

# **Social Roles & Relationships**

**Teacher's Manual**

# **Social Roles and Relationships**

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## Lesson 1

### Introduction to Relationships

#### I. Man was created as a social being.

A. As such man was created with a need for others.

1. We were not meant to exist in isolation on this planet (Gen. 2:18).

*And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."*

2. We cannot fulfill our God-given destiny without others (Gen.1:26-28).

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

3. We all live in relationship to others.

1. The word "relationship" refers to state of being connected to others. When we ask, "What is your relationship to someone?" we are in essence asking, "What is your connection to that person?"
2. The word "relationship" means "the fact or condition of being related or connected, or that by which things are connected either objectively or in the mind." Relationship speaks of interdependence.

B. As such every man is in some way connected to and interdependent on other people.

1. People are connected.

To be connected is to be joined together, associated with or united with (Eph. 4:16). Christians are connected in an even more significant way through their common relationship to Jesus Christ.

1. There are many things that can cause us to be connected (That man has connections).
  - Humankind
  - Nationality
  - Race
  - Language

- Geography (Province, State, City, Neighborhood, Complex, House)
  - Trade, Job, Career, Business Connections, Profession, Partnerships
  - Hobbies, Interests, Activities
  - Heritage—Parents, Grandparents, Brothers, Sisters, Cousins, Etc.
  - Religious Faith (Christianity)—Brother, Sister, Pastor, Ministry, Etc.
2. It is customary to introduce people or to describe ourselves by our relationships or connections.

For example:

- This is Fred; he works with me.
- This is Ann; she lives in the same apartment complex.
- This is Peter; he goes to the same church.

2. People are interdependent.

To be interdependent is rely on others for maintenance and support. It is said that no man is an island to himself. Christianity is not just “me and Jesus.” We depend greatly on others in all aspects of our life.

- C. As such every man’s success depends on maintaining healthy relationships with others (Eccl. 4:7-12). We cannot take others for granted in our lives.

*I observed yet another example of meaninglessness in our world. 8 This is the case of a man who is all alone, without a child or a brother, yet who works hard to gain as much wealth as he can. But then he asks himself, "Who am I working for? Why am I giving up so much pleasure now?" It is all so meaningless and depressing. 9 Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. 10 If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. 11 And on a cold night, two under the same blanket can gain warmth from each other. But how can one be warm alone? 12 A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken. –NLT*

When we fully realize this we will be more careful about how we handle the relationships in our life.

1. Sometimes we handle our relationships carelessly as if we they were disposable. Perhaps you have been treated this way by others.
2. We can do things that weaken our connections to people or we can do things that strengthen them. So much depends on how we are personally inputting into these relationships.
3. It is good for us to evaluate just how much we need others.

Ask Class: What are some of the things for which we are dependent upon others?

4. We must guard against an independent spirit that does not appreciate the value that others add to our lives. There are several words that characterize an independent spirit: Self-centered, Proud, Arrogant, Careless, Inconsiderate.

## **II. Jesus had a lot to say about our relationships.**

- A. He is concerned that we have a love relationship with Him (Mt. 22:34-40).

*But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they thought up a fresh question of their own to ask him. 35 One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: 36 “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” 37 Jesus replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” –NLT*

- B. He is concerned that we have a love relationship with our fellowman (John 13:34-35).

*So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples. –NLT*

- C. He put a high priority on our keeping our relationships pure (Mt. 5:23-24).

*Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

## **III. Satan resists the development of healthy relationships.**

- A. He knows that our relationship to others is a key to our success. It is a key to our success in politics, in business, in society, in our families and in almost every area of life.
- B. He does every thing that he can to hinder the development and the maintenance of healthy relationships.
  1. He promotes attitudes in us that push people away.
  2. He minimizes how much we really need other people.
  3. He fosters misunderstandings and communication breakdown to keep us offended.
  4. He leads us to believe that the work involved in cultivating healthy relationships is not worth the effort.

5. He plants seeds of criticism in our heart toward others.
6. He causes us to be suspicious of others and their motives.

#### **IV. Modern society hinders the development of healthy relationships.**

##### **A. People are on the move.**

Gone are the days when people lived in the same place all of their life. They say that in the modern world 25% of the population moves every year. Even in churches it is rare for people to stay in one place for very long.

##### **B. People are less community orientated.**

Gone are the days of the small rural village where everyone knew everyone else. Many people today do not even know the names of those who live on either side of them. The tendency is for people to be migrating to large cities where they have no long term relationships. In most big cities, there is no sense of community where neighbor watches out for neighbor.

##### **C. People are affected by crime.**

Gone are the days when crime was only something that you read about in the newspaper. People have become fearful, suspicious and cautious about interacting with strangers for fear that they will become another crime statistic. In many cases they live behind walls and security fences. They occasionally come out for some of their necessities only to retreat back into their secluded haven.

##### **D. People have been isolated by technology.**

Gone are the days when you had to team up with others to get things done. Technology has made it possible for you to do things yourself that used to require a participation with others.

##### **E. People are more financially independent.**

Say what you will, people have more money today than ever before. You can now hire things to be done that used to be done through a mutual exchange or bartering. You can even have things delivered to your door without ever having to launch out.

##### **F. People have become spectators rather than participants.**

Gone are the days when you had to leave your home to engage in some form of entertainment. Television, video games, DVD's, The Internet and other modern inventions have made it possible for us to watch anything we want whenever we want without ever leaving our home. Our relationship is with our TV pastor, our favorite celebrity, the football captain, but mostly with our lap full of remote controls.

**V. Relationships are vitally important if the Church is to fulfill God's eternal purpose.**

The Church's success is based on the right relationship of its membership and a commitment to community. This is seen in the various pictures of the Church that are found in the Bible.

**A. A Body**

In this Body there are many members who are interrelated and interdependent each having its own significant contribution to the success of the whole.

**B. A Family**

In this Family there are many brothers and sisters who are interconnected as one family unit.

**C. A Temple**

In this Temple there are many living stones that are to be fitly framed together for a common purpose, each stone covering and supporting the other stones in the building.

**D. An Army**

In this Army there are many soldiers fighting shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy.

**E. A Vine**

In this Vine there are many branches each one linked together for the purpose of bringing forth God-ordained fruit.

**F. A Flock**

In this Flock there are many sheep under the one true shepherd. As the sheep flock together they find safety and protection.

**VI. God is interested in strengthening us and our relationships for His purpose.**

A. Our relationship to Him.

B. Our relationship to our parents and those older than us.

C. Our relationship to our peers.

D. Our relationship to the opposite sex.

He wants us to have God honoring and God pleasing relationships.

## Lesson 2

### Relationship to God

Before we can talk about our earthly relationships, it is critical to discuss the foundation for all relationships. The foundation for all other relationships is our relationship to God. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, that sin not only affected their relationship with God, but it also affected their relationship with each other.

In order to undo the damage that was done to all relationships through the fall of man, we must restore our relationship to God. This is the only way to deal with the issues of sin in our lives that keep us from being what we are to be. We must get back to a proper relationship to God. When God is in the center of a person's life it makes it possible to cultivate unselfish relationships with others.

#### **I. The Bible clearly teaches that we must seek God first.**

- A. Jesus taught that the first and the greatest commandment is to love the Lord God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mt. 22:37-40).

*Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

- B. Jesus taught that when we put God and His kingdom first the other issues of life will take care of themselves (Mt. 6:25-34, esp. verse 33).

*Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

God's principles always lead to God's reward. If you want something to worry about, worry about pleasing God in all things. Please God first and you will ultimately have man's favor as well. You will have favor with God and man.

When a man's ways please the Lord, even his enemies are at peace with him (Pro. 16:7).

- C. Jesus taught that having good works and correct doctrine must be grounded in a first love relationship to God (Rev. 2:2-4).

*I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

## **II. Having a proper relationship with God serves as our foundation for our relationships with one another.**

We cannot love our neighbor as ourselves unless we first love God with all of our hearts (Mt. 22:37-40).

*And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

- A. The "agape" love of God that comes through our personal relationship to God makes it possible for us put off the sin issues in our lives that can have a negative impact on all of our relationships (Eph. 4:22-5:7; Col. 3:8-17).

### **Read: Ephesians 4:22-5:7**

Some of the primary qualities that affect relationships in a negative way include:

1. Deception
2. Lying
3. Anger
4. Dishonesty
5. Corrupt Communication
6. Bad Habits, Addictions or Compulsive Behavior
7. Bitterness
8. Covetousness
9. Pride

- B. The "agape" love of God that comes through our personal relationship to God makes the dynamics of good relationships possible.

When you have God's love in your heart you possess capabilities that are not possible without that love or grace.

Some of the primary virtues that make all relationships succeed include:

1. Faithfulness
2. Forgiveness

3. Selflessness
4. Compassion
5. Kindness
6. Gentleness
7. Patience
8. Holiness
9. Humility

These capabilities are all greatly enhanced by our personal relationship to God.

C. The “agape” love of God that comes through our personal relationship to God makes it possible for all other relationships to succeed. When you have God’s love in your heart it has a positive affect on all other relationships that you have.

1. It makes you a better son or daughter.
2. It makes you a better husband or wife.
3. It makes you a better father or mother.
4. It makes you a better grandparent.
5. It makes you a better neighbor.
6. It makes you a better friend.
7. It makes you a better employee or employer.
8. It makes you a better citizen.

This is why it is difficult to provide marriage counseling to the unsaved or people who are not in right relationship to God. In essence you will be asking them to do things that they do not have the capability of doing in themselves. Sometimes the best advice you can give to a husband or wife is to “Get right with God!”

D. The “agape” love of God that comes through our personal relationship to God changes the way in which we relate to everyone. It is only through the love of God that we can love others the way God loves us (John 13:34).

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*

How does God love me? Meditate on this thought for a while. That is how He wants me to love others.

### **III. There are different levels of relationship that we can have with God.**

There are different levels of relationship that we can have with God. The deeper that we allow this relationship to go the more positive affect that it has on all of our other relationships.

#### **A. A Master/Servant Relationship (John 12:26; 13:13)**

*If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. John 12:26*

This is the entry level to our relationship with God where our service to the Lord is more out of a sense of duty. At this level our relationship is based on the fact that He is the Lord and Master and we are His servants. As our Master,

1. He expects obedience to His commands.
2. He expects humble service.
3. He will hold us accountable for what He has placed in our hands.

#### **B. A Father/Son Relationship (Gal. 4:6-7)**

*And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*

This is a closer relationship where we realize that we are more than servants but we have been adopted as sons and daughters with God as our loving Father. As our Father,

1. He wants to provide guidance and direction for us.
2. He wants to provide for our natural and spiritual needs.
3. He will faithfully discipline us when we need it.
4. He has laid up an inheritance for us.

#### **C. A Brother to Brother Relationship (Mt. 12:49-50; Heb. 2:11; Pro. 18:24)**

*For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren... Hebrews 2:11*

This is a progressive relationship where Jesus wants to be our brother. As a brother,

1. He wants to be right by our side in adversity (Pro. 17:17).
2. He wants to stand with us through our battles.

#### **D. A Friend to Friend Relationship (John 15:15)**

*No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

This is the kind of relationship that Abraham had with God. As our friend,

1. He wants to prove or demonstrate His loyalty.
2. He wants to encourage us and lift us up.

3. He wants to share His secrets with us.
4. He wants to sharpen us and make us better than we are now.
5. He wants to have His heart knit together with our heart (Amos 3:3).

*Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?*

E. A Husband to Wife Relationship (Eph. 5:22-33)

As a husband,

1. He wants to prove that He will never leave us or forsake us.
2. He wants to walk hand in hand with us down the path of life.
3. He wants to have intimate communion with us.
4. He wants to be joined with us for eternity.

As we continue through this course on Social Roles and Relationships we will be talking about our relationship to authority, to parents, to our brothers and sisters in Christ, to friends, to members of the opposite sex and to the world. But the key to success in all of these areas is our personal relationship to God. The more God pervades our relationships, the more successful they will be. Therefore it is critical that we do a spiritual checkup before we proceed.

- How is your personal relationship with the Lord?
- Are you relating to Him as a servant who serves of the Lord out of a sense of duty?
- Is your relationship with the Lord progressive?
- Is your relationship with the Lord getting better and better as the years go by?
- Is your present relationship to the Lord a tree of life to others?

## **Lesson 3**

### **Relating to Authority**

The subject of authority is not a subject that is very popular in modern society. Most people on earth are “free spirits” who do not want to have anyone telling them what to do. This is not an attitude that we had to learn, it was passed on to us by Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were the first one’s to challenge God’s authority to rule over their lives.

Part of God’s restoration in our lives involves bringing us back into right relationship to authority. God has established various levels of authority in our lives. Many of the problems that we face in life have to do with an improper relationship to these authorities. If we are to have successful human relationships it is critical that we allow God to assist us in getting this aspect of our lives into biblical order.

#### **I. What is authority?**

Authority is the right to command or act, the right to govern or rule and the right to exercise power. “Authority is the right and capacity of an individual to perform what he wills and who, by virtue of his position or office, can command obedience” (H.D. McDonald, *Elwell Evangelical Dictionary*)

The Bible clearly teaches that all authority is from God, but that God has delegated His authority to other humans with whom we must learn to properly relate.

#### **II. What is the purpose of authority?**

God has established authorities in our lives for several reasons.

- A. Authority has been established by God to help us properly relate to God. At times it is difficult to relate to God who we have not seen. Duly appointed authorities in our lives who are functioning as God intended can help us to see “God in the flesh.”
- B. Authority has been given by God to help us develop wisdom, understanding, knowledge and character (Luke 2:49-52). Even Jesus grew in these areas as He submitted to His earthly parents.

*And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?” 50 But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. 51 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

- C. Authority has been given by God to help protect us from exploitation. Being under rightful authorities in our life provides a spiritual covering to us that can ensure protection from forces that would seek to destroy us (Ps. 91:1-13).

In Psalm 91 we are promised protection, deliverance and a place of refuge. We are promised angels who will keep charge over us to guard us against plague, famine and enemy attack. But all these promises are conditioned upon our being properly related to God's covering. According to this Psalm, we are protected because:

1. We are dwelling in the secret place of the Most High (vs. 1).
  2. We are abiding under the shadow of the Almighty (vs. 1).
  3. We are talking refuge under His wings (vs. 4).
  4. We have made the Lord our habitation (vs. 9).
- D. Authority has been given by God to come along side of us to give guidance and direction to the critical decisions of our life (Pro. 6:20-23).

*My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. 21 Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. 22 When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. 23 For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life...*

- E. Authority has been established by God to maintain order and to assist us in fulfilling purpose. Without an understanding of authority, it is possible for "everyone to do what is right in their own eyes." This attitude will lead to chaos as self-will and self-centeredness will prevail.

"Everyone is under certain God-ordained authorities, such as parents, government, and the church. The purpose of God-ordained authority is to provide protection, direction, instruction, and provision." –Bill Gothard

### **III. What authorities must I relate to as a Christian?**

#### **A. Absolute Authority**

God is the source of all authority (Rom. 13:1-2). His authority is absolute and He demands complete submission and obedience. God is head over all human or delegated authority. God is also the only one Who can ordain human authorities.

*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. Romans 13:1-2*

God has all absolute authority for several reasons.

1. God created the world and everything in it (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11).

*You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.*

Revelation 4:11

2. God owns the earth and everything in it (Ps. 24:1).

*The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.*

3. God has given life to everything that lives (Acts 17:24-28).

*God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, "For we are also His offspring."*

4. God sustains the earth and everything in it by His word (Ps. 119:89-91; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:3).

*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. Colossians 1:16-17*

## B. Delegated or Limited Authorities

God has delegated His authority on the earth to human channels. God fully expects us to respond to these channels of His authority the same way that we would respond to Him. Jesus said that "If you receive Me, you receive Him that sent Me" (Luke 9:48; John 5:23, 43). There are five levels of delegated authority.

1. God has delegated authority to the individual to rule over his or her own soul (Pro. 4:23).

*Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.*

2. God has delegated authority in the natural family.

- a. There is authority carried by the parents together (Ex. 20:12; Pro. 6:20-21; 30:17; Luke 2:51; Rom. 1:30; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20).

*Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Colossians 3:20*

*The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.*

Proverbs 30:17

- b. There is additional authority carried by the husband and father (Gen. 3:16; Mal.1:6; I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; I Pet. 1:3-6).

*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Ephesians 5:22-24*

3. God has delegated authority in the realm of civil government (Rom 13:1-7; I Pet 2:13-17). Jesus said that we were to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's (Mt. 22:15-21).

*Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men--as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. I Peter 2:13-17*

- a. We are commanded to be subject to the higher powers and give honor to whom honor is due (Tit. 3:1-2).

*Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.*

- b. We are commanded to honor the king. It does not say we are to honor "good" kings.

4. God has delegated authority in the local church (Acts 20:28; I Th. 5:12-13; I Tim 5:17; Heb. 13:17; I Pet. 5:1-5).

*And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. I Thessalonians 5:12-13*

*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17*

5. God wants us to respond to the authority structure related to our work life (Mal 1:6; Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-23; I Tim 6:1-2; Tit. 2:9-10; I Pet. 2:18). This includes master/servant or employer/employee relationships.

*Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. Ephesians 6:5-8*

*Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Titus 2:9-10*

#### **IV. What does biblical submission to authority look like?**

The fact that there is authority indicates that there is also the issue of submission or obedience to authority. Submission is “voluntarily placing yourself under the protection of divinely appointed authority” (Bill Gothard).

- A. Submission is coming under the spiritual covering of those appointed over you from the heart (Eph. 6:6).
- B. Submission involves obeying your authorities in spirit and in truth (Mt. 7:21-23; Luke 6:46).

*But why do you call Me “Lord, Lord,” and not do the things which I say?*

Luke 6:46

- C. Submission involves responding to your authorities as you would to Christ Himself (Eph. 5:22; 6:5, 7).
- D. Submission automatically involves a certain level of accountability and the concept of stewardship (Mt. 24:45-51; 25:14-30).

#### **V. How does Satan promote rebellion to authority?**

Satan knows that our success as individuals and our success as local churches is based on effective leadership. Satan is against authority because he knows that without effective leadership the church will not be built and our lives will not reach their intended destination (Eph. 4:7-16). For this reason God puts the sin of rebellion on the same level as “witchcraft” (I Sam. 15:23). What does Satan do?

- A. He fosters an independent spirit in us (Phil. 2:20-21). He helps us come to the conclusion that we really do not need anyone else to make it in life.
- B. He promotes attitudes that conflict with authority (Gal. 6:2). He fans negative qualities in us that tend keep us resistant to our being lead.
  - 1. Pride
  - 2. Ambition

3. Self-righteousness
  4. Anger
  5. Self-will
  6. Envy
  7. Bitterness
- C. He promotes misunderstandings and offenses between us and our authorities (Mark 6:2-3).
- D. He tries to convince us that our authorities do not understand us and they do not have our best interest in mind.
- E. He creates an atmosphere of suspicion relative to our authorities (II Pet. 2:10).
- ...and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries...*
- F. He convinces us that we are free from authorities that do not live up to our standards of righteousness (Jude 8-10). Respect for those in authority has nothing to do with the character of the authorities themselves.
- Yet these false teachers, who claim authority from their dreams, live immoral lives, defy authority, and scoff at the power of the glorious ones. But even Michael, one of the mightiest of the angels, did not dare accuse Satan of blasphemy, but simply said, "The Lord rebuke you." (This took place when Michael was arguing with Satan about Moses' body.) But these people mock and curse the things they do not understand. Like animals, they do whatever their instincts tell them, and they bring about their own destruction. –NLT*
- G. He plants seeds of disloyalty in our hearts that can lead to a casting off of our authorities.
- H. He prompts us to speak to others of things that undermine the value of authority.

## **VI. What are the limits of authority?**

All delegated authority has its limits. Ultimately we must obey God above all other delegated authorities (Acts 5:29). When any authority on earth asks us to violate the clear word of God, we will have to disobey that authority. However, we can still disobey with a submissive and respectful attitude toward that person.

“The only circumstance that disobedience to authority is justifiable by scripture is if it conflicts with the laws of God. Authority should be cooperated with except in those situations where laws depart from the basic moral and righteous principles of God’s Word.” –Dr. Dale A. Robbins

**VII. How do I restore proper relationship to God's delegated authorities in my life?**

- A. Take personal responsibility for closing the gap between you and the authority figures in your life.
  - 1. Repent for wrong attitudes against authority.
  - 2. Pray for those in authority (I Tim. 2:1-2).
  - 3. Forgive those in authority
  - 4. Open fresh lines of communication.
  - 5. Apologize for past attitudes.
  - 6. Ask God for creative solutions for old problems.
  - 7. Seek input from your authorities.
  
- B. Work through each of the authority relationships in your life beginning with your parents. Wrong relationships to parents can product negative fruit in all other relationships.

**Lesson 4**  
**Relating to the Body of Christ**  
**Brother/Sister Relationships**

**I. What happens when we become part of the family of God?**

When God calls us into the family of God He calls us into relationship with others. In the family of God we have relationship to the following:

**A. We have a relationship to our Heavenly Father.**

In the Church, God is our Father (Ps. 68:5; 89:26; Is. 64:8; Mt. 5:16). As a true father God is faithful to fulfill all of the responsibilities of a father to His children.

*A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.*

Psalm 68:5

1. As a true father God has provided the seed that has brought about our birth into the family of God (I Pet. 1:23). That seed is the incorruptible seed of the Word of God.
2. As a true father God has provided an inheritance for His offspring. He has laid up for their future (Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:11).
3. As a true father God is responsible to discipline us when we need it.

God will not fail to keep His obligations as father in the family of God.

**B. We have a relationship to an elder brother.**

In the Church we have an elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:14-17).

*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil--15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. --NIV*

1. Christ is the unique son over His own house (Heb. 3:6).
2. He is the firstborn (Rom. 8:29) and pattern son in the family (I Pet. 2:21).
3. He is our kinsman redeemer who has paid the price to restore our lost inheritance.

4. He is our example, the one who has gone before us and the one on whom we can rely as we go through all of life's problems.

C. We have a relationship to fellow brothers and sisters.

In the Church all true believers are the children of the family.

1. As members of the family we are all partakers of the same blood (John 6:53).
2. As members of the family we all take on the family name (Eph. 3:14-15).
3. As members of the family we all bear the family resemblance or image (Eph. 4:13; I Cor. 15:49).
4. As children of the family we must fulfill all the duties and responsibilities of brothers and sisters which are outlined in the Word of God.

## II. How does Paul demonstrate a good example of brother and sister relationship?

- A. Paul didn't see people as problems; he had a genuine love for others (Phil.1:3-8; 2:26-27; I Th. 2:1-12).

*Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. 4 I always pray for you, and I make my requests with a heart full of joy 5 because you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. 6 And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again. 7 It is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a very special place in my heart. We have shared together the blessings of God, both when I was in prison and when I was out, defending the truth and telling others the Good News. 8 God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:3-8, NLT*

*So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. 9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; 11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, 12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. I Thessalonians 2:8-12*

1. Paul always referred to others as "beloved" (Eph. 6:21; Phil. 4:1; Col. 4:9, 14; Philemon 2, 16).

*Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. Philippians 4:1*

*Dear brothers and sisters, I love you and long to see you, for you are my joy and the reward for my work. So please stay true to the Lord, my dear friends.*  
–NLT

2. Paul wasn't afraid to get close to people and get emotionally involved with them (Philemon 12-13).

*I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel.*

3. Paul even had a genuine love for those he had not seen (Col. 2:1, margin "care").

*For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh...*

- B. Paul realized a dependence on others; he knew he was not self-sufficient (Phil. 2:25; Col. 1:7; 4:7, 10-11; Philemon 2, 11, 17, 24). When you treat people like rubbish, it means that you do not have a true understanding of who you are and what a dependent creature you really are.

1. Paul always had something good to say about people. He did not neglect to compliment them on their strengths (Eph. 1:2; 6:21; Col. 1:2, 4, 7; 2:5; 4:12-13; Philemon 5, 7). He fostered or mentored the relationships that he had.

*We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 for we have heard that you trust in Christ Jesus and that you love all of God's people. 5 You do this because you are looking forward to the joys of heaven--as you have been ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News. 6 This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is changing lives everywhere, just as it changed yours that very first day you heard and understood the truth about God's great kindness to sinners. 7 Epaphras, our much loved co-worker, was the one who brought you the Good News. He is Christ's faithful servant, and he is helping us in your place. 8 He is the one who told us about the great love for others that the Holy Spirit has given you. Colossians 1:3-8, NLT*

2. Paul never failed to exalt and acknowledge support ministries even though their role may have been minor (Phil 1:1; 2:25, 29-30; Col. 1:1).

*Meanwhile, I thought I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a true brother, a faithful worker, and a courageous soldier. And he was your messenger to help me in my need. 26 Now I am sending him home again, for he has been longing to see you, and he was very distressed that you heard he was ill. 27 And he surely was ill; in fact, he almost died. But God had mercy on him--and also on me, so that I would not have such unbearable sorrow. 28 So I am all the more anxious to send him back to you, for I know you will be glad to see him, and that will lighten all my cares. 29 Welcome him with Christian love and with great joy, and be sure to honor people like him. 30*

*For he risked his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while trying to do for me the things you couldn't do because you were far away. Philippians 2:25-30, NLT*

3. Paul depended on the prayers of others (Phil 1:19).
  4. Paul never took others for granted, but was always thankful for their contribution to his ministry, and he was faithful to tell them (Phil. 4:14, 18). Most of the people in our lives receive very little payback from us other than the way we thank and acknowledge their impact in our lives.
- C. Paul lived and poured out his life for others (Phil 2:17-18).

*But even if my life is to be poured out like a drink offering to complete the sacrifice of your faithful service (that is, if I am to die for you), I will rejoice, and I want to share my joy with all of you. And you should be happy about this and rejoice with me. –NLT*

1. Paul spent time in prayer for others (Phil 1:4, 9; Col. 1:3, 9; Philemon 4).
  2. Paul was willing to make financial sacrifices for others (Philemon 18-19).
  3. Paul made most decisions in his life on the basis of how it would affect others (Phil. 1:24-26; 4:17; Philemon 13-14).
- D. Paul was very much concerned about seeing others realize their full potential in God (Phil. 4:3; Col. 4:17).

*And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." Colossians 4:17*

1. Paul had confidence in others. He trusted them with important missions (Eph. 6:22; Philemon 21).
2. Paul was not afraid to get specific with people if it would help them (Phil. 4:2).

### **III. What serves as the basis for brother and sister relationship in the Body of Christ?**

Brother and sister relationships are based on the "agape" love of God.

- A. There are at least four different types of love that were part of Greek culture. Unfortunately in English we only have one word for "love."
1. There is erotic love (*eros*).

Erotic love is sexual or sensual love that is primarily to be experienced inside of the marriage relationship. This is sometimes referred to as carnal love

because the emphasis is on the physical side of love. This word does not actually occur in the New Testament.

2. There is friendship love (*philos*). The noun form of this word is most often translated “friend” in the New Testament (Mt. 11:19; Luke 11:5-8; John 15:13-15). This is human love that is often affected by the strength of one’s relationship to the object of that love.

*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. John 15:13-15*

3. There is family love (*sterge*). This is the natural kind of love that parents have for children and brothers and sisters have for each other in the natural family.
4. There is God-like love (*agape*). This is the love that characterizes the very nature of God. It is a totally selfless love that gives expecting nothing in return (John 15:9-10; II Cor. 5:14; I John 4:7-8)

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. I John 4:7-8*

B. God wants to birth a deep level of love in His body.

We are commanded to love in the following ways:

**1. With a pure heart (I Pet. 1:22).**

*Now you can have sincere love for each other as brothers and sisters because you were cleansed from your sins when you accepted the truth of the Good News. So see to it that you really do love each other intensely with all your hearts. –NLT*

**2. With unfeigned or sincere love (II Cor. 6:6; Rom. 12:9).**

This is love without any agenda, hypocrisy or hook of self-interest.

*We have proved ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, our sincere love, and the power of the Holy Spirit.*

I Corinthians 6:6, NLT

**3. With brotherly love (Rom. 12:10).**

Brotherly love is very practical in its expression.

*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another...*

**4. With fervent love (I Pet. 1:22).**

**5. With abounding love (I Th. 3:12).**

*And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you...*

*And may the Lord make your love grow and overflow to each other and to everyone else, just as our love overflows toward you. –NLT*

**IV. Brother and sister relationships are mutually uplifting or edifying.**

**A. These relationships should involve building each other spiritually. This involves:**

**1. Stirring one another up (Heb. 10:24).**

*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works...*

**2. Encouraging or exhorting one another (Rom. 1:12; Heb. 3:12-13).**

*I'm eager to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours. In this way, each of us will be a blessing to the other.*

Romans 1:12, NLT

*Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Hebrews 3:12-13

**3. Comforting one another (I Th. 5:14-15; Gal. 6:2).**

*Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. I Thessalonians 5:14-15*

**4. Building up one another (Rom. 14:19; 1 Th. 5:11).**

*Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Romans 14:19*

**5. Praying for one another (Jam. 5:16).**

*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

**6. Bearing each other's burdens (Gal. 6:2).**

*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

7. Teaching and admonishing one another (Col. 3:16).

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

- B. These relationships should involve caring for each other naturally.

1. Serving and sacrificing for others (I John 3:16).

*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

2. Meeting the practical needs of others (I John 3:17-18).

*But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

3. Ministering to others financially (Rom. 12:13).

*...distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.*

4. Exchanging of skills with others (Eph. 4:28).

*Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*

5. Rushing to the “emergency” needs of others (Tit. 3:14-NAS).

*And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.*

6. Showing hospitality to others (Rom. 12:13; I Peter 4:9).

*Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. I Peter 4:9*

7. Doing good to others (Gal. 6:9-10).

*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

- C. These relationships should involve spending time with each other socially.

1. Eating together (Acts 2:46).

*So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart...*

2. Thinking together (Phil. 2:2).

*...fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

3. Rejoicing together (I Cor. 12:26; Rom. 12:15).

*And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. I Corinthians 12:26*

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*

Romans 12:15

This is what brother and sister relationships look like in the Body of Christ. These relationships will form the basis of all other relationships including friendship, partnerships and marriage partners. God wants us to have many such relationships with young and old, male and female. Our life is enriched by the relationships that we have by virtue of our relationship to Jesus Christ.

## **Lesson 5-7**

### **Cultivating Friendship**

#### **I. What is a friend?**

- A. The dictionary defines a friend as “one who cherishes kind regard for another person; an intimate and trustworthy companion.”
- B. There are other definitions that have been put forward for a friend.
1. A friend is someone with whom you dare to be yourself (C. Raymond Beran).
  2. A friend is someone who understands your past, believes in your future, and accepts you today just the way you are (Unknown).
  3. A friend is one who knows all about you and likes you just the same (Elbert Hubbard).
  4. A friend is a person with whom I may think out loud (Ralph Waldo Emerson).
  5. A real friend is one who warms you by his presence, trusts you with his secrets, and remembers you in his prayers (Unknown).
  6. A friend is:
    - A push when you have stopped.
    - A word when you are lonely.
    - A guide when you are searching.
    - A smile when you are sad.
    - A song when you are glad. –Unknown

#### **II. What are the various levels of friendship?**

There are at least four levels of friendship or relationship:

##### **A. Acquaintance**

1. The word “acquaintance” is defined as follows:

“A person with whom you are familiar or conversant.”
2. An acquaintance is someone that you see occasionally, that you know on a very surface or public level and that you can identify by name and general information.

##### **B. Casual Friends**

1. The word “casual” is defined as follows:

“Occurring at irregular intervals, accidentally or by chance.”

2. A casual friend is someone with whom you share common interests and with whom you participate in common activities. You bump into them occasionally, more by chance than by design. You may know very little about them except for those commonly shared areas or experiences.

### **C. Close Friends**

1. The word “close” is defined as follows:

“Affectionately associated with or trusted.”

2. A close friend is someone with whom you share common life goals, mutual projects and personal conversations relative to family, values and beliefs. A close friend is someone that you trust and toward whom you feel a strong level of personal commitment.

### **D. Intimate Friends**

1. The word “intimate” is defined as:

“Closely connected on a personal, confidential and innermost level.”

2. An intimate friend is reserved for only the very closest of friends and is based on covenant relationship. This includes a mutual commitment to build each other up, to love in spite of weaknesses and to sharpen character through personal accountability.

This is the relationship that David had with Jonathan (I Sam. 18:1-4).

*Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt.*

## **III. What is the purpose of friendship?**

- A. A person who has no friends is missing out on some of the greatest blessing of life (Ps. 142:1-4).

*I cry out to the LORD; I plead for the LORD's mercy. 2 I pour out my complaints before him and tell him all my troubles. 3 For I am overwhelmed, and you alone know the way I should turn. Wherever I go, my enemies have set traps for me. 4 I look for someone to come and help me, but no one gives me a passing thought! No one will help me; no one cares a bit what happens to me. Psalm 142:1-4*

This verse teaches that:

1. A person without friends has no one to whom to tell his troubles (or his jokes).
  2. A person without friends has no one to turn to when he is overwhelmed.
  3. A person without friends has no one to protect his back when enemies come against him.
  4. A person without friends has no one to help him when he needs help.
  5. A person without friends has no one to care for him spontaneously.
- B. A person who has friends is blessed (Eccl. 4:9-12).

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

This verse teaches that:

1. A person who has friends has someone to share in his or her labor.
  2. A person who has friends has someone to lift him up when he or she falls.
  3. A person who has friends has someone to bring warmth to his or her life.
  4. A person who has friends has someone to help him or her overcome obstacles.
- C. A friend is someone who can refresh our souls.
1. By sharing their life with us in fellowship and relationship.
  2. By caring for us in our times of difficulty.
  3. By growing with us in the purposes of God through mutual edification and accountability.

#### **IV. What does the Bible teach us about friendship?**

- A. The Book of Proverbs has much to say about friendship.
1. True friendships in life are few in number (Pro. 18:24, Amp.).

*The man of many friends [a friend of all the world] will prove himself a bad friend, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

“A friend to everybody and to nobody is the same thing” –Spanish Proverb

“He who has many friends, has none.” –Aristotle (384-322 B.C.)

2. A true friend stands with you in times of trouble (Pro. 17:17).

*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*

*He that is a friend loveth at all times: and a brother is proved in distress.*

–Darby

3. A true friend is not in the relationship for the wrong reasons (Pro. 19:4, 6).

*Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man’s friend deserts him.*

Proverbs 19:4, NIV

*Many curry favor with a ruler, and everyone is the friend of a man who gives gifts.* Proverbs 19:6, NIV

*Everyone tries to be friends of those who can help them.* –CEV

4. A true friend’s counsel is very sweet (Pro. 27:9). It is sweet because we know that it comes from a genuine care and concern for us as a person.

*Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man’s friend gives delight by hearty counsel.*

*The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense.* –NLT

5. A true friend will tell you what you need to hear not what you want to hear (Pro. 27:5-6).

*An open rebuke is better than hidden love! Wounds from a friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.* –NLT

6. A true friend will clash with you at times for your personal improvement (Pro. 27:17).

*As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*

7. A true friend is loyal at all times (Pro. 11:13; 17:17; 18:24, NLT).

*A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.*

Proverbs 11:13, NIV

*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* Proverbs 17:17

*There are “friends” who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother.* Proverbs 18:24, NLT

8. A true friendship can be destroyed by slander, whispering and not keeping confidences (Pro.16:28; 17:9).

*A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.*  
Proverbs 16:28

*He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.* Proverbs 17:9

**B. Jesus had something to say about friendship.**

1. A friend lays his life down for the relationship (John 15:13).

*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*

2. A friend knows the real you (John 15:15).

*No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

**C. The rest of the Bible adds to the concept of friendship.**

1. A true friend will know you as they know themselves (Deut. 13:6b).

*...your friend who is as your own soul...*

2. A true friend will show you kindness when you are discouraged (Job 6:14, NIV).

*A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.*

3. A true friend will be an advocate or intercessor to plead your cause (Job 16:21, NIV).

*...on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.*

4. A true friend will be there to restore you when you stumble (Eccl. 4:10).

*If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!*

**V. How do friendships happen?**

**A. Friendships must be desired.**

You will never have close friends unless you desire them. And you can only be a close friend to those who desire to be one with you. You cannot force someone to want you as a friend. Deep friendships must be equal and mutual.

**B. Friendships must be pursued.**

They do not just happen. Casual friendships happen by chance. Deep friendships require regular contact. You must take initiative and not expect the other person to make the first move. This means that having friends must be a priority to you above some of the other things in your life.

**C. Friendships have to be built.**

That means that we have to invest in them and put in the kind of things that will contribute to their success. This means a certain amount of work. Take advantage of common interests such as hobbies, exercise regimen, activities to spend time building the relationship.

**D. Friendships take time to build.**

Friendships move gradually through the various stages. Not all friendships will reach the “intimate” friendship level. Before friendships can reach that level, both parties must be committed to that level.

**E. Friendships will be tested.**

Everyone will disappoint you or let you down at some point. People are still people. It is important to understand from the beginning that if perfection is required for being your friend, Jesus is the only friend that you will have until you get to heaven.

**F. Friendships must be maintained.**

We cannot take them for granted. The same things that build a relationship maintain a relationship.

**G. Friendships are to be enjoyed.**

**VI. What are some qualities to look for in a friend?**

**Quotes:**

“Friendships form among people who strengthen each other.” –Franklin Owen

“He who looks for advantage out of friendship strips it of all its nobility.”  
–Seneca (4 B.C. -65 A.D.)

Here are five key qualities that you look for in friends.

**A. Those who fear the Lord (Ps. 119:63, NIV).**

*I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.*

- B. Those who can keep confidence.
- C. Those who possess the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:23-24).
- D. Those who enjoy life.
- E. Those who share your basic values.

## VII. What are some qualities to avoid in a friend?

As much as the Bible says about the positive aspects of friendship it also warns us not to associate with certain types of people. We must choose our friends wisely because we will be known by our friends or the company we keep (Pro. 12:26; 13:20; I Cor. 15:33). We will also become like our friends. We become like what we worship or admire (Ps. 106:19-20).

*The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray. Proverbs 12:26*

*He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed. Proverbs 13:20*

*Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." I Corinthians 15:33*

*Bad company corrupts good character. –NLT*

*They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molded image. Thus they changed their glory into the image of an ox that eats grass. Psalm 106:19-20*

Here are five key qualities that you do not want in your friends.

### A. Angry or Hot-tempered People (Pro. 22:24-25)

*Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.*

This verse clearly teaches that you become like what you associate with.

### B. Worldly People (Eph. 5:11; Jam. 4:4)

*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. Ephesians 5:11*

*Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

James 4:4

### C. Wicked People (Pro. 12:26; II Cor. 6:14-15; Gal. 5:19-21)

*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*

*And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? II Corinthians 6:14-15*

D. Self-Centered People (II Tim. 3:1-5)

Paul discusses the nature of people in the end times. They are lovers of self, lovers of pleasure and lovers of money. He tells us how we are to view these people who maintain a form of godliness.

*And from such people turn away! II Timothy 3:5b*

E. Hypocritical, Unrepentant “Christian” People (Mt. 18:15-17; II Th. 3:6).

*But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Matthew 18:17b*

*But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. II Thessalonians 3:6*

These are people who profess to be Christian but who live a lifestyle characterized by some of the following:

1. Covetousness—Inordinately desirous or greedy.
2. Idolatry—Inordinately fond of anything above the Lord.
3. Railing—Abusive and scornful in their language.
4. Drunkenness—Habitually drinking to excess.
5. Extortion—Obtaining gain by dishonest means.
6. Fornication—Involved in illicit sexual relationships.
7. Hardness of Heart—Refusing to reconcile an offense with a brother.

With these types of people we are encouraged not to eat with them or keep company with them (I Cor. 5:11; II Th. 3:14-15).

*But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person. I Corinthians 5:11*

*And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. II Thessalonians 3:14-15*

## **VIII. What are some skills that will help you to develop and foster good friendships?**

### **Quotes:**

“Friendship is like money, easier made than kept.” –Samuel Butler (1612-1680)

“Promises may get friends, but it is performance that must nurse and keep them.”  
– Owen Fellthan (1602-1668)

“Friendship is usually treated as a tough and everlasting thing which will survive all manner of bad treatment. But it may die in an hour of a single unwise word; its conditions of existence are that it should be dealt with delicately and tenderly. It is a plant and not a roadside thistle. We must not expect our friend to be above humanity.” –Ouida (1839-1908)

### **A. Becoming a good conversationalist.**

1. Learn how to start a conversation and keep it going.
  - a. Give a warm greeting.
  - b. Wear a smile.
  - c. Ask questions.
  - d. Work to remember details, especially their name.
  - e. Repeat their name several times in conversation.
  - f. Notice things that stand out about the person or their environment.
  - g. Compliment them (sincerely) on some area of achievement.
  - h. Play off of their responses with more clarifying questions.
  - i. Paraphrase back to them what you believe they are saying (in your own words). They may add to or correct your perception of what they had said.
  - j. Find out what the person is interested in and explore it.
  - k. Discover things you may have in common (do not focus on yourself).
  - l. Avoid highly controversial subjects until you get to know them better.
  - m. If you must disagree, do it agreeably.
  - n. Do not interrupt.
  - o. Recognize when the conversation is over.
  - p. Remember the depth of conversation is based on the depth of friendship.
2. Be willing to give and to receive information.

A good friendship is 50/50. You do not want to listen all of the time no more than you want to talk all of the time.
3. Do things together that require a certain amount of talking (e.g. going for coffee, walks, golf, etc).
4. Learn how to communicate creatively to further feed the friendship.

- a. Phone
- b. Email
- c. SMS
- d. Fax
- e. Answering Machine
- f. Occasional Card or Note

**B. Becoming a good listener.**

1. Pay careful attention when they speak.
2. Maintain good eye contact with them as they speak.
3. Respect their point of view.
4. Do not react to what they say.
5. Do not feel that you must adjust every factual detail with which you disagree.
6. Give responses that indicate your interest (active listening).
7. Don't walk away until the conversation comes to resolve.

**C. Becoming a physical and moral support.**

1. This means acknowledging them as your friend.
2. This means attending to their physical and emotional needs.
3. This means providing a listening ear when they want to vent.
4. This means putting up with them when they are moody.
5. This means being cautious in criticism willing to overlook some of their imperfections.
6. This means encouraging them when they are down.
7. This means being ready to assist them financially.
8. This means providing a shoulder for them to cry on.
9. This means praising them for their positive actions and accomplishments.
10. This means rejoicing with their success (and their new car).
11. This means praying for them when they need it.
12. This means helping them solve the problems of their life.
13. This means surprising them with thoughtful gifts and remembrances.
14. This means staying true to them when they disappoint you.
15. This means giving them the benefit of the doubt when unexpected things come up and things do not work out as planned.

16. This means relaxing, slipping off your shoes, loosening your tie, kicking back on the couch and just “hanging out” with them.

**IX. What does accountability look like in an intimate relationship?**

A. Accountability involves self-disclosure.

This means being willing to share some of your inner secrets. This includes such things as:

1. Life goals, visions and ambitions
2. Inner fears, values and beliefs
3. Personal challenges
4. Temptations and spiritual battles

B. Accountability involves a commitment to absolute honesty and speaking the truth in love.

C. Accountability involves apologizing when you are wrong.

D. Accountability involves a high level of trust and confidentiality.

E. Accountability involves giving permission to ask the tough questions.

The following 26 questions are excerpted from *Rebuilding Your Broken World* by Gordon MacDonald.

1. How is your relationship to God right now?
2. What have you read in the Bible in the past week?
3. What has God said to you in this reading?
4. Where do you find yourself resisting Him these days?
5. What specific things are you praying for in regard to others?
6. What specific things are you praying for in regard to yourself?
7. What are the specific tasks facing you right now that you consider incomplete?
8. What habits intimidate you?
9. What have you read in the secular press this week?
10. What general reading are you doing?
11. What have you done to play?
12. How are you doing with your spouse? Kids?
13. If I were to ask your spouse about your state of mind, state of your spirit or state of your energy level, what would be the response?
14. Are you sensing any spiritual attacks from the enemy right now?
15. If Satan were to try to invalidate you as a person or as a servant of the Lord, how might he do it?
16. What is the state of your sexual perspective? Tempted? Dealing with fantasies? Wrong entertainment?

17. Where are you financially right now? Things under control? Under anxiety? In serious debt?
18. Are there any unresolved conflicts in your circle of relationships right now?
19. When was the last time you spent time with a good friend of your own gender?
20. What kind of time have you spent with anyone who is a non-Christian this past month?
21. What challenges do you think you are going to face in the coming week? Month?
22. What would you say are your fears at this present time?
23. Are you sleeping well?
24. What three things are you most thankful for?
25. Do you like yourself at this point in your pilgrimage?
26. What are your greatest confusions about your relationship with God?

#### **X. Do all friendships last forever?**

No! In a perfect world, all relationships would last forever. Some of the friends that you have, you will have for life. In other cases they may have a shorter life span because of things that change. In addition, one person can only nurture a limited number of close relationships without neglecting others.

- A. Sometimes relationships change due to conflict. We should not just accept the termination of such a relationship easily. We should work to see it restored.
- B. Sometimes relationships change due to the change of life's seasons.
  1. Marriage. Sometimes when single people get married it changes their relationships in favor of other married couples.
  2. Children. Sometimes when people have children it affects their relationship with people who are not in the same phase of life.
  3. Relocation. Sometimes when one relocates a long ways away it is difficult to maintain the same intimacy levels.
  4. Spiritual Shift. Sometimes the relationship that began at the same level changes as one person moves on or falls back.
- C. Sometimes relationships change due to other factors.
  1. Breach of Trust. A good friend will be very cautious about what was said to them in confidence. It only takes one careless conversation to undo months of relationship building.
  2. Clinging Jealousy. A good friend will allow for other friendship in the person's life of which they are not a part.

3. Smothering. A good friend will not dominate a relationship but will allow space for other activities of life.

Good friends are worth fighting for, because they are the things that make our life rich and full.

### **Friendship from A to Z**

*What is a friend? Someone who...*

**A** ccepts you as you are,  
**B** elieves in "you",  
**C** alls you just to say "HI",  
**D** oesn't give up on you,  
**E** nvisions the whole of you (even the unfinished parts),  
**F** orgives your mistakes,  
**G** ives unconditionally,  
**H** elps you,  
**I** nspires you to be the best you can be,  
**J** ust happy to be with you,  
**K** eeps you close at heart,  
**L** oves you for who you are,  
**M** akes a difference in your life,  
**N** ever judges,  
**O** ffers support,  
**P** icks you up,  
**Q** uiets your fears,  
**R** aises your spirits,  
**S** ays nice things about you,  
**T** ells you the truth when you need to hear it,  
**U** nderstands you,  
**V** alues you,  
**W** alks beside you,  
**X** -plains things you don't understand,  
**Y** ells when you won't listen and  
**Z** aps you back to reality.

--Author Unknown

## **Lesson 8**

### **Maintaining Moral Purity in Relationships**

Admittedly, this lesson is aimed more at the men than it is at the women. It is a fact that men are more prone to fail in the area of moral purity. A lot of it has to do with the way men are wired and the way women are wired. This lesson will specifically apply to men, but the women need to understand it as well. Both men and women need to establish biblical guidelines and personal convictions in the area of sex outside of marriage. If they do not, their decisions for life will be based on “situation ethics” and will lead ultimately to moral failure.

#### **I. What is the moral climate of our day?**

Today men are facing a moral attack such as the world has not seen since the rise of Christianity.

This attack is coming through many avenues. It is coming...

- A. Through the fashion and dress industry.
- B. Through the movie and entertainment industry.
- C. Through the perpetuation of the philosophies of Darwinism and secular humanism which teach that:
  - 1. Man is just a higher form of animal life.
  - 2. Man is amoral.
  - 3. Man is not accountable to a higher law.
- D. Through the proliferation of pornography and sex education.
- E. Through the open acceptance of homosexuality and other non-biblical relationships as legitimate “alternative” lifestyles.
- F. Through the development of the Internet where all manner of perversion can be brought into the privacy of one’s home.

#### **II. What is the responsibility of the believer when it comes to confronting our culture?**

- A. We must separate or distinguish ourselves from a misguided culture.

Peter’s words on the Day of Pentecost were never more significant than they are today, “Save yourself from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40).

Other translations:

*Be saved from this perverse generation. –Rhm*

*Escape from this perverse generation. –Weymouth*

B. We must resist the spirit of immorality that is sweeping over the world.

It takes a strong person to resist this onslaught and overcome. A weak person or a person with no moral walls in place will be swept away. If we are to be successful in resisting we must do four things.

1. We must see the need to resist.
2. We must have a plan of attack.
3. We must not fight alone.
4. We must give the enemy no place to gain a foothold.
5. We must understand the steps to impurity.

### III. What are the steps down on the road to moral impurity?

We do not want to be ignorant of Satan's devices. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Moral sin has a progression that must be recognized and acknowledged (Jam. 1:14-15).

*But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death. –NIV*

#### A. Step One: Impurity begins in the mind.

It begins by not doing battle in the mind and by entertaining impure thoughts (Jam. 1:14; Mt. 15:19).

*But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. James 1:14*

*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. Matthew 15:19*

#### B. Step Two: Impurity is fed passively through the eyes.

The eyes follow the heart; they are the windows of the soul (Mt. 5:27-29; II Pet.2:14 - "eyes full of adulteries").

*"You have heard it said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell." Matthew 5:27-29*

1. This kind of looking is a continual looking. This is not just a glance. There are many avenues of looking:
  - Girl-watching (behind sunglasses)
  - Magazines (swimsuit issues)
  - TV, cable, advertisements, pageants, Internet
  - Magazine racks
2. These kind of activities are easy to justify because they are passive areas of involvement, that is, they come at us with no initiation or overt action on our part.
3. This kind of activity must be recognized for what it is—Satan at the door.

If this is a problem, however, you are to take drastic measures. If you do not deal with this issue severely, it will lead to worse things.

### **C. Step Three: Impurity progresses by actively feeding the sensual appetite.**

If you do not deal with the passive areas of the eyes, you will begin creating situations upon which to feed your mind and eyes.

1. The Bible refers to this appetite as the “lust of the flesh” (1 John 2:16). A lust is a craving that must be fed.
2. There are many things we can use to feed the craving. These are not passive, but involve active attempts on our part to feed this desire.
  - Pornographic material (especially the Internet)
  - Videos/movies
  - Fantasizing
  - Improper reading material
  - Night spots/nude or semi-nude dancers
  - Filthy talk/jesting

The more you feed something, the stronger it becomes. It soon has the power to dominate you (Rom. 6:11-14).

*Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

### **D. Step Four: Impurity matures further through sexual experimentation.**

This usually involves a single act or violation. If you have already yielded to or given up the battle in the previous areas, this next step will come more easily.

1. Galatians 6:1 speaks of someone who is “caught in a sin” or “overtaken in a fault.”
  - a. This is an act of weakness.
  - b. It speaks of a slip.
  - c. It speaks of being taken by surprise.
2. We are surprised, but in reality, we have set ourselves up.
  - a. We have lowered our resistance.
  - b. We have been open to the seductress (Proverbs 4-5).
  - c. The truth is, it happened suddenly, but it was building up for a long time.

No one sins suddenly. We have positioned ourselves to fall and Satan and the situations of life have accommodated us by putting the right situation in front of us.

3. Some of the sins of experimentation may include:
  - a. Falling with members of our own household, those under our authority.
    - Sexual exploitation of wife (Heb. 13:4), wanting her to do things we have seen on film.
    - Sexual exploitation of children (Mt. 18:6), which often begins with inappropriate touching. This is a despicable sin that deserves serious treatment.
  - b. Falling with someone we do not know.
    - Prostitutes
    - Massage parlors, etc.
  - c. Falling with someone we know.
    - A relative (sister-in-law, niece)
    - Co-worker
    - A friend’s spouse
    - A spouse’s friend

#### **E. Step Five: Impurity ends up in a lifestyle of adultery.**

This is when one becomes an immoral person or an adulterer according to the biblical definition (I Cor. 6:9-10).

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*

1. This person now plans to fall and begins to seduce others for his own self-gratification. They never stop sinning (II Pet. 2:14, NLT).

*They commit adultery with their eyes, and their lust is never satisfied. They make a game of luring unstable people into sin. They train themselves to be greedy; they are doomed and cursed.*

2. This person has become reprobate, perverse and degenerate (Rom. 1:24-32).
3. God is going to actively resist this person (Heb. 13:4).

*Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.*

#### **IV. What are the consequences of moral failure?**

Moral sin has some serious consequences that must be understood. These are the wages of sin (Pro. 5:3-9; 6:24-35; 7:4-27).

*For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; 4 But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. 5 Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of hell. 6 Lest you ponder her path of life-- her ways are unstable; you do not know them. 7 Therefore hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. 8 Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, 9 Lest you give your honor to others, and your years to the cruel one... Proverbs 5:3-9*

*These commands and this teaching will keep you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of an adulterous woman. 25 Don't lust for her beauty. Don't let her coyness seduce you. 26 For a prostitute will bring you to poverty, and sleeping with another man's wife may cost you your very life. 27 Can a man scoop fire into his lap and not be burned? 28 Can he walk on hot coals and not blister his feet? 29 So it is with the man who sleeps with another man's wife. He who embraces her will not go unpunished. 30 Excuses might be found for a thief who steals because he is starving. 31 But if he is caught, he will be fined seven times as much as he stole, even if it means selling everything in his house to pay it back. 32 But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul. 33 Wounds and constant disgrace are his lot. His shame will never be erased. 34 For the woman's husband will be furious in his jealousy, and he will have no mercy in his day of vengeance. 35 There is no compensation or bribe that will satisfy him. Proverbs 6:24-35, NLT*

*Love wisdom like a sister; make insight a beloved member of your family. 5 Let them hold you back from an affair with an immoral woman, from listening to the flattery of*

*an adulterous woman. 6 I was looking out the window of my house one day 7 and saw a simpleminded young man who lacked common sense. 8 He was crossing the street near the house of an immoral woman. He was strolling down the path by her house 9 at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in. 10 The woman approached him, dressed seductively and sly of heart. 11 She was the brash, rebellious type who never stays at home. 12 She is often seen in the streets and markets, soliciting at every corner. 13 She threw her arms around him and kissed him, and with a brazen look she said, 14 “I’ve offered my sacrifices and just finished my vows. 15 It’s you I was looking for! I came out to find you, and here you are! 16 My bed is spread with colored sheets of finest linen imported from Egypt. 17 I’ve perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. 18 Come, let’s drink our fill of love until morning. Let’s enjoy each other’s caresses, 9 for my husband is not home. He’s away on a long trip. 20 He has taken a wallet full of money with him, and he won’t return until later in the month.” 21 So she seduced him with her pretty speech. With her flattery she enticed him. 22 He followed her at once, like an ox going to the slaughter or like a trapped stag, 23 awaiting the arrow that would pierce its heart. He was like a bird flying into a snare, little knowing it would cost him his life. 24 Listen to me, my sons, and pay attention to my words. 25 Don’t let your hearts stray away toward her. Don’t wander down her wayward path. 26 For she has been the ruin of many; numerous men have been her victims. 27 Her house is the road to the grave. Her bedroom is the den of death. Proverbs 7:4-27, NLT*

“No amount of prayer or pious living is going to undo the damage caused by undisciplined actions of infidelity.” Example: David

The man who participates in immoral conduct does eight things:

- A. He destroys his own soul (Pro. 6:32).
- B. He will experience a shame that will never go away (Pro. 6:33).
- C. He will be scarred for life (Pro. 6:33).
- D. He destroys the temple of God (II Cor. 3:13-20).

*Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.*

- E. He hurts those he loves (Pro. 2:17).

Wisdom, understanding and knowledge are given,

*To deliver you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words, 17 Who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God. 18 For her house leads down to death, and her paths to the dead; 19 None who go to her return, nor do they regain the paths of life...*

Proverbs 2:16-19, NLT

F. He will grieve his friends and ruin his friendships (II Cor. 12:21).

*Yes, I am afraid that when I come, God will humble me again because of you. And I will have to grieve because many of you who sinned earlier have not repented of your impurity, sexual immorality, and eagerness for lustful pleasure. –NLT*

G. At the end of his life he will groan (Pro. 5:11, NIV).

*At the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are spent.*

H. He will experience death (Pro. 7:27; 14:12). Willful sin leads to death.

## V. **How can moral sin be conquered by the believer?**

A. We must take the battle seriously (I Pet. 2:11).

*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

Lenski says, “Which campaign against the soul.”

Satan actually is campaigning against your soul with moral attacks. No one is immune to his attack.

B. We must repent of any areas in which we have stumbled (Ps. 51:1-13).

C. We must be willing to remove snares that cause temptation.

1. This means that we must take drastic measures.

2. We must sever relationships that drag us down.

D. We must deal with our thought life (Phil. 4:18).

1. This means guarding our minds and rejecting evil thoughts.

2. This means putting on the mind of Christ.

E. We must make a covenant with our eyes (Job 31:1, NLT).

*I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust upon a young woman.*

1. This means putting on spiritual blinders.
  2. This means changing the TV channels, when necessary.
- F. We must be willing to solicit the help of others.
1. Your wife
  2. A friend
  3. A small group leader
  4. A pastor
- G. We must work hard to cultivate a healthy marriage.
1. Quit talking of divorce.
  2. Cultivate first love.
- H. We must flee all impurity in the future, never over-estimating our strength (II Tim. 2:22; 1 Cor. 10:12).
- I. We must keep busy doing the work of the Lord, serving others and extending the Kingdom of God. Idleness is an enemy (Phil. 3:13-14; Heb. 12:1-2).

## VI. What is the price tag of moral failure?

The price for moral sin is too high.

- A. It causes us to lose our birthright (Heb. 12:16-17, NLT; I Chr. 5:1).

*Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau. He traded his birthright as the oldest son for a single meal. And afterward, when he wanted his father's blessing, he was rejected. It was too late for repentance, even though he wept bitter tears.*

1. Esau and the mess of pottage
2. Reuben (1 Chr. 5:1, NLT)

*The oldest son of Israel was Reuben. But since he dishonored his father by sleeping with one of his father's concubines, his birthright was given to the sons of his brother Joseph. For this reason, Reuben is not listed in the genealogy as the firstborn son.*

- B. It causes us to become a castaway (I Cor. 9:27).
- C. It diminishes the effectiveness of the church. Holiness and purity are important to God (Ps. 24:3-5; Eph. 5:25-27).

*Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Psalm 24:3-5*

*Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5:25-27*

## **Lesson 9-10**

### **Romantic Relationships**

There is hardly an area of life in which godly wisdom is needed more than for romantic relationships. In the last number of years there has been a great effort made to apply biblical wisdom to marriage. It is our desire to see the same effort made concerning the romantic relationships that lead to marriage.

As we look at this area it is important to understand that the Bible does not speak directly to the issue of romance in marriage. The truth is that romance was not a big part of the process of obtaining a spouse in the culture of the Bible. In the Bible you loved the one you married rather than married the one you loved.

Most biblical marriages were arranged by the parents, particularly the fathers. In most cases when such a marriage was arranged, the couple would enter into a betrothal period of up to one year in which time they would get to know one another. This betrothal period was only entered when both parties were serious about marriage. It was not a period of time to be taken lightly by either party. In fact, the only way to end a betrothal was by an official divorce.

However, we have to realize that we do not live in that kind of culture today. This has its positives and negatives. On the positive side, each person has more to say about who they marry. On the negative side, the dating relationship can be a vulnerable time for each party involved and it is filled with potential problems.

Somehow we must take the biblical principles of the word of God and apply them to this area of life as well as other areas of life. There are many principles in the word of God that can give us excellent guidance and protection during this season of our lives.

#### **I. Why is a fresh look at the area of romance and dating so important?**

- A. Because of the model of romance put forth by modern society.
- B. Because of the problems that arise when God's concepts are not observed (Hos. 4:6). These problems include:
  - 1. Broken and wounded relationships due to past dating experiences.
    - a. This can include wounded parents.
    - b. This can include wounded friendships.
    - c. This can include personal emotional scars.
  - 2. Loss of moral purity. This, of course, can lead to more serious things including:
    - a. Loss of virginity and long term guilt
    - b. Unwanted pregnancies
    - c. High risk of sexually transmitted disease

d. Abortion

## II. What is a steady dating relationship?

- A. It is a relationship based on solid friendship.
- B. It is a relationship that is submitted to God's guidance and control.
- C. It is a relationship that is, by its very definition, exclusive in nature. That is this kind of relationship should only be pursued with one person at a time.
- D. It is a relationship that should be entered into cautiously.
- E. It is a relationship established to pursue a possible marriage choice.

This will involve getting to know a person well enough in a romantic relationship to be able to make a wise and solid marriage commitment. This cannot be done from a distance. There must be a considerable amount of personal involvement, time and shared experiences to make this knowledge both substantial and realistic.

Scripture seems to encourage exploring a marriage choice (Pro. 18:22; 31:10).

*He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD.*

Proverbs 18:22

*Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.* Proverbs 31:10

## III. What concepts should form the basis for a dating relationship?

- A. A romantic relationship can only be considered with another Christian (I Cor. 6:15-17; II Cor. 6:14-18).
- B. A romantic relationship should arise out of a lifestyle of serving others and of developing a full range of successful friendships.

Every male and female should be encouraged to have many sincere and wholesome friendships with the opposite sex. Unfortunately when people do not, they have little experience with members of the opposite sex and tend to want to rush into a romantic relationship too soon.

If a person does not have healthy relationships with members of the opposite sex as brothers or sisters in Christ...

1. They will tend to see every relationship with a view to romance.
2. They will tend to rush straight to the physical aspect of the relationship.

3. They can limit their exposure and, therefore, limit their options for a marriage partner.
  4. They can become very possessive of and overly dependent on the one person.
  5. They will usually have a limited ability to communicate on a heart level.
  6. They will make premature and inappropriate statements reflecting the emotional level of the relationship (e.g. "I love you.").
- C. A close friendship should be developed before entertaining the idea of pursuing a romantic relationship.
- D. Genuine prayer and sincere seeking of the Lord should be involved in moving any relationship into a romantic relationship.

One of the main reasons for this is that once you begin a romantic relationship with someone expectations will be generated. With the elevated expectations comes the potential for greater disappointment and hurt.

- E. The possibility of a marriage choice should temper all romantic relationships.

You should not be dating someone that you would not consider to be a potential marriage partner. This does not mean that the decision to begin a romantic relationship is the same as a proposal to marry. However, based on your present understanding of the person, you should be seeing that person as someone that you could potentially marry. In other words, you should not be in a romantic relationship with someone who in your estimation is "not the marrying kind."

- F. For wisdom and safety, a romantic relationship should be under natural (parental) and spiritual (pastoral) covering.

Single young people are still under the direct covering of their parents. In order to succeed in perhaps the most important decision you will ever make, it is good to get all of the spiritual and practical advice that is possible. This means that we do not hide or run from those in authority in our life, we run to them and seek them out.

- G. A romantic relationship should be developed slowly and naturally.

#### **IV. How should a romantic relationship begin?**

It should begin with a joint decision to allow a romantic relationship to develop based on an established friendship, honest communication and mutual desires. The following are elements that should be considered in the decision to develop a healthy romantic relationship:

##### **A. Evaluate the past and present relationship.**

How strong is it? How well do we know each other? How well do we communicate? What fruit have we seen in our friendship?

**B. Assess your compatibility as believers.**

Are we spiritually compatible? Do we have similar life goals and ambitions? Do we have a similar value system? It is good to find out these things early in the relationship to keep us from making bad choices that will affect us in a negative way for the rest of our lives.

**C. Determine if there is a mutual desire to develop a romantic relationship.**

If there is not a mutual desire, there is no need to proceed any further. You can get into real trouble if you try to pressure the other party into a relationship that is not mutual. You can set yourself up for a major let down when your hopes are dashed.

**D. Consider the time element.**

Is it the right time? Is the relationship ready for a romantic element? Is such a relationship consistent with my life goals at this time? The only time to think rationally about this relationship is before it is allowed to get started. Once we cross the line relative to this decision, it will be hard to be objective.

**E. Make the decision a matter of prayerful consideration.**

What does God think about it? Have you actually prayed about it? Do you really want to pray about it? If this relationship is more important than God, it is idolatry. Remember that God knows us, He loves us, He only wants what is best for us, He has a wonderful plan for our lives and He is the only one who knows where our choices will ultimately lead.

**F. Hold the decision tentatively until it has been submitted to your covering for counsel.**

The young man should ask the young woman's father or covering for permission to begin a romantic relationship. You are not asking for her hand in marriage, but you are entering into a relationship that could potentially lead to marriage. Remember that you are approaching those who are spiritually accountable for the life that has been given to them by God.

**G. Submit the relationship to God.**

All of your desires, values, actions, thoughts and decisions must be yielded to the Lord. This means yielding your rights to each other to Him and confirming your accountability to Him for what you contribute to the relationship. Understand that your dating life is to be submitted to God's word and His standards of purity.

**H. Set your mutual dating standards by combining your individual ones and determining to live by the stricter.**

**I. Make sure the following mutual commitments are clear:**

1. There is NO commitment to marriage (This commitment should never be assumed before an actual engagement).
2. The commitment to guard one's own feelings.
3. The commitment to protect the other person's feelings.
4. The commitment to communicate honestly.
5. The commitment to submit the relationship and possible marriage decision to the Lord.

**V. How do I put myself in a place of being "marriage material"?**

Much of the following outline is taken from unpublished notes by Wendell Smith.

**A. See how you should see.**

1. This means correcting misconceptions about marriage. The truth of the matter is...
  - a. Marriage is not for everyone.
  - b. It is possible to live a fulfilled and fruitful life without marriage.
  - c. One's life is not on hold until they find a spouse.
  - d. You can have a valid ministry expression without being married.
  - e. You do not have to be lonely without having a spouse.
  - f. You are not half of a person until you get married.
  - g. Marriage is good and not to be feared.

The problem with all of these things misconceptions is that if this is how we feel when we are single, we will carry these things into marriage. This will result in unmet expectations. It will also set us up for failure should something ever happen to our marriage partner.

2. This means finding the key to life.

The key to life is having a vital and living relationship with Jesus and His Body—the Church.

3. This means knowing what you believe.

This means knowing what God says relative to the world of dating and marriage and developing some personal convictions consistent with this area of life.

4. This means recognizing God as your source and your provider.

This means trusting God for your future and embracing His plan for your life whether it includes marriage or not.

5. This means having a right view of ourselves (proper self-image).

This means being confident in whom we are in Christ and finding our identity in what God says about us.

6. This means having a right view of singleness.

You must see your singleness as a special time when you can focus on the Lord and enter into His perfect will without the distraction of family relationships. You must see it as an opportunity and not a curse (I Cor. 7:32-35).

*But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord--how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world--how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world--how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.*

## **B. Be who you should be.**

1. This means focusing in your character as a Christian.

- a. This means being the kind of person that someone would want to marry.

We often have our own list of what we are looking for in the “perfect” person instead of focusing on being who we should be.

- b. This means cultivating the fruit of the Spirit especially in our attitude toward people and life in general.

- c. This means living a life that honors, respects and submits to authority.

2. This means that we learn to be a servant of the Church.

3. This means living a life of purpose and significance as a single.

## **C. Do what you should do.**

1. This means getting involved and active.

Don't wait until you get married to become active. The best place to meet a potential marriage partner is when you are walking in the center of God's will for your life.

2. This means enjoying life in your present situation.

Learn to laugh and enjoy a broad base of friendships.

3. This means being responsible.

- a. This means handling your money properly.
- b. This means pursuing a stable vocation.
- c. This means taking care of yourself physically.

4. This means guarding your heart diligently (Pro. 4:23).

- a. This means doing the battle in our thought-life.
- b. This means not allowing yourself to compromise for the sake of a marriage possibility.
- c. This means fleeing fornication (See previous lesson).

Note: Some of the above material was extracted from a book no longer in print titled *Principles of Family Life*, which was published by City Bible Publishing and was authored by a team of writers including but not limited to the author of this teaching.

## **Lesson 11-12**

### **Dating and Engagement**

Satan is doing everything that he can to destroy this generation because he knows that there will be a generation that will tread on him. He uses the drug culture, music, entertainment (movies, TV, video games), toys, pornography, the Internet and many other avenues with the view of derailing this generation.

One major way he seeks to destroy young people and change the course of their lives is by promoting sexual promiscuity. Sexual promiscuity leads to damaged self-image, unplanned pregnancies, abortions, broken relationships and poorly founded marriages which can lead to divorce. All of these things can destroy the potential of young people and hinder their ability to be a generation of spiritual warriors.

Sexual promiscuity is fanned by our western view of dating and relationships. If we are going to confront our culture, we have got to deal with the dating issue.

- I. What are some of the things that complicate the issue of dating in our day?**
- A. Dating is not specifically discussed in the Bible.
    - 1. In Bible times children had very little to do with the choice of whom they married.
    - 2. They learned to love their betrothed during the espousal period, which was a period of a year prior to the marriage.
    - 3. There was no experimental or recreational dating, as we know it today.
  - B. Children see a totally wrong view of sex and male/female relationships on TV, in the movies and among schoolmates.
    - 1. Dating almost always involves or leads to kissing, touching and eventually intercourse.
    - 2. Dating is often a status thing among young people. Your status is determined by whom you date or if you have a boyfriend or girlfriend.
  - C. Parents themselves have had no teaching on biblical principles that might apply to the dating scene.
    - 1. They themselves possibly did it wrong.
    - 2. They do not know what the Bible says.
    - 3. They have no ammunition to use to establish a line with their young people.
  - D. Some parents think that matchmaking and early dating is cute and they foster it or promote it early in their child's life.

E. Parents find it difficult to resist the persuasions of their own teenagers.

1. Their children accuse them of being old fashioned.
2. Few other parents have strong standards and your children use that against them.
3. Often even pastors and youth groups do not have clear standards.

All these things can lay a very poor foundation for dating and set young people up for serious failure.

If we are going to find success in this area, we must be willing to submit this area of our lives to the principles of God's word as it addresses all relationships outside of marriage.

## II. What are some biblical concepts that apply to this area of dating and relationships?

A. God wants us to be free from any premarital sexual encounters and promiscuity (I Th. 4:3-8).

*It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. –NIV*

The word used in this passage for “possess” his own vessel can be translated “acquire, obtain, possess or purchase.” There is a biblical way to gain a wife.

In the process of obtaining a spouse we are to abstain from sexual immorality. We are to obtain a spouse in a way that is honorable and does not in any way jeopardize our sanctification or holiness.

Sexual immorality by biblical definition includes the following:

1. Licentiousness sometimes translated “lewdness”, which is the stirring up of sensual desires (e.g. kissing, petting, inappropriate touching, indecent bodily movements, even homosexual acts, See: I Pet. 4:1-6; II Pet. 2:7; Eph. 4:17-24).

*Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men,*

*but for the will of God. 3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles--when we walked in **lewdness**, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. 4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. 5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. I Peter 4:1-6*

*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to **lewdness**, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:17-24*

2. Passion of lust (Col. 3:5-6; I Th. 4:5).

*Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. Colossians 3:5-6*

3. Evil Desires (Col. 3:5-6; Rom. 7:8)
4. Fornication, which is any form of sex before marriage (I Cor. 6:13, 18-20; Gal. 5:19). This is the Greek word from which we get the word “pornography.”

*Flee **sexual immorality**. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.*

I Corinthians 6:18-20

- B. God does want us to get married, but some how He wants us to do so without sinning in the process.
  1. The example of Mary and Joseph (Mt. 1:18). They were betrothed or engaged to be married, but they did not come together in a sexual way until after they were married.

*Now this is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. –NLT*

2. When we take advantage of another person sexually outside of marriage, the Bible speaks of this as defrauding them (I Th. 4:6). Defrauding is “using taking advantage of or injuring” someone else for your own gratification. It involves taking something that does not belong to you.
- C. The romantic desires that we have within us are given to us by God and are meant to push us toward marriage, which is part of God’s eternal purpose (Pro. 5:15-20).
1. These desires must be brought under the control of the Holy Spirit (I Tim. 5:1-2; I Th. 4:7-8).

*Never speak harshly to an older man, but appeal to him respectfully as though he were your own father. Talk to the younger men as you would to your own brothers. Treat the older women as you would your mother, **and treat the younger women with all purity as your own sisters.** I Timothy 5:1-2*

2. These desires can only be righteously fulfilled in marriage (Pro. 5:15-20, NLT).

*Drink water from your own well--share your love only with your wife. 16 Why spill the water of your springs in public, having sex with just anyone? 17 You should reserve it for yourselves. Don't share it with strangers. 18 Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. 19 She is a loving doe, a graceful deer. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love. 20 Why be captivated, my son, with an immoral woman, or embrace the breasts of an adulterous woman?*

### **III. Why do some singles end up getting involved in immoral relationship?**

- A. Because they think that having sex proves their love.
- B. Because “everyone” is doing it.
- C. Because for young women it is the expected price of a date.
- D. Because it seems necessary to make one popular.
- E. Because it is seen as a sport or game.
- F. Because it is an easy step from lesser forms of physical activity.

### **IV. What is God’s pattern for developing relationships?**

In God’s pattern for developing relationship...

- A. The relationship starts by being one in the spirit.

1. No one could ever marry someone that is not a Christian because there can be no unity of spirit (II Cor. 6:14).

*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*

2. If you cannot marry an unbeliever, you must not date an unbeliever. If you do, you are setting yourself up for an emotional attachment that may be difficult to control.

We must begin all relationships with the opposite sex as brothers and sisters in Christ. All of the admonitions concerning how to treat a brother or sister apply to this relationship (love, honor, seek best interest, be considerate, etc.).

3. Activities that promote a unity of the spirit include church services, youth group, Bible studies, group fellowship, and Christian service projects.

B. The relationship develops by becoming one in the soul realm.

1. This involves becoming one in our mind, will and emotions.
2. This could be described as cultivating deepening levels of friendship. The levels of relationship include:
  - a. Acquaintances
  - b. Casual Friends
  - c. Close Friends
  - d. Intimate Friends
3. It is when the relationship reaches the “close friend” level that you are in a position to begin exploring the idea of a romantic relationship.
4. Activities in this period should be limited to non-romantic type activities that still involve others, family members and friends (sports, hobbies, family outings, concerts, plays, eating out, horseback riding, bowling, safari, zoo, museums, skating and group activities).

C. The third level involves the coming together in the physical realm. This realm is reserved for after marriage.

*Run from anything that stimulates youthful lust. Follow anything that makes you want to do right. Pursue faith and love and peace, and enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.* II Timothy 2:22

**A summary of God’s dating plan can be seen in the following chart:**

	<b>God's Dating Plan</b>	<b>Improper Dating Plan</b>
<b>Basis</b>	God centered relationships based on wholesome attraction, common commitment to God, and Christian friendship	Self-centered relationships based on natural attraction, feelings and sensual desires
<b>Founda-tion</b>	Moral absolutes found in the Bible—Principles	Situational ethics and a lack of absolutes—Feelings
<b>Goals</b>	Mutual Edification—Giving	Mutual Gratification—Receiving
<b>Focus</b>	Focus on becoming one in spirit and soul	Focus on physical activity and experimentation
<b>Pacing</b>	Relationship takes time to grow through the stages, getting to know one another	Relationship moves quickly, bypassing levels to take advantage of the other
<b>Relation-ship to Others</b>	Relationship inclusive of the Body of Christ	Relationship exclusive of the Body of Christ
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger relationship to Lord</li> <li>• Stronger relationship to others</li> <li>• Healthy self-image</li> <li>• Character development for the better</li> <li>• Good example to others</li> <li>• Peace</li> <li>• Joy</li> <li>• Strong foundation for marriage</li> <li>• Abundant Life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weakened relationship to God</li> <li>• Weakened relationship to others</li> <li>• Unhealthy self-image</li> <li>• Character change for the worse</li> <li>• Influence others to sin</li> <li>• Confusion, strife, pain</li> <li>• Sorrow and regret</li> <li>• Bad foundation for marriage.</li> <li>• Death</li> </ul>

**V. What areas should be considered in making a marriage choice?**

**A. Spiritual Life**

When considering a potential mate, one should give primary considerations to their relationship to God, including the strength of their personal commitment, ability to flow together in spiritual things, involvement in prayer and the Word, and spiritual growth and witness.

**B. Character/Personality**

A person's character qualities, personality traits, habit patterns and ability to change, should be considered.

**C. Interpersonal Relationships**

Much insight can be gained from a person's interpersonal relationships. Apart from your own relationships to them, you should take into account their relationship to their parents, the church, their friends and family, as well as their

ability to communicate, to handle irritations, to resolve conflicts, and their social fluidity and response to authority.

#### **D. Natural Life**

Also to be considered are a person's age, education, domestic life, work stability, financial freedom and recreational interests.

#### **E. Life Purpose**

Attention should be given to career direction, ministry direction, purposefulness, goals and flexibility, especially to discern whether these areas are compatible with yours.

### **VI. How should engagement be handled?**

The purpose of engagement is to provide a bridge from the state of being single to the state of being married. This is based on the recognition that this change will affect and involve many people, and that this adjustment will take some time to take place smoothly.

A. Engagement begins with the couple's mutual commitment to marry.

This commitment should be made in the light of:

1. A serious time of seeking the Lord for his approval.
2. The heartfelt approval of both the natural and spiritual coverings (authorities) involved.

Parental blessings should be viewed as being a necessary confirmation of the marriage choice and the timing for such a marriage.

B. It is advisable to go through the Pre-Engagement Questionnaire that is appended to these notes to be sure that all of the important issues have been addressed (See Appendix 3).

C. There are certain things of a public nature that will make the engagement official. These things include the following:

1. A public announcement
2. An engagement ring
3. The setting of a wedding date

Open ended engagements are a recipe for disaster.

These are all external signs of the internal choice and attest to the genuineness of the commitment.

- D. The length of the engagement should be determined by a consideration of the following:
1. The time needed to make necessary arrangements for the wedding.
  2. Family and friends having enough time to prepare for the wedding.
  3. The financial status of the couple.
  4. Special considerations such as job or schooling that may come to bear on the situation.

Once the decision is made to get engaged, the wedding should follow relatively soon to avoid elevating the potential of pre-marital sexual activity in the couple.

- E. Though all doubts should be dealt with before an official engagement is made, engagement should not be viewed as being entirely irrevocable. This is why it is critical that there should be a strong and mutual commitment to moral purity in this phase of the relationship.

Note: Some of the above material was extracted from a book no longer in print titled *Principles of Family Life*, which was published by City Bible Publishing and was authored by a team of writers including but not limited to the author of this teaching.

## **Appendix 1—Dating Standards**

The following is a sample statement of personal dating standards written by a single young man who attended Portland Bible College in 1993:

### **My Creed**

The words of wisdom contained in this creed have been spoken to me by the Holy Spirit through my father, youth pastor, and various teachers here at P.B.C. as well as past experience. It is because of the conviction of the Holy Spirit that I commit to stand by these principles no matter what the consequences, and I believe that it is by the grace of Jesus that I will be able to discipline myself to stand by them.

Firstly I will define, in my own words, these two terms:

#### **Date:**

A date is to have a social engagement with a woman, individually or in a group setting, with the expressed purpose of conversation which should lead to a better understanding of her personality, desires, lifestyle, background, spiritual life/calling, and dreams. The purpose of the date is to determine if she is someone that I should court.

#### **Courting:**

Courting requires a commitment from both individuals to maintain a relationship, for an unspecified amount of time, to be totally open with each other so as to test the coherency of our personalities, desires, lifestyle, background, spiritual life/calling, and dreams. Courting is done with the purpose of determining suitability of marriage. This is also called “going steady” or “seeing each other.” I commit to being in a courtship relationship with only one person in any season of time.

#### **The standards that I set for a date:**

1. I will not go out on a date with any woman without first considering and praying about it for a period of 30 days. During that period I will seek to be as open as possible to the Holy Spirit and anything that He may want to say to me regarding pursuing a relationship with this individual. The reason for this standard is to force me to become friends with this individual before allowing myself to become romantically involved with her. It is also set forth so that I am sure that this individual is someone whom I really like and not just a whim.
2. I will not go out on a date with any woman without the expressed permission of her father (or her guardian). In some cases I will ask that he read a copy of this Creed and spend that same 30 days in prayer concerning the possibility of my relationship with his daughter.
3. To the best of my ability I will not “allow physical lust to intrude” upon my mind while on a date. My rule will be: No contact, meaning that I will not touch her (e.g. holding hands, placing my arm around her, elbow loving her) on any date. Not ever.

**The standards that I set for courting:**

1. I will not begin a courting type relationship with a woman without the permission and approval of her father.
2. I will not begin a courting type relationship without seeking the counsel of my father and I will not begin such a relationship without his permission and approval.
3. I will also seek the counsel of at least two men of God to whom I am in submission (e.g. an elder or pastor over me).
4. Physical contact in the courting period shall be limited to such things as holding hands, and placing an arm around. My standard shall be NO physical contact which would cause physical desires to be aroused on her or my part.
5. It is my conviction that I should refrain from any long term prayer times when alone with a young lady whom I am romantically involved with.
6. Courting is never to imply engagement but it is my expressed desire that any long term courting relationship (greater than six months) would lead into engagement and then marriage.

**The standards that I set for engagement:**

1. If at any time in a courting relationship I wish to pursue the possibility of marriage I will first spend another one to two months in prayer and fasting; seeking God's will for me and her.
2. Then I will next ask her father and mother for their permission to marry their daughter.
3. Then I will ask my father and mother for their permission to marry this individual.
4. Finally I will seek the counsel of two to three godly men whom I am in submission to. I will ask for their input into the situation and their evaluation of the possibility of our marriage.
5. During the engagement time I will not do anything physically which would violate my conscience. I haven't been engaged before so it is hard to say what this would include but I will not engage in passionate kissing or anything which would cause physical feelings or desires to go beyond control in her or me.

Name Withheld

## Appendix 2—Wedding and Marriage Prerequisites

### Wedding/Marriage Prerequisites

Marriage is a sacred institution that was created by God to reflect the relationship of Christ to the Church (Eph. 5:25-32). God is concerned about every marriage relationship and the ultimate success of each marriage. We must also remember that the marriage decision is, apart from our decision to accept the lordship of Christ in our lives, the most important and consequential decision that anyone makes because people must live with the consequences of that decision for the rest of their lives. How a couple starts out is very important if they are to have a rewarding life and a peaceful home. For this reason the leadership of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ takes every marriage seriously and strives to represent Christ and His word to every couple that seeks their involvement in their wedding.

**In order for the pastoral staff of local church to be actively involved in the wedding of any couple, the following prerequisites must be met:**

**A. The couple must be Christian and be willing to submit to the biblical standards for a Christian throughout their courtship. This means that:**

1. Both parties in the relationship must be born again Christians. It is advisable that both be baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit as well.
2. Both parties must be biblically free to marry.
  - a. They are of legal age.
  - b. They are not already married.
  - c. If they have been previously married, they are biblically released to remarry (Mt. 19:1-10; Mark 10:1-12; I Cor. 7:10-16).
3. The couple must not be involved in fornication which is a sexual relationship outside of marriage (I Th. 4:3-8). If they have been involved in this way, they must cease immediately.
4. The couple must not be living together. If they are, they must separate immediately.

**B. The couple must be willing to follow the prescribed premarital track set forth by the eldership of City Life Church.**

1. At least one of the parties must have been a regular attender of the church for at least 3 months.
2. The couple must have made the decision to make this church their home church after they marry.
3. The parents of the couple must be in approval of the relationship and the wedding. Note: Under certain conditions, an exception may be made.
4. The couple must be willing to complete the Pre-marriage Questionnaire.
5. The couple must be willing to submit to three to four months of pre-marriage counseling with a leader of the church assigned by the pastoral staff.
6. The couple must be willing to complete any homework that is given as an assignment by their counselor.

**C. The couple needs to be aware that there are other things that could be a factor when it comes to the involvement of the leadership of the church in their wedding.**

In asking for the participation of the pastoral staff of the church in their wedding, each couple is acknowledging the fact that they are Christian, that they want to live their married life as Christians and that they want God to be honored in all that they do in conjunction with their wedding experience. A Christian is someone who is more concerned about pleasing God than pleasing man. A Christian is a Christian at all times whether they are in a church service, on the job or at play.

If God is to be honored in what is done, the wedding plans should not include elements that clearly violate the spirit of the Word of God. If there is a desire for God is to be present, the wedding atmosphere should be in keeping with his holy nature. Remember that your wedding ceremony should be a Christian witness to the world. This position could affect several things:

### 1. Gowns

While the leadership of the church have no desire to speak to issues of dress, the Bible does hold up a standard of dress that reflects God's heart in this area. Christian apparel is to be modest at all times. This includes wedding ceremonies. No one who attends a wedding should be struggling with impure thoughts due to the immodest dress of the participants in the wedding party (I Tim. 2:9-10). Brides and bridesmaids are encouraged to be discrete when selecting the official garments to be worn for the ceremony.

### 2. Bachelor Parties

Many bachelor parties are totally unchristian in their atmosphere and activities including such things as intoxication, strippers, and other clearly sinful behaviors. If the leadership of the church becomes aware of any such activity, they may refuse to perform the ceremony. It is the responsibility of the groom to inform the wedding party and friends that a Christian party is the only acceptable party. Note: This standard applies to the bride as well.

### 3. Wedding Reception

Because of the varying standards among Christians and the normal abuse of alcohol in relation to many wedding receptions, the leadership of the church would prefer that no alcoholic beverages be served at the official wedding reception. However, if they are served, they should be served in moderation (no open bar, etc.) to ensure that drinking does not lead to the sin of drunkenness (Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21).

Maintaining a Christian atmosphere at the reception may also have a bearing on other activities included in the program, such as music selection, dancing and entertainment. The following questions should be asked when doing all planning:

- Is it to the glory of God?

I Corinthians 10:31, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

- It is a stumbling block to others?

I Corinthians 10:32-33, "Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

- Has it the appearance of evil?

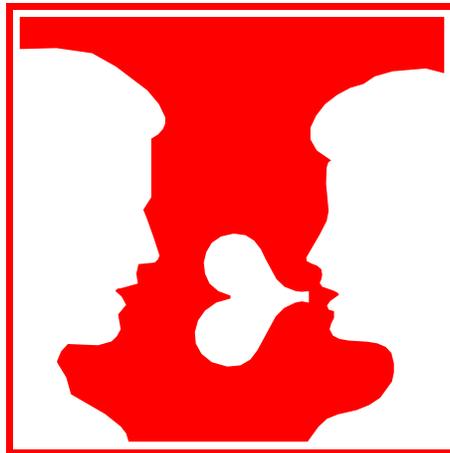
I Thessalonians 5:22, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” (KJV) The Knox translation says “all that has a look of evil about it.”

- Is its atmosphere good? Could you enjoy communion with God when engaging in this activity or would God be out of place?

II Corinthians 6:14 “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”

# A PRE-ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

**A Guide for Couples and their Counselor**



**By Bill Scheidler**

## Pre-Engagement Questionnaire

The following questionnaire is designed as a counseling tool for pastors and a tool for Christian couples to help them evaluate their own readiness for marriage. It is meant to assist couples in considering the level of their relationship in a spirit of honesty, openness and true understanding. The questionnaire may be used with a pastoral advisor to help clarify the direction of and the speed with which the relationships should progress. Many of the questions have no right or wrong answer, but are only given to insure that the right kinds of questions are being addressed in the relationship.

### ARE WE QUALIFIED TO MARRY?

A. Are we on the same level spiritually (II Corinthians 6:14-16)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Born again? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ How long? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Baptized in the Spirit No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Baptized in water? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Living a life committed to Christ and the service of others? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

5. Committed to a local church? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. Give three reasons why you want to marry: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Are we qualified to get married? Do we have a past marriage relationship that is not biblically resolved? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Any children from a past relationship? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

2. Is there a past marriage and divorce? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

3. If yes, was the divorce biblical? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Unsure \_\_\_\_

4. If yes, am I biblically free to marry? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Unsure \_\_\_\_

Explain your situation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. How do my parents and spiritual leaders *honestly* feel about our relationship and potential marriage? Check all that apply.

- | <b>Mother</b>                              | <b>Father</b>                              | <b>Pastor / Elder</b>                      |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eager for it      | <input type="checkbox"/> Eager for it      | <input type="checkbox"/> Eager for it      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reserved about it | <input type="checkbox"/> Reserved about it | <input type="checkbox"/> Reserved about it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Against it        | <input type="checkbox"/> Against it        | <input type="checkbox"/> Against it        |

If any authorities have reservations about the relationship, what are their concerns? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E. Is it God's will for us to marry? (Comment on answers)

1. Do I have the gift of singleness (I Corinthians 7:1-9, 17-40)?  
No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do we have the same long-term goals? (Amos 3:3)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Does God have an active part in our relationship? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Have I prayed **sincerely** about this relationship? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_  
What has God said? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Would marriage hinder or help your usefulness to the Lord and fulfillment of His will? Help \_\_\_\_ Hinder \_\_\_\_ In what way? \_\_\_\_\_

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**ARE WE MATURE ENOUGH TO MARRY?**

- A. Have we been able to solve problems biblically? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

1. What problems or disagreements have you had during your courtship?

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2. How did you resolve them? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Do you feel that they are completely settled now? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Do you feel that either of you ever uses wrong means to get your own way?  
No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

- a. Is one a bully? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Which one? \_\_\_\_\_

- b. Does one manipulate? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Which one? \_\_\_\_\_

- c. Does one avoid facing problems? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_  
Which one? \_\_\_\_\_

- d. Do you let things slide until forgotten? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

- e. Do you store up resentments? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

- f. Does one of you sulk? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Which one? \_\_\_\_\_

- g. Does one blame shift or make excuses? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_  
Which one? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you use biblical skills to solve problems?

- a. Do you bring things up and talk them through? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
  - b. Do you find it easy to express your true feelings to your partner?  
No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
  - c. Do you go to Christ for help? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
  - d. Do you ask forgiveness for your failures? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
  - e. Do you offer forgiveness to the other? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
  - f. Do you pray together? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
  - g. Do you keep lines of communication open? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
- B. Have we experiences maturity in our relationship? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
1. Does either manifest patterns of sin in his or her life? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
  2. Is either tempting the other sexually? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_  
Which one? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Is either critical toward the other in a verbal or physical way?  
No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Which one? \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Do I lie to the other in this relationship? Never \_\_\_\_ Occasionally \_\_\_\_  
Often \_\_\_\_
  5. Does either spend money impulsively? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_  
Which one? \_\_\_\_\_
  6. Do we have a good relationship with our parents? Comment \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  7. Do I have any extreme fears? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Comment \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  8. Do you detect strong feelings of jealousy in your partner? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_  
Is it a problem for you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**ARE WE WILLING AND READY TO “LEAVE” OTHER ATTACHMENTS?**

A. Are we willing to emotionally break with our parents? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

B. Are we able to financially break from our parents? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

C. Are we willing to put the relationship before all other possessions?

No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D. Are we willing to give up the right to make independent decisions?

No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E. Are we willing to adjust our relationship to other singles of the opposite sex?

No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

**ARE WE READY TO “CLEAVE” TO EACH OTHER?**

A. Are we willing to become accountable to the other? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

B. Are our lives going in the same direction?

1. What are my career goals? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What are my ministry goals? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What are the ministry goals of my desired spouse? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. What basic lifestyle are we expecting? Summarize in a brief paragraph.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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1. What income level? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What work hours? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What television habits? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What types of entertainment? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What types of recreation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. What kind of church life / commitment? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. What church do we plan to attend? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. Do we agree philosophically?

1. Do we have any theological differences? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ What areas?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Do we agree on male / female roles in the home? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_  
Comment: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Do we both plan on working outside the home? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Comment:

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4. What will be our financial priorities? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Do we want to have children? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ How many? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What are your views on contraceptives and which partner should use them?

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7. Do we agree on styles of child discipline? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Comment:

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8. What is our attitude toward credit buying? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. How do we envision our relationship to relatives? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Are there any factors that might make the relationship difficult? \_\_\_\_\_

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**ARE WE READY TO ACCEPT EACH OTHER JUST AS WE ARE?**

QUALITY	MY POTENTIAL SPOUSE			ME		
	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
1. Strong godly character						
2. Fully trustworthy						
3. Brings out best in others						
4. A servant spirit						
5. A hard worker						
6. Self-sacrificing for others						
7. Financially responsible						
8. Plans ahead						
9. Good self-image						
10. Generous						
11. Courteous to others						
12. Builds others up						
13. Fun to be around						
14. Generally optimistic						
15. Complimentary						
16. Easy to talk to						
17. Faithful on the job						
18. Respectful of authority						
19. Not angry quickly						
20. Calm under pressure						

A. If my potential spouse never changed, am I willing to accept them as they presently are?

No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. Am I confident that this is **the right time** for us to be contemplating marriage?

No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ Anticipated wedding date? \_\_\_\_\_