



The Flame

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Christ at the Center of it All Holy Relationships

Chuck Nolen, a survivor of a FedEx plane crash, finds himself marooned on an island with scattered waterlogged packages from the doomed flight. That's the scenario of a film entitled *Cast Away*, starring Tom Hanks.

Nolen, the only inhabitant of a small atoll, soon finds himself craving relationship. Enter the only character in the film who did not receive a place in the credits: Wilson, a normal everyday volleyball, involuntarily turned companion and confidante of a man driven close to madness.

Relationships are not optional. From the beginning God made it clear that human beings were not designed to be solo acts. The plan was that they were to be connected. One of our links was to be with other human beings. But the first link of all was to be with God Himself.

The most consummate human relationship, by God's own plan, is the relationship between husband and wife; and that relationship is meant to reflect God's relationship with His Church (see Ephesians 5:25-33). But on a broader scale, the ultimate model for human relationships is the covenantal nature of God's relationship with His people. Relationships are by definition covenantal, a bond of mutual commitment (Exodus 19:3-8).

At the center is the God of Covenant.

Relationship was His idea!

With Him as "the center of it all," for us as His people every relationship in our lives becomes an extension of our relationship with Him. Our friendships, our business associates, our neighbors, our families – all are sacred. They are entrusted to us by the One who both defines what our relationships should be and extends Himself through those relationships.

The sacrament of relationship is obviously not a spiritual ritual like communion, but it is a valuable and enriching component through which God reveals Himself to those who have been added to our lives.

Take Your Next Step

Make a list of your relationships. Don't try to list every one of them, just the ones that come to mind immediately. This is an ongoing list. At least once a week, as part of your prayer time, look at the names, add those God brings to mind, and honestly seek a fresh sense from the Lord that these are *His* relationships with which you have been entrusted. Submit each relationship to Him. Be ready to seek His healing for any damaged relationships.

And, above all, commit to the God of Covenant that your covenant with Him is first, His will and purpose held higher than all other relationships. Commit to Him that you will live out those relationships at His promptings.