

Module 3

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

PART 1 - FAMILIARITY & LOYALTY

What is Familiarity?

Familiarity means to know someone or something so well and in such a way as to cause you to lose your admiration, respect and sense of awe.

2 Samuel 6:20-23 “David went home so he could ask the Lord to bless his family. But Saul’s daughter Michal went out and started yelling at him. “You were really great today!” she said. “You acted like a dirty old man, dancing around half-naked in front of your servants’ slave-girls.” 21 David told her, “The Lord didn’t choose your father or anyone else in your family to be the leader of his people. The Lord chose me, and I was celebrating in honor of him. 22 I’ll show you just how great I can be! I’ll even be disgusting to myself. But those slave-girls you talked about will still honor me!” 23 Michal never had any children.” (CEV)

1.) Familiarity means to know someone or something so well and in such a way as to cause you to lose your admiration, respect and sense of awe.

Familiarity leads to presumption and arrogance. A person who suffers from familiarity becomes confident in a way that shows a lack of respect. Michal, the wife of King David, was so confident that she criticized the king for his style of praise and worship.

She knew the king so well as to lose her sense of awe. She criticized the king for his display of exuberance in front of girls she considered insignificant.

When people work closely with a man of God they tend to lose their sense of awe. Some also lose their admiration and respect. The loss of admiration and respect shows up in many subtle ways.

Michal, the classical critical and familiar wife, showed her lack of respect by the kind of remark or rebuke she made to her husband. Michal had become disconnected, critical and disloyal to her king. Michal had developed this attitude because she knew the king from head to toe. She had seen him playing with her like a little boy. She had related to him when he was in his most naked and unguarded moments.

This exposure had unfortunately eroded the mystification and awe that many held for the king. That is why she turned against him. This is what happens to many wives of men of God. There is nothing new under the sun. It is easy to become familiar and lose your sense of awe when you see a highly respected man sitting on the toilet or behaving like a gas bag in the home!

**“YOU NEED TO HAVE THE GIFT OF WORKING IN THE KING’S PALACE TO WITHSTAND
THE TENDENCY TO BECOME FAMILIAR.”**

In the book of Daniel the three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were described as people who had the ability to work in the king’s palace. There, they would see many private and uncomely things. They would see the base and human parts of the glorified royal family. Yet they would be

required to maintain genuine respect and awe for them. This is what is meant by having the ability to work in the king's palace.

Daniel 1:4 “Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.” (KJV)

2.) Familiarity afflicts the closest family and friends the most.

This causes anointed people to move away from their family and friends. Because of familiarity amongst those who you interact with closely, it is wise for ministers to reach out to non-familiar groups.

These non-familiar groups may be people who are not your family or not close to you. Non-familiar groups are often the poor, the forgotten and the neglected ones.

3.) Familiarity has the power to neutralize the greatest of the gifts of God.

No matter how great the gift of God is, it can be neutralized by familiarity. Jesus was the greatest healer and teacher, yet his anointing was neutralized by the presence of familiar people!

Familiarity is a spiritual disease that can kill the ministry of a prophet. Familiarity was the most powerful antagonist to the anointing on Jesus' ministry!

Familiarity is the greatest block to the flow of God's power from God's servant!

Mark 6:1-5 “Then He went out from there and CAME TO HIS OWN COUNTRY, and His disciples followed Him. 2 And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, “Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! 3 IS THIS NOT THE CARPENTER, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” So they were offended at Him. 4 But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.” 5 NOW HE COULD DO NO MIGHTY WORK THERE, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.”

4.) Familiarity is the cause of diminishing attendance at Christian programmes.

Because ministers continue to minister in the familiar zones, their impact gradually lessens until there is a perception that their season is past.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus moved away from His hometown Nazareth and went down to Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida doing great miracles?

Jesus did not do miracles everywhere. He did great miracles in particular places where they were not familiar with Him. Actually, most were done in particular places.

Matthew 11:20 “Then He began to rebuke the cities IN WHICH MOST OF HIS MIGHTY WORKS HAD BEEN DONE, because they did not repent.”

5.) Familiarity is the cause of spiritual barrenness.

Familiarity is the greatest block to receiving God's power. Because of familiarity, many people do not believe in the man of God. They do not believe the man of God has anything special to offer.

Because familiar people do not receive the power of God they do not amount to anything. They do not receive the teachings, they do not receive the revelations, they do not receive the blessings and therefore they remain in their barren state.

Great men of God are sent to them but they are unable to receive or understand anything that they say. Familiarity is one of the greatest causes of spiritual barrenness.

6.) You can be close to a man of God without becoming familiar.

If you have the right attitude and the right heart you can be close to the power of God without becoming familiar.

There are many examples of people who were close to a man of God but did not become familiar. Many people actually use their privileged positions of closeness to receive the anointing.

Such people allow the strengths of their mentor to encourage them. But they also allow the weaknesses of their mentor to inspire them. They tell themselves, "If God can use a "normal" person like this man of God then He can use someone like me." They are simply not turned off by anything they see or hear. Three people stand out in this regard.

John was so close to Jesus that He entrusted His own mother to him. John described Jesus in a peculiar way in his famous epistle. John said:

1 John 1:1-3 "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

Somehow, John was not affected by having been so close to Jesus. He rather seemed overawed and full of faith that he had been with the Son of God Himself.

Mary and Martha were unaffected by their closeness to the Lord. Mary and Martha were blessed to have the Lord eating and resting in their home, Yet, they believed in His power to raise their dead brother, Lazarus, to life after four days.

John 11:20-22 "Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. 21 Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

It is encouraging to know that not everyone will fall to this deadly condition called familiarity. Leaders must search for people who base the ability to work closely without becoming familiar.

Four Groups that are Prone to Familiarity

Leaders must notice familiarity in the groups that are prone to it. Some people have a greater tendency to be familiar and presumptuous.

1.) People who frequently interact with the leader are prone to familiarity.

Mark 6:2-3 “And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, “Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! 3 Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” So they were offended at Him.”

2.) People who know too much about the leader are prone to familiarity.

Where the people knew a lot about Jesus and His family, He was unable to perform miracles. They could only relate to Him as a carpenter. They had known Him as a brother of their friends. They had known as a son to Mary. They had known Him as an apprentice carpenter in Joseph's workshop. How could this man now claim to be the Son of God? It was preposterous. Yet Jesus was received in other towns where they were not familiar with His background. Today, Jesus is received all over the world with great faith and expectation because we do not have the problem of familiarity that His hometown had. This is why every leader should maintain a degree of mystique around him. The fewer people know about your private and uncomely realities and problems, the more they will be able to receive from you.

Mark 6:5 “Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.”

3.) People who are friends of the leader are prone to familiarity.

Jesus' friend with His disciples exposed the familiarity of Peter. One day, Jesus asked Peter for his opinion about His ministry. This question shows how Jesus was relaxed in the company of his disciples.

Unfortunately, Peter stepped out of line almost immediately and began to rebuke, correct and instruct Jesus on His future ministry plans. Close friends can step out of line when they take the privilege of closeness for granted.

Matthew 16:15-17 “He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”

4.) People who have been promoted are prone to familiarity.

Sometimes when people are elevated a little, they feel they are equal to their seniors and teachers. This is unfortunate.

Not everyone can handle promotion, elevation and blessings. Unfortunately, promotion corrupts and destroys many people. Upon graduation from the medical school, we were given a certificate which reminded us not to become familiar. The first statement of the certificate read, "I shall show respect to my teachers..."

Peter was promoted and became the head of the church. He immediately began to step out of line, rebuking the Lord and forbidding Jesus to die on the cross. He had a better plan for the salvation of this world. Peter rebuked God after his promotion. Perhaps that is why the Lord allowed him to be humiliated before the other disciples.

Peter's Appointment:

Matthew 16:18 “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

Peter Rebukes God after his Appointment:

Matthew 16:22-23 “Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” 23 But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Twelve Signs of Familiarity

1.) Familiarity is shown when someone comments about things that are above him.

Matthew 16:22 “Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

The fact that your leader has discussed personal things with you does not mean that you should step out of order.

2.) Familiarity is seen when someone finds faults with the leader and with his person.

Familiar people elevate you in a carnal and natural way. Jesus was evaluated by the people in His town. They scrutinised His family, His brothers, His sisters and His profession. Because the people of Nazareth were familiar with Jesus Christ and His family, they found fault with Him.

Mark 6:2-3 “And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, “Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! 3 Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” So they were offended at Him.”

Jesus’ own brothers did not believe in Him for obvious reasons. He was their very own brother.

John 7:5 “For even His brothers did not believe in Him.”

3.) Familiarity is seen when someone attempts to correct his leader.

Matthew 16:22 “Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

Peter began to feel “extra free” after he was told, “flesh and blood has not revealed this to you.” He thought that he could now correct Jesus. Although every leader needs to be corrected, a subordinate is not qualified to do this.

4.) Familiarity is displayed when someone attempts to direct or control his leader.

Matthew 16:22 “Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

Jesus was very quick to notice that Peter was out of order. Peter began to make the pronouncements about the ministry of Jesus. Peter thought that his friendship with Christ gave him

the authority to direct and to correct Jesus. Perhaps he thought that Jesus now wanted direction from him.

5.) Familiarity is seen when someone uses privileges without asking for them anymore.

King David had a mule that was symbolic of his authority and power as a king. Anyone sitting on that mule was in charge of Israel. When David wanted to show the world that Solomon was the legitimate king, he asked that Solomon should be given the privilege of riding on his mule. It may have been a little thing, but it was enough to send a message to the entire city that Solomon was a legitimate heir to David.

Symbolic privileges are important because they help workers and associates to remember their true position. Anyone who casually presumes upon these privileges has become familiar.

1 Kings 1:33 “The king also said to them, “Take with you the servants of your lord, and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and take him down to Gihon.”

1 Kings 1:38-40 “So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on King David’s mule, and took him to Gihon. 39 Then Zadok the priest took a horn of oil from the tabernacle and anointed Solomon. And they blew the horn, and all the people said, “Long live King Solomon!” 40 And all the people went up after him; and the people played the flutes and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth seemed to split with their sound.”

Whenever people trifle with the privileges of their leaders, they display a dangerous familiarity! The riding of David's mule was so symbolically powerful that everyone knew who the rightful king was. Watch out for people who trifle with your symbolic privileges. They reveal a subtle, developing arrogance towards authority.

6.) Familiarity is seen when someone uses privileges without saying thank you for them any more.

7.) Familiarity is seen when someone freely enters your room or office without knocking.

8.) Familiarity is displayed when someone yawns and sleeps when you preach, teach or lecture.

Preachers and teachers must watch out for yawning, especially when the yawns come at the beginning of the message. Watch out for "early yawners"; they are usually suffering from familiarity. Such people feel that they know what you are going to say. They know you and they know what you usually say!

Truly, they have developed a familiar attitude towards your sermons, your CDs, your DVDs and your writings.

9.) Familiarity is exhibited when someone walks around, talks and chats whilst you are preaching.

10.) Familiarity is revealed when someone is rude.

Numbers 16:3 “They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?”

11.) Familiarity is displayed when someone is rude to people you delegate.

Numbers 16:12 “And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, “We will not come up!”

Moses sent someone to call Dathan and Abiram. But they refused to come when Moses called them for a meeting. They said plainly: “We will not come.” This kind of rudeness is what you find in presumptuous people suffering from familiarity.

There was no greater prophet than Moses. There was no prophet who had such teachings and writings. There was no prophet who had such signs and wonders. And yet, there were people who were not afraid to be rude to him or to the people he had delegated. Indeed, some people are too familiar with greatness.

12.) Familiarity is demonstrated when someone raises his voice at you.

Seven Ways to Deal with Familiarity

1.) Address and confront all forms of familiarity urgently. Put subordinates who are out of order into their proper places.

Matthew 16:23 “But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Peter began to feel extra free. He became presumptuous and stepped out of order. He assumed he could correct Jesus. He thought his friendship with Christ gave him the authority to direct or correct Jesus. Peter thought his conversation with Jesus made him someone whose opinion had to be taken by Jesus. But Jesus quickly put him right. Jesus suddenly changed from a kind and gentle Jesus into a strong and tough Jesus. In a swift move, he cut Peter down to size.

Why was Jesus transformed from a kind and gentle Jesus into a Jesus of steel? Why did He rebuke His close friend and associate in the harshest possible way? Why did He call Peter “satan”?

Think about that! He needed to cut Peter down to size urgently. Jesus addressed and confronted familiarity with the utmost urgency.

2.) Avoid places where you are tolerated and go to places where you are celebrated.

Avoid programs in which the people have become familiar. Avoid places where the people take you for granted.

Jesus Christ set the example for overcoming familiarity. We see Him as He leaves familiar turf and heads for the non-familiar where little is known about Him. There, He will be celebrated and many great miracles will take place. Read for yourself and see how Jesus recognized the deadly syndrome of familiarity and intentionally moved away from it.

Jesus Avoids Nazareth and Heads for Other Places

Mark 6:1-6 “Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. 2 And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, “Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His

hands! 3 Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” So they were offended at Him. 4 But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.” 5 Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.

3.) Avoid familiarity by making clear distinctions between the different ranks of leaders.

Notice how Jesus sat on the donkey, whilst the disciples walked. Jesus did not hire twelve donkeys so that they could all have donkeys. Notice how Jesus slept in the boat whilst the disciples rowed and worked hard.

Sometimes these differences are necessary to kill the spirit of familiarity. Do not feel shy to introduce necessary differences. It is these differences that may save your followers from familiarity.

4.) Avoid monotony and repetitiveness in your ministry.

Introduce new ideas into your programs. Monotony incubates familiarity. Don't always do what people are expecting you to do.

Repetitiveness, dullness and uniformity are the perfect contexts for familiarity. The same sermons in the same way from the same person at the same time have a way of incubating familiarity.

When people wanted Jesus to come to their town to preach in the same old way, He refused to enter their monotonous pattern and decided to go to the next city. He knew that they would soon be yawning at him whilst he preached. He knew they would soon be having discussions behind the stage whilst He ministered. He knew people would be having little chats and jokes whilst he preached but suddenly sit up when His eye fell on them. Jesus wisely decided to travel away to new territories.

It is good to have annual programs, but sometimes it is necessary to break monotonous patterns.

Mark 1:37-39 “When they found Him, they said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” 38 But He said to them, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.” 39 And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.

The very people who impress upon you to do what you have been doing all the time, are those who become familiar. It is because people know what you are going to do, that they become familiar. Remember: too much knowledge incubates familiarity. Sometimes a prayer meeting or a worship session, instead of the expected sermon, will help to break the familiarity.

5.) Teach about familiarity.

“IGNORANCE IS THE BREEDING GROUND OF DEMONIC ACTIVITY.”

Teaching always serves to prevent the development of evil cankers in the ministry. Teaching is the greatest tool that prevents familiarity from developing in the ranks.

6.) Teach against presumption.

Presumption is the arrogant assumption that privileges must be given to you. People who assume that they are entitled to certain privileges complain and murmur about things that are great privileges to other people.

Spoilt children complain about not having certain toys or games when many other children live in the desert hoping for a meal to keep them alive.

Equally, “spoilt” ministers complain about things which others would be grateful to have. Tell people the value of the privileges they have. It is when people do not know the worth of something that they develop ungrateful and rebellious attitudes.

7.) Teach people to have an attitude of thankfulness for everything.

You must teach people to be thankful on a minute-by-minute basis. This is what the Bible teaches.

**“YOU MUST TEACH PEOPLE TO BE THANKFUL BECAUSE IT IS A SIGN OF THE
PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

People who are filled with evil spirits are not thankful. People who are filled with evil spirits complain and murmur all the time.

Ephesians 5:18-20 “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;”

You must teach people to be thankful even in bad circumstances.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”