



SIMPLIFY RELATIONSHIPS

DIGGING DEEPER

The Bible has a lot to say about what healthy, God honoring relationships look like. Read through (or even memorize) the following selected passages and ask the Holy Spirit to shape and guide you, to live out healthy and God honoring relationships with others.

Proverbs 13:20 - He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

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

Proverbs 18:24 - A man of too many friends comes to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Proverbs 27:6 - Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

Proverbs 27:9-10 - Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man's counsel is sweet to his friend.

Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity; Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother far away.

Luke 6:31 - Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.

Luke 6:35 - But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

Galatians 5:13 - For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Ephesians 4:2-3 - With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...

Ephesians 6:1-3 - Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 - Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Corinthians 15:33 - Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

2 Corinthians 6:14 - Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

1 Timothy 5:1-3 - Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity. Honor widows who are widows indeed.

Hebrews 10:24-25 - and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

1 John 4:7 - Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

The 4 G's of Conflict Resolution (adapted from Ken Sande, Peacemakers.net)

Conflict is not necessarily bad or destructive. Even when conflict is caused by sin and causes a great deal of stress, God can use it for good (see Rom. 8:28-29). As the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1, conflict actually provides three significant opportunities. By God's grace, you can use conflict to:

- Glorify God (by trusting, obeying, and imitating him)
- Serve other people (by helping to bear their burdens or by confronting them in love)
- Grow to be like Christ (by confessing sin and turning from attitudes that promote conflict).

These concepts are totally overlooked in most conflicts because people naturally focus on escaping from the situation or overcoming their opponent. Therefore, it is wise to periodically step back from a conflict and ask yourself whether you are doing all that you can to take advantage of these special opportunities.

1st G: Glorify God

You can glorify God in the midst of conflict by trusting him, obeying him, and imitating him (see Prov. 3:4-6; John 14:15; Eph. 5:1). One of the best ways to keep these concerns uppermost in your mind is to regularly ask yourself this focusing question: "How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?"

2nd G: Get the Plank out of your own eye

There are generally two kinds of "logs" you need to look for when dealing with conflict. First, you need to ask whether you have had a critical, negative, or overly sensitive attitude that has led to unnecessary conflict. One of the best ways to do this is to spend some time meditating on Philippians 4:2-9, which describes the kind of attitude Christians should have even when they are involved in a conflict.

The second kind of log you must deal with is actual sinful words and actions. Because you are often blind to your own sins, you may need an honest friend or advisor who will help you to take an objective look at yourself and face up to your contribution to a conflict. When you identify ways that you have wronged another person, it is important to admit your wrongs honestly and thoroughly.

3rd G: Gently Restore

- Pray for humility and wisdom
- Plan your words carefully (think of how you would want to be confronted)
- Anticipate likely reactions and plan appropriate responses (rehearsals can be very helpful)
- Choose the right time and place (talk in person whenever possible)
- Assume the best about the other person until you have facts to prove otherwise (Prov. 11:27)
- Listen carefully (Prov. 18:13)
- Speak only to build others up (Eph. 4:29)
- Ask for feedback from the other person
- Recognize your limits (only God can change people; see Rom. 12:18; 2 Tim. 2:24-26)

4th G: Go and be reconciled

One of the most unique features of biblical peacemaking is the pursuit of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Even though Christians have experienced the greatest forgiveness in the world, we often fail to show that forgiveness to others. To cover up our disobedience we often use the shallow statement, “I forgive her—I just don’t want to have anything to do with her again.” Just think, however, how you would feel if God said to you, “I forgive you; I just don’t want to have anything to do with you again”?

Praise God that he never says this! Instead, he forgives you totally and opens the way for genuine reconciliation. He calls you to forgive others in exactly the same way: “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Col. 3:12-14; see also 1 Cor. 13:5; Psalm 103:12; Isa. 43:25).

Remember that forgiveness is a spiritual process that you cannot fully accomplish on your own. Therefore, as you seek to forgive others, continually ask God for grace to enable you to imitate his wonderful forgiveness toward you.



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