

## The Intimate Terrorist

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We live in an age where acts of terrorism have become an increasing problem, even against those who live in the United States. The definition of a terrorist is one who uses terror and violence to intimidate and subjugate. A terrorist is typically a coward who plants a bomb for unsuspecting innocents. Terror, the root word here, is the main goal.

The terrorists who plant bombs in planes and cars are usually not known to us. But there is another kind of terrorist who also works great havoc in the daily lives of many people. The **intimate terrorist** lives in very close proximity to someone and continually works to oppress them and make their lives miserable. Someone once said that familiarity breeds contempt, and we can find a few examples of this in the Bible.

Take, for instance, the story of Sarai and Hagar. Remember that God promised Abram a son, but Sarai was old and thought to be barren. So she decided to use her Hagar, her Egyptian maidservant, to provide the child (Genesis 16). This wasn't what God intended, and problems developed as they usually do when we don't trust God's promises. As soon as Hagar realized that she was pregnant, she began to despise Sarai. One can only imagine the sparks that flew when these two got near each other. But because Hagar was a servant, their contact was inevitable. So Sarai blames it all on Abram and he tells her to do whatever she wants with her. Sarai began to mistreat Hagar, who ran away. God appeared to Hagar and told her to go back and submit to her mistress, and Hagar obeyed.

About thirteen years later (Genesis 21), God delivered on His promise and Sarah bore a son, who was named Isaac. As he grew up and was weaned, Abraham held a great feast. Sarah saw Ishmael was making fun in some way, and she demanded that Abraham get rid of both Ishmael and Hagar. So even though Abraham was concerned about this, God told him to go ahead and send them off and He would take care of them. We see that Sarai and Hagar were set on making each other's lives miserable, and one eventually drove off the other.

The intimate terrorist many times passes themselves off as a friend, but finds a way to cause intense grief and suffering in the lives of their victim. Remember Job? His life wasn't bad enough, so his friends and his wife all contributed to his pain even though they were trying to help. Now Job's people were not mean or hostile, but many times the intimate terrorist is.

Samuel's mother, Hannah, was in this kind of situation with her husband's other wife. At the time she was barren, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her (1 Samuel 1:6-7). This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. This is the kind of terrorism that is very hard to endure.

Solomon had several things to say about this kind of situation. In Proverbs 21:9 and 25:24 we read, "Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife." Similarly, in Proverbs 27:15 we find, "A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day." Of course, the same is true for a terrorist husband. Solomon wrote from this point of view because he had 1000 women to deal with. A great example of the other side of this coin is the story of Nabal and Abigail (1 Samuel 25), where Nabal appears to me to be a very abusive person. But in a more generic sense, he wrote "Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred (Proverbs 15:17)", and "Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife (Proverbs 17:1)."

Many of us know that intimate terrorists are very active in this day and time. Sometimes this is under the guise of "Christian" relationships. "Christian" oppression works because the victim has a passive or peaceful nature, and the intimate terrorist takes advantage of it. This is usually hidden to casual friends and the religious community. It can be someone for whom nothing is ever done right, and can extend to actual physical violence. It can also continue once the relationship is officially over, in being totally hostile to someone in private but maintaining the public look of a spiritual leader.

The lessons to be learned from this are, of course, to not do it. But perhaps more importantly, to be aware that others may be enduring or have had to endure this; though on the surface it was not apparent. Our love and understanding must overflow to those in this type of need, even though we may not have experienced it ourselves.

*Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.*

*Psalms 41:9*

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