

The Junkanoo That Pains

Christmas is the time of year in the Bahamas when most people look forward to a very colorful and rhythmic event: Junkanoo. "It is believed that this festival began during the 16th and 17th centuries. The slaves were given a special holiday at Christmas time, when they could leave the plantations to be with their families and celebrate the holidays with African dance, music and costumes. For many, Christmas celebrations in The Bahamas would not be complete without Junkanoo bands "rushing" in the streets. The Junkanoo preparation season can be very long and stressful, lasting three to six months. The long tedious hours of Junkanoo costume preparation can run late into the nights and early hours of the morning. The costume builders pack the Junkanoo houses to cut and paste delicate paper and fabric on cardboard or other materials. The Junkanoo bands, with their goat skin drums, cow bells, and wind instruments, spend long hours in practicing and perfecting their unique "rushing sounds." Unfortunately, Junkanoo time is not always a happy time in many homes. Why? It is a time when many Junkanoo artists spend unusually long hours outside of the home.

THE PAINFUL TRUTH

During the Junkanoo season many spouses go into what I call "Junkanoo Hibernation." This is the time when Junkanoo preparation becomes more important than marital relationships. Many Junkanoo workers ignore their family and marital responsibilities leaving their spouses vulnerable to face the pain of rejection. Too many relationships go sour during the Junkanoo season. Too many spouses, while spending unusually long hours away from home develop adulterous relationships. They are introduced to drugs, alcohol and promiscuous behaviors. While the startling, flamboyant colors of Junkanoo may mesmerize the mind under the street lights of romantic Bay Street, they may often reveal the dark secrets of immoral behavior and marital dissolutions. Many tears are shed during the Junkanoo season.

The clanging of the cow bells and the beating of goat skin drums may sound a pleasant call to the eager ears of thousands of Junkanoo lovers. To many spouses though, each drum beat pounds deep into the heart the pain of loneliness, rejection and feelings of worthlessness. Why do so many Junkanoo lovers allow their passion to take control of their lives so negatively?

NOT ONLY JUNKANOO IS GUILTY

The truth is that not only Junkanoo is to blame for such behavior. The problem of priority setting is a giant issue in many relationships and in all careers. It is even more prevalent among managers and presidents of large companies, police and military officers, politicians, pastors, and community leaders. Defining what is important to you is crucial in life. More so, it is imperative that each spouse understands what are the needs of his or her spouse and diligently learn how to meet those needs.

We often forget that family relationships are eternal, but careers are only seasonal. When one spouse says "honey could we spend more time together," that's the ringing of the alarm that can only be shut off by the responding spouse. If the alarm is ignored, the battery power of the marriage will get weaker and weaker. One day the Junkanoo lover or the community leader will come home and meet the house empty without the slightest clue why it is so. Why did the spouse not hear the alarm? Because his ears were only in tune with his passion, Junkanoo, pastoring, protecting the nation, etc.

WHAT IS YOUR PASSION?

What is your passion? We all have passions. The passion that has the greatest effect on your life is the one that will control you. I appeal to Junkanoo lovers not to allow the passion of Junkanoo to control you, but to keep focus on what is really important: relationship with people. Junkanoo preparation may last three months, but Junkanoo events are only for a few hours and the costumes are melted away by the heat and sweat of energized dancers. Junkanoo costumes are not made to last a lifetime. Therefore,

it is imperative to have the greatest passion for what can last a lifetime: loving relationships. May the cow bells of Junkanoo ring a celebration of warm, loving relationships rather than the distorted sounds of miserable, painful marriages.