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The False Doctrine of *'Soul Ties'*

The doctrine of *'soul ties'* claims that ungodly sexual or emotional unions knit two souls together spiritually, creating a bond that leaves open a *'spiritual legal contract'* that demons can travel across. This concept is believed to leave a person fractured emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

'Soul ties' is a relatively recent development in Church history, originating within the Charismatic Deliverance Movement of the late 20th century. It did not exist in classical, Reformation, or medieval Christian theology.

For the first 1,900 years of the Church, struggles associated with past relationships were categorised under sanctification, habitual sin, or emotional grief. Early Church Fathers (2nd to 5th centuries) wrote extensively on sexual sin but never suggested a literal piece of the soul splinters off and binds to another person. Instead, they viewed sexual sin and unhealthy relational bonds through the lens of spiritual defilement, idolatry, grieving the Holy Spirit, and the corruption of the mind.

Clement of Alexandria: Viewed sexual immorality as moral defilement that degrades the mind, not a mystical tether. *"A luxury that is coupled with infamy is a thing to be avoided... He who mixes with a harlot becomes one body; not that he becomes the harlot, but that the defilement of the sin passes into his body." - The Instructor (Paedagogus)*

Tertullian: Argued sexual sin violates the temple of God and grieves the Spirit, pointing to strict repentance and self-discipline rather than breaking a spiritual contract. *"All the other frenzies of passions - impious both toward the bodies and toward the sexes which exceed the laws of nature, we banish... from the shelter of the Church... Do you not know that you are God's temple, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, him will God destroy." - On Modesty*

John Chrysostom: Chrysostom, known for his practical and powerful preaching on Christian living, commented directly on 1 Corinthians 6. He explained that joining oneself to a prostitute was a catastrophic insult to Christ because the Believer's body belongs to Christ. He focused on the legal and relational betrayal, rather than a mystical splintering of the soul.
"For he that is joined to a harlot is one body... How then is it not an insult, that thou shouldest take the member of Christ, and make it the member of a harlot?... For it is not the body only that is defiled, but the whole soul also is polluted by the custom of such things." - Homilies on First Corinthians

Augustine of Hippo: Augustine wrote deeply about desire, habit, and the psychology of sin. In his *Confessions*, he described his own intense struggles with breaking free from a long-term relationship before his conversion. He did not describe his lingering emotional attachment as a mystical 'soul tie', but rather as the heavy chain of habit and a divided will.
"The enemy held my will, and of it he made a chain and bound me. For from a perverted will desire arose, and a slave to desire became habit, and habit not resisted became necessity. By which links, as it were, joined together... a hard bondage held me enthralled." - Confessions (Book VIII)

Historical Development of 'soul ties':

Mid-20th Century Post-War Healing Revival: Following World War II, a wave of independent, itinerant evangelists birthed the 'Healing Revival'. Ministries began focusing heavily on the casting out of demons. They expanded the practice from non-believers to active Christians, claiming Believers could have hidden spiritual bondages.

1970s–1980s (The Charismatic Movement): Prominent deliverance teachers systematised spiritual warfare. To give reason for why Christians struggled with recurring sins or emotional baggage from past relationships, they formalised the idea that ungodly sexual or emotional unions left open spiritual legal contracts that demons could carry across. The term *'ungodly soul tie'* became popular to describe these perceived spiritual links.

1990s–Present (Pop Culture & New Age Merger): Secular culture popularised identical concepts like *'karmic cords'* and *'twin flames'.* The ritual of breaking a soul tie directly mirrors New Age 'cord-cutting'. In the 2010s and 2020s, social media turned the phrase into a viral catchphrase to describe any intense, toxic or hard-to-break emotional attachment to an ex-partner/s.

Supposed Biblical Evidence for the Doctrine of *'Soul-Ties':*

Those who hold to the teaching of *'soul ties'* point to two primary passages to defend the concept. However, when studied carefully in the original languages, these verses reveal social, legal, or biological realities; not the creation of a mystical, lingering spiritual attachment.

- ***1 Samuel 18:1 (David and Jonathan):*** The text states Jonathan's soul was "knit" (*qashar*) to David's. In Hebrew, *qashar* means to tie, bind, or conspire. Relationally, it refers to a conscious commitment, loyalty, and covenantal alliance (used similarly for Jacob and Benjamin in Gen 44:30).

  'Soul' (*nephesh*) idiomatically means *'life' or 'breath'.* Loving someone as your own *nephesh* means loving them as your own life. It describes deep friendship and shared purpose, not a supernatural blending of souls.

- ***1 Corinthians 6:16 (Paul on Sexual Union):*** Paul warns that joining oneself to a prostitute makes one body (*soma*) with her, using the Greek *kollao* (to glue/cement). Paul specifically avoids saying sex joins two *souls*; he keeps the focus on the physical and covenantal violation of the flesh (*sarx*).

  Furthermore, when we read subsequent passages of Jonathan's and David's relationship, they reiterate that it was purely a deep friendship they enjoyed:

  And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt (1 Sam18:3-4).

  Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord, saying, the Lord is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever." *Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town (1 Sam 20:42).*
  Again, no mention of their souls being tied together.

If Not *'Soul Ties'*, Why Do Christians Feel Bound Up?

There is no mistaking that Christians suffer from issues pertaining to their soul *(i.e. their mind, will, and emotions).*

While our spirits are renewed instantly at salvation, our souls undergo a lifelong process of sanctification (Phil 2:12).

However, the reality is, most of our emotional and mental struggles stem from the fact that we have made a deliberate choice of our will to give our highest allegiance to something or someone other than Jesus. And nothing in your life should take priority over your relationship with Jesus!

Yes, demonic doors can open when you love someone or something else more than you love Jesus.
Yes, the enemy gains access when you open the door through unforgiveness and bitterness.
Yes, you allow your heart to be broken and struggle emotionally when you keep putting your hope in toxic people.

But it is wrong to mistake the heavy consequences of these wilful choices for an external demonic spiritual bond.

Common struggles of the human soul include:

- **Co-dependency:** God created us for companionship, but co-dependency turns a person into our source and sustainer instead of God. At the core, the relationship is focused on using one another rather than giving unconditional love and honest acceptance. There is a *'give to get'* component behind this. And one may feel tied because the truth is that your worth is tied up in this other person. You might feel that someone completes you or that you're missing something in your life if they're gone. It is NOT a soul tie that needs to be cut, it's the emotional dependency that needs to be confessed to and repented of.

- **Idolatry:** An idol is anything that replaces the one true God *(Ex 20:3).* When we give a person other than Christ first place in our hearts, we may call it love, but it's been an idol. And this is why when a relationship is over, it can feel so unusually devastating because this person was given a place in your life that only God should have occupied.

- **Trauma:** Trauma is sin perpetuated against us. It can be physical or emotional. Relationships literally create connections in our brain. We *'get in each other's heads'* and when we do it increases the strength of the bond. But if the relationship is toxic and traumatic, now there's a toxic exchange. This is why it's difficult sometimes to let go of a relationship despite how toxic it is because the intensity draws you back to this person - making it feel like a tie or a bond. The problem with trauma is that everything is distorted. It's also why many have difficulty in normal relationships because normal relationships lack that intensity that traumatic relationships are accustomed to. Therefore, you feel like it's not love if it's not intense. Trauma keeps you connected to this person through hope, but it's a false hope. Proverbs 13:12 reminds us that hope deferred makes the heart sick. It's likely that you've had some good moments that you are hanging on to the hope of returning. Meanwhile, the *'bad'* is hurting you.

- **Lack of Self-Control:** Often we end up in sinful relationships simply through a lack of self-control. We can justify giving into temptations with words like, *"Oh, I'm just so drawn to him and I can't fight it."* But this simply isn't true. *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability (1 Cor 10:13).* Just because you can't stop thinking about a person or you strongly desire to be with them, does not mean that it's what God wants for you. Be very careful and very prayerful before you give in to these passions.

- **Unforgiveness:** Holding onto unforgiveness keeps us feeling tied to someone in the most destructive way possible, and the root of bitterness goes down so deep that it chokes out any ounce of life that Jesus died for you to have. We must forgive those who have trespassed against us if we want to experience relational healing *(Mtt 6:15).*

- **Demonic Activity:** While the enemy and his demons cannot touch a Believer's saved spirit, they look to wreak havoc on the soul through legal entry points like sin, rebellion, deception, unforgiveness and bitterness - which will in turn infect and affect your spiritual life. Sometimes there can also be the sense that a person is familiar to you and you can mistake it for a '*soul-tie'*. You might say, *"I've feel like I have known this person my whole life".* This too is often a familiar demonic spirit. The enemy has demons monitoring our words and activities. He can mimic a true connection.

Conclusion

The Church frequently introduces terms that the Bible never speaks of. 'Soul ties' is one such term *(generational curses, pleading the Blood of Christ and "I bind you, Satan" being others).*

Except for trauma, which is a sin committed *against* you, every soulish trait mentioned in the list above is a personal sin.

Calling these struggles a *'soul tie'* shifts the blame, allowing people to avoid taking responsibility for their own wilful sinful actions by falsely blaming an external demonic force.

The enemy gladly encourages this belief!

By making you think he has a legal hold on you and that Jesus' Blood isn't enough to cleanse you from your sins, he keeps you trapped, fearful, and ineffective as a Christian.

There's no doubt that our soul needs healing, but the truth is, Believers are complete in Christ, and the old things have passed away *(Col 2:10-13, 2 Cor 5:17).* Thus contradicting the idea that past relationships can cause us to have some dark spiritual bond to somebody else.

Living sinfully does give the enemy legal access to wreak havoc in your life, but the good news is Jesus' death on the Cross paid the penalty for all of your sins so that you can be forgiven. His Blood is not limited in dealing with your sins! No matter what you have done, His sacrifice is completely sufficient to wipe away every sin and restore your freedom.

Jesus never said, *"Ok, you are forgiven, but since you're in a soul tie I need you to say these words to break them off you first so I can do what I need to do to help you".*

Christ's death fully breaks the power of past, present and future sins, requiring no secondary deliverance rituals to 'detach' from someone. Hence, there is absolutely no need to participate in soul tie-breaking rituals or ceremonies. Furthermore, we must be extremely careful as repeating formulaic prayers or participating in soul-tie-breaking ceremonies closely mirrors witchcraft, which is strictly forbidden and a sin in itself (*Deut 18:10).*

To find true freedom from issues of the soul, Believers must stop spiritualising sin.

Instead of shifting personal responsibility for our sin and calling it a *'soul tie'*, let us heed the advice of the author of Hebrews and *"throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:1-2).*

We must each take responsibility for our own sins and look to Jesus alone for our forgiveness, cleansing and restoration.

When caught up in an issue of the soul, you are to confess your sins *(I Jn 1:9, Prov 28:13),* repent of your wrongdoing and live obediently to His commands *(Acts 3:19, Rom 13:14, Titus 2:11-12, 1 Pet 2:24, Rom 6:13).* This way you will be faithfully working out your salvation with fear and trembling and be growing in maturity *(Phil 2:12)*. Guarding your heart & walking in accountability with other Christians as you do this is always helpful *(Prov 4:23, Phil 4:6-7, Jam 5:16, Gal 6:1).*

Appendix 1:

Core Theological Contrasts Around 'Soul Ties'

	Modern 'Soul Tie' Framework	***Traditional Biblical Theology***
Source of Bondage	Ongoing, invisible spiritual ties created by past sexual sin or intense emotional relationships.	The residual power of the flesh, unrenewed minds, and sinful habits or patterns.
The Status of the Believer	Fragmented; a Christian can remain partially bound, possessed, or spiritually compromised by a past partner.	Complete in Christ; fully justified, entirely owned by God, and a brand-new creation.
Method of Deliverance	Specialised prayers, spoken formulas, or specific deliverance ministry to 'break' the hidden tie.	Continuous repentance, daily renewing of the mind, and walking consistently in the Holy Spirit.
Focus of Responsibility	An external, quasi-spiritual entity or link that must be severed to achieve freedom.	Personal accountability, heart transformation, and intentional discipline in choices.