal here. And the other thing is that I don't have to win all the time. You know, it's not like she can't have her way, she's dominating me if she gets her way or I have a lost record against my wife. You know, all the different things just cause trouble. I don't have to win all the time. I don't have to win period. These are some of the things – you got to look at some of these things. They're humbling aren't they? But I'll tell you, humility goes a long way in a marriage relationship.

The next bullet is personal and self-defining. This is the one where you don't say anymore, I am less of a man if my wife wins. You know, I just made a joke just two seconds ago, but that's how a lot of us think, you know. If I'm getting, if my wife's getting her way, I'm supposed to be the man. I think it's said in cliché, hey, I wear the pants around here, you know and all those types of things. And when you feel like that's not you or you think you're going to be ridiculed if that's not you, and it

defines you that you always got that reputation for wearing the pants and things like that. You know, when you do this properly that becomes less important. You don't define yourself by how many arguments you can win. In fact, I think it says more about you. You define yourself by how many of your discussions end well and you end on good terms with your wife.

Let's go to the next one. It says here, less aggressive, less dogmatic and less rigid. This is – there's a cliché that says it's my way or the highway. You know, some of the guys have said this is my house, you know, dogmatic, meaning only my way works. And there is no way that God designed up to where in a marriage relationship you have all the right ideas. I'm going to tell you in all humility, if my wife ever started doing everything I say, if I am always right, I'm looking for us to just run into a wall because there's no way I know everything. Think about when we're trying to use a map to go places, have you ever been too stubborn to just stop and say, I'm lost and stuff like that. It's times when I'm look, I'm lost and my wife who is actually better at reading maps – she was a drafter – she can help us find our way and I'm humble enough to let her do that. You know, so it's never your way or the highway. It's just – you both want to do it God's way. Sometimes it needs to be done her way. She'll be right about some things and sometimes you can do it your way. So you got to have that compromise.

Defender

And then the next part, it says, we become more open to the other person's perspective. This has to happen. Nobody knows everything. You know, this is where you say, you know what – first of all by the way, your wife is going to love this – you have to listen. You know, in order to consider someone else's perspective, you got to stop yelling and barking in the argument and just stop for a second and hear her whole perspective and then you got to be able to say, you know what, I didn't see it that way. Let me process that a little bit. Man, I think I heard Robert say it a few minutes ago, you'll score some points with your wife just by listening and being willing to hear her side and then you think about what you need to say and then you guys can figure it out together. But if it's always your way, you'll never care about the other person's perspective.

To the next point. You'll be willing to consider a compromise. Be willing to consider a compromise. It's just simply, hey, look, you know what? I don't agree with you. By the way, guys, it's okay to disagree with somebody. You will disagree at times, but then you got to figure out an anecdote, a solution. So it's like you know what, I don't agree with you, but I'll tell you what. You can do X, Y, Z sometimes and maybe I'll do X, Y, Z sometimes and then that way, we're both happy. Compromise is always the way to go because you're not always right and she's not always right. But she needs her way and you need your way and you kind of find that sweet spot, you know that spot that just makes everybody feel pretty good, like they're being listened to and share as a solution.

Defender

Alright, we got two more bullets here. Relationship-friendly when discussing the issue. You want to become more of this. You want to become more relationship friendly. I've heard this saying and I love it. It says, you know what, sometimes you might have to fight. I don't really like using the word fight, but I know you guys want about, fight, argue, whatever, disagree. You want to fight well. You want to fight fair. You know, there's a loving way to disagree and there's a couple of examples I have learned over the years. I want to share one with you real quick. Now you got to use your imagination a little bit, so let's just say there's a triangle here. Okay, I'm going to draw a triangle, you follow me. Put you here, put your wife here, let's put God at the top. And let's just say in the middle, that's where Satan sits. Okay, that's where like the landmines sit. And on each end of that triangle here, that's where your personal walls are built up. If you're trying to change her and she's trying to change you, if you're going at each other, that's where Satan sits and he manipulates and he gets in your mind and that's where the landmines are. That's where the traps are, that's where the problems are, the things you don't see. That's what happens when you go at each other and notice when you're going at each other, you're leaving God out of the picture. Look at that triangle. Just take a single look at it. Picture it in your head. You're here, she's here. If you just decide to climb your side of the triangle and you're doing what a man is supposed to do and encourage her to climb her side, don't go in the middle. That's where Satan sits. Now he sits on

the outside too but the thing is, this is God's design for you to pursue Him and so when you're running the same that way, He'll empower you to get by. But in here, this is apart from God, in the middle you're on your own. But if you go to God, you just try to be the man that God wants you to be, and then encourage your wife to be the woman that God wants her to be, you're both chasing after God. You're not focusing on each other and then by the time you come together, you're up there and God's a part of the whole thing and then it works out. So don't try to change her and don't let her try to change you. You both try to change yourselves by climbing your side of the triangle and then it all works out. Now I love that diagram but that helps you to fight well, or disagree well. I really enjoy that. I've been using that and it's been working for me.

Alright, one more point. Willing to view the conflicts as a learning opportunity and a chance to grow as a couple. Here's the final thing. Here's what I want you guys to do. I know it works and it's the right thing to do. When you have a problem, it's you, your wife, and then there's the problem – the issue, whatever you're fighting about. You, instead of fighting each other about the problem, you can still have a discussion, but you should have it side-by-side against the problem. The two of you fight the problem, not fight each other about the problem. And in doing that, you'll work together. You'll grow together and you're not harming each other but you're beating the crap out of that problem. And that's the way it should work and that will strengthen your marriage and make you guys

tighter. So hopefully you're internalizing these things and man, I want to see some victories in your life. Alright, here we go, with the Knightly News by Keith Walker.

KEITH: What we want to look at is Zedekiah. Zedekiah is a guy in the Bible who was a jerk and he decided to align with another jerk. And what he did was that he did all kinds of destruction and ultimately cost him everything and his nation everything. In fact, look at this statement. He went after a win by aligning with an enemy. By the time he tried to correct it, it cost him and his nation absolutely everything. Guys he might have won the moment, but he loses the world, you know, it's just one of those kind of things. Keep that in mind.

Let me finish up with what T.C. was talking about, No. 9. It takes knightly courage to lose an argument well. It also requires concentration because you must control your desire for payback, for revenge, for retribution. You're going to have to have the courage to say, you know what, I still think I'm right here, but you know what, I'm going to make sure that I'm not going to shoot back and say man, listen to me. I'm going to make sure that you understand that I'll teach you not to do that to me. When somebody hurts you, don't try to figure out a way back. It's never Christ-like.

Look at C. Because of our differences, each relationship will require us to set boundaries and create boundaries that are specific to that relationship. Now each participant in a relationship is going to deal

with the following things. Clair and I have done enough life together that maybe we thought, man, let him share of these things and what you can do to set those boundaries in relationships. Clair.

CLAIR: I'm going to just talk about a couple of points that each participant in a relationship has to deal with. So, No. 1, we must honestly define their limits in regards to the relationship. I was thinking about the early – my early experience in our marriage. When Bonnie and I first got married, it was absolutely amazing. I don't know what you guys, for those of you who are married, what it was like. But for us, it just naturally, just met each other's needs. Every decision that we had to make, it just meshed. It got to the point almost about like we could, you know, finish each other's sentences, every desire that I had she was right there already knowing what I wanted, what I needed. And I was thinking about the conflicts, I don't know what it's like for you guys, but even the conflicts, we just came together on and we laughed about them quickly. We got through them and enjoyed the differences between us. And then day two came and it all fell apart. Hatfields and McCoys, I'm telling you.

Well here's what I found about having relationships, honestly defining limits in regards to the relationship. Unspoken expectations are two words that came to mind in this. It took Bonnie and I awhile to figure out that we had expectations. I had an expectation of her as a wife and I assumed she already knew it. She had expectations of me as a husband and she assumed I knew it. And man, we were so hurt and so frustrated

and it led to anger and I'll tell you, actually a lot of challenges in the early years of our marriage, until we learned that I cannot assume that she knows these things. And until I'm willing to take the risk to vocalize it, I have no right to hold her accountable for that. We've grown so much in that relationship. I find it a little bit trickier with men. My wife and I now know to sit down and talk about it and I will now assume, apparently you didn't know this, but I had this desire or this need. A little trickier with guys. Not quite as touchy, feely when we sit down, but over time I've learned in different ways that we've got to somehow communicate. These are the limits I have, these are the expectations I have on the relationship. So keep them healthy, take that step.

Let's go on to No. 2. No. 2 says we must be willing to make the other person uncomfortable if that's what is necessary in order to be fully honest. Well guys, I just talked about it. It's a little bit trickier in those men to men relationships I'm involved in and here's the deal. If I want to have a long term relationship, I found – I don't know what you guys are like, but maybe for a period of weeks or months, you in – it's kind of weird to call it a honeymoon in a male relationship. You're in the phase where there's not a whole lot of maintenance. We're still learning to know each other, haven't run into too many conflicts. However, I desire long term relationships. I value the fact that Keith and Roy and I have been friends for a long time and these guys I hope will be friends for a long time. That sometimes requires maintenance and it is uncomfortable, but if I don't go

there, I found, my history tells me, I'm going to blow that relationship to bits and I lose that friendship. So a little bit of discomfort now for a long term gain, lifetime relationships.

Let's go on to point 3. Must trust that the other person is strong enough to take care of their own feelings because it is impossible to take care of another person in all ways. This is just a little bit more about that piece about being uncomfortable. I have got to assume that some of my expectations or some of the limits that I want to communicate with my friends about our relationship, it may hurt them. I still have to do it. I have to take that risk. If I choose not to vocalize it, if I choose not to set the expectations of the boundaries, guaranteed they're going to violate it, they're going to hurt me, I'm going to respond poorly. Relationship over. So again, I've got to take the risk but I got to assume that it may hurt the other person. That cannot stop me. I can't do it away, if I'm being completely honest, can not do it in a way that may not sting a little bit, but I've got to do it any way to protect that long term relationship. Keith.

KEITH: One of the things that you'll discover is that all of us have at certain times struggled through this issue of relationships. All of us have. I mean we have and together, it's been part of it. So boundaries are everything. So keeping these in mind, we're going to fly through the last few boundaries. Must not allow their sense of well being to be controlled by the other person. I need you to be able to be honest with me, but you cannot control me, nor can I control somebody else.

Remember what I said in the beginning. It's about responsibility, not about control. Control doesn't work. Roy's illustrations about what happens in a community heading into a slave market. I'm not going to let you control me. When you control me, I will find a way to do something that will do destructive actions to somebody – you or myself or others.

Look at 5. Must be aware of the fear and guilt they may feel while the other person is learning to tolerate and accept the boundaries that are set. I oversee singles in our church at LCBC and what we do with our singles is we often say to them, if you don't set boundaries before you date, you'll be in my office telling me what violated while you were dating. And they say, well I might lose the relationship with the person. If you're going to lose it early, you're going to lose it late so you might as well just be honest right away. Set those boundaries because people might not be excited about your boundaries but they need to do it. My children have had to do that with me, by the way. As they've gotten older, they've had to teach me I'm no longer the dad in charge. I'm not the sage that's going to give input into their life. That changed. Sometimes they'll have to say, Dad, I'm going to set some boundaries and how that works and what that does.

Look at No. 6. Must communicate relationship guidelines when the other person acts in an angry, demanding, whining, or rueful way and they exhibit many other forms of dependent or controlling behavior. Understand this. Temper tantrums are the way we do it, right. We try to

get us to do what you want us to do by changing the rules by being upset about the boundaries. Well boundaries, sorry it bothers, but I'm going to stay strong on this one.

Look at No. 7. Learn to live according to the same boundaries and relationship guidelines that they expect from others. In other words if you're going to ask for boundaries, live by those same boundaries in the other person. It's sort of the Golden Rule. You're going to do unto others what you're going to do to each other.

It's funny. The other night we were at a restaurant and T.C. and Robert were in this discussion which would really actually be an argument because we actually had to call a court, a hearing, and instead of jury and everybody else in the whole process, and as T.C. was sharing, I was actually thinking, I wonder which one of these blow points he violated going down the whole thing? And so we were laughing and enjoying that time. The bottom line is that what I expect in a relationship over here, I need to expect in a relationship over here and what I'm asking of you, I need to be willing to do it myself. So keep that in mind. It's a really important part of the process of how we all get along with each other.

Look at 8. Must take responsibility for their own behavior and the consequences that result from these choices. Do not, guys, blame what's happening in your life on somebody else. I know they've hurt you. I told you early on in this trails, I've dealt with guys with unbelievable pain from their mates. I've dealt with kids with unbelievable pain from there parents.

The problem is this – you're responsible for your choices in light of it. You're not responsible for what they did to you. You're responsible for the choices. Your behavior is up to you. What choice do you make? So man, make sure you take care of that and when you're encouraging the other person say, you're also responsible for it. There have been times when my kids, I've said to them, what you're about to do is going to hurt you, but now that you're of this age I cannot stop you from hurting you. You'll be responsible for that choice. I can't help you do what's wrong. Part of the issue is always be careful you do not help somebody do what's morally incorrect by trying to get them to like you along the way.

No. 9. Must be aware that the individual whose behavior is being limited by a healthy boundary will often not be pleased or grateful for these limitations. You want to test this one out? Limit your mom's access to your Facebook page, limit your mom's phone calls to you. Do anything to limit your mom. I will tell you, moms never get excited about limited by their children – ever. They don't ever stop being a mom. So when you put a boundary on your mom, it's like she goes, what are you doing? Don't you love me anymore? I brought you into this world. I sweated, I gave, I did, you know all that stuff. Guys, you know what, the person is going to be limited in their behavior is not always going to be happy about it. Leadership says, I'm not trying to get you to like me. I'm trying to get this relationship to be healthy. It's very different.

No. 10. Will discover that conflict can be reduced through mutually established guidelines which are used for future decision making. So often when you guys have a problem with somebody, you can reduce the whole pressure, all the conflict by simply understanding that we're going to have guidelines as to how we're going to conduct this. Lynn and I went through a period of time when we were arguing a lot. And one day, we said, - we heard it somewhere – when you're arguing, just start taking off your clothes. Now make sure you're not doing it in a restaurant because it's really weird there. People get really nervous. But just start taking off your clothes. You cannot argue naked and you know what, there's a truth to that. We got to the point where we would just say, wait a minute. We're going to have guidelines for when we go too far in the argument and so fortunately I only do it with my wife, not with you guys. (Laughter).

No. 11. May benefit from external accountability and support relationships which will provide encouragement and help them not to compromise the standards they set. That can be a professional counselor, a therapist, it can be a pastor, it can be guys in your campfire, people that are just going to hold you to some accountability, because of that pattern. Now, when you find yourself in that situation where you're finding that I need to have some steps, somebody is going to guide you through some things you never knew. Roy and I were talking one time about a situation where a person was being pressured by a person to be controlled in an argument and Roy would say just get up and walk out of

the room. If they follow you, walk out of that environment. Those things – I would never have thought of that as a great direction. It is a phenomenal way and you're going to have to get people involved in your life to give you some accountability in all that.

Okay, all this make sense? Now, I'm going to take you back to this. If you're strong, you can be capable of having conflict, of pushing and growing another person, but also allowing them to be them and not controlling them. So that's where this all leads. So, as we move towards the final couple trails, make sure that you're excited about relationships and willing to do the hard work that relationships cost. It's really worth it. Thanks for being with us. We'll see you in Trail 22.