

A Study on

Relationship Building

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12 Lessons

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Preface

Relationships are vital to man's happiness and well-being on earth! Not only has man come to realize such, but God stated it about man in the very outset of man's creation (Genesis 2:18). It should be obvious then that man needs to learn how to build relationships for his own good, as well as the good of others.

This study will briefly explore in the first few lessons some of the principles that help to build and keep good relationships, while the second half will look at the specific relationships and our responsibilities in regards to each.

Our relationship with God and man is not only vital for this life, but will have an effect upon our eternal destiny as well. Thus, we feel that such a special study from Scripture and experience should be both interesting and helpful

As you would expect, this study has come from my exposure to various sources along with a study of Scripture. I do not take credit of originality, but only for putting it into the format to be studied.

---Paul E. Cantrell

2003

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Lesson One

“MAN’S NEED FOR RELATIONSHIPS”

(James 4:1-10)

INTRODUCTION

1. Why do people fight among themselves?
 - a) They can’t get along with one another.
 - b) Poor people relations.
2. Their obvious need: BUILD GOOD RELATIONS WITH ONE ANOTHER!
 - a) A need is:
 - 1) Something we have to have to survive;
 - 2) That helps us to do more than just survive—to enjoy life.
 - b) Forming good relationships in life is a need!
 - 1) In order to survive physically in some instances;
 - 2) In order to live life successfully, happily;
 - 3) And in order to be right with God!
3. Thus, the reason for this lesson: “Man’s Need for Relationships.”

DISCUSSION**I. WHY STRESS THAT RELATIONSHIPS ARE VITAL TO US?****A. Successful living is closely tied in with good relationships.**

- 1) Can be seen in the lives of troubled people.
- 2) Illustration:
 - a) Minister told about a visit he had from a homosexual person.
 - b) *“You ought to accept my actions as moral & acceptable.”*
 - b) Minister did not react, just listened patiently.
 - c) Finally:
 1. The real person began to come out;
 2. The pain of an anguish-laden life;
 3. Hurt filled his eyes;
 - e) And then, he admitted: *“I would give anything to have a meaningful and lasting relationship in my life.”*
- 3) Most emotional problems stem from relationship problems.
 - a) The inability to get along with people brings trauma.
 - b) It can bring loneliness & depression.
- 4) Most problems faced in the Home, the Community, and the church are relationship problems.
 - a) Why do Christian homes break-up? (Can’t get along)
 - b) Why does a man quit a high paying job? (Can’t get along with boss)
 - c) Why do congregations Split, Divide, Bite & Devour one another? (Poor Relationships)
- 5) Some people live lonely lives because:
 - a) They either are fearful of forming relationships;
 - b) or, They are unable to do so.

- 6) Even competent, successful people in some areas of life feel confused and insecure when it comes to personal relationships.
- 7) But almost without exception:
 - a) Congregations that grow have discovered something vital!
 - b) The importance of building relationships in their midst!!
 - c) Of showing lots of love for one another.

B. But God, Himself, has shown how important relationships are!

- 1) He wants us to have a close relationship with Himself.
 - a) 2 John 9—*“Whosoever goes onward and abides not in the doctrine of Christ has not God; but whosoever abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son.”*
 - b) He invites and wants it....
 - c) But, it won’t happen without our effort!
- 2) An example of a relationship in the O.T. illustrates the importance.
 - a) Between Jonathan and David.
 - b) They would have given their lives for one another.
 - c) 1 Sam. 18:1—*“And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”*
 - d) David’s comment upon Jonathan’s death: *“I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.”* (2 Sam. 1:26)
- 3) The very command: *“love your neighbor as yourself”* ...would indicate the need for forming good relationships.
 - a) At least 48 times Christians are commanded to:
 1. Do something for one another;
 2. Or, Do something to one another.
 - b) And the end results....Good Relationships!
 - c) How can you avoid such when:
 - “We confess our faults to one another”**
 - “We pray one for another”**
 - “We serve one another”**
 - “We submit to one another”**
 - “We forgive one another”**
 - “We are kind to one another”**
 - “We encourage one another”**
 - “We fellowship one another”....etc.**
 - d) These *“One another”* passages actually demonstrate how to love our neighbor.
 - e) End result...a close personal relationship with my fellow-Christian.

II. THE GOLDEN RULE’S IMPORTANCE!

A. Rule...“Treat others as you want to be treated.”(Luke 6:31)

- 1) Why did God give such a rule for living?
 - a) To help us keep our distance from each other?

- b) Or, to help us get along well with people?
 - c) To make it easier for people to like us?
 - d) To help us to be drawn to people?
- 2) The answer should be obvious!

B. How do I want to be treated?

- 1) I want to be valued as a person of worth.
- a) Jesus showed his sensitivity to this concept.
 - 1. He talked and ate with people.
 - 2. Even the Publicans & sinners that others would not.
 - 3. He was rebuked for doing so, but didn't stop.
 - 4. Jesus knew what He was doing.
 - 5. He showed that He valued people.
 - b) Matt. 25:40—***“Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”***
 - c) Jesus knew people needed to be valued as people of worth!
- 2) People want to be listened to.
- a) Not get advice, but listened to.
 - b) ***“The road to the heart is the ear...”*** Voltaire.
 - c) Listen attentively...show interest.
 - d) Jas. 1:19—***“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”***
- 3) People want to be appreciated.
- a) There is no person that does not like to be appreciated.
 - b) When done, makes it easier to build relationships.
 - c) Rom. 12:10—***“In honor preferring one another”*** (Be 1st to show honor).
- 4) People want to be built up & edified.
- a) Our world tends to put people down.
 - b) We all need to be lifted up.
 - c) To sincerely build someone up, brings you closer together.
 - d) The tongue is a great power...to build up or to destroy!
 - e) Prov. 18:21—***“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”***
 - f) Heb. 10:24—***“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.”***
- 5) People want to be treated with empathy.
- a) Illustration:
 - 1. Man called doctor during a heavy rain storm.
 - 2. ***“My wife needs you badly, can you come?”***
 - 3. Doctor: ***“Can you come & get me, my car is being repaired.”***
 - 4. Man: ***“What, go out in this weather?”***
 - b) Do we expect others to do what we are unwilling to do?
 - c) Need to be in the other person's place...see his view.
 - d) Rom. 12:15—***“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”*** (Identifying with people...helps!)

CONCLUSION

1. The Kingdom of God is RIGHT relationships!
 - a) We need good relationships.
 - b) Must maintain such.
 - c) God has designed His word to help us have and keep such.
 - d) It is the greatest textbook on how to build good relationships.
2. The church is the place to receive that help!
3. Come on in and do your part to build a great church!

Lesson Two

“BUILDING BLOCKS FOR GOOD RELATIONSHIPS”

(Romans 15:1-7)

INTRODUCTION

1. All of us have a wide range of contacts:
 - a) Family, relatives, Friends
 - b) People at work, or at school
 - c) People in community, neighbors
 - d) Organizations...religious & otherwise
2. Most of these contacts are Surface, Shallow, Not Deep & Meaningful.
 - a) Reasons are obvious in most instances!
 1. It takes time to have deep & meaningful relationships.
 2. It often requires a real struggle within & without.
 3. Cannot be forced...must be desired by both parties.
 - b) Some people are just hard to get along with also!
 1. Rom. 12:18—***“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”***
 2. AT WORK—We may be forced to deal with people who are not very likeable.
 3. IN THE CHURCH—We may run into someone who wants to give us a hard time.
 4. IN THE FAMILY—Where we have to live with a mate that isn’t easy to get along with...or even In-Laws!
 5. Or a NEIGHBOR—Who makes it hard to even get acquainted, much less to get along with.
6. And...as much as we would like to avoid confrontation with people.....
 - a) None of us will escape having to deal with confrontations!
 - b) We need help in order to do it effectively.
 - c) The Bible gives us that help.
 - d) Rom. 15:1-7 ----- How to retain good relationships in the church:
 1. Support one another (v.1)—***“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.”***
 2. Find & Dwell on Compatible things (v.4)---***“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”***
 3. Cooperate with one another (v. 5)---***“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.”***
 4. Develop Closeness (v. 7)---***“Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.”***
 - e) We want to look closer at these four areas of building relationships!
 - f) Lesson: “Building Blocks for Good Relationships”

DISCUSSION**I. COMPATABILITY****A. The problem:**

- 1) Incompatibility---people can't get along---don't fit together.
- 2) They do not have enough in common to help hold them together.

B. Reason for problem:

- 1) Everyone has Fixed Opinions, Attitudes, & Values.
- 2) These are all brought into any relationship that is formed.
- 3) The Challenge: *How to blend two different people into a close relationship.*
- 4) Every close relationship has to deal with this challenge.
- 5) Matt. 19:5—*“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.”*

C. Is Change the answer?

- 1) Must one or both change to make relationship work?
- 2) Many new husbands & wives think herein lies the secret...CHANGE... YOU Change!
- 3) The Bible does advocate change for our lives!
 - a) Concept of Repentance....Change of mind leading to change of one's life.
 - b) Rom. 12:2—*“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...”*
 - c) All of us can change for the better...no question about that!
- 4) But is change the real solution or only a part of it?

D. The need for Compatibility!

- 1) Shouldn't we be loved for who we are...not because we are willing to change our lives to suit another?
- 2) Things in common are what helps to build lasting relationships.
 - a) The more we hold in common....the greater the relationship.
 - b) Phil. 4:8—*“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”*
 - c) Think on the GOOD, POSITIVE, & UPLIFTING in Common!
 1. Don't emphasize the differences...tends to alienate.
 2. Emphasize the common things....draws together.
 3. Then, build on the common things.

II. COOPERATION**A. The Problem:**

- 1) Relationships will falter if we do not learn how to work together.

- 2) To fuss, fight, argue, blame, defend, cut down one another won't get the job done!
- 3) Competitiveness only widens the gap in relationships.

B. The Solution:

- 1) It is togetherness that brings people closer.
- 2) Gal. 5:13-15
 - a) Biting & devouring will destroy our relationship in Christ.
 - b) Must be closely guarded against.
- 3) Acts 2:44—*“And all that believed were together; and had all things common.”*
- 4) Acts 4:32—*“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”*
- 5) Their commonness is what welded them together.

C. Learning to work together:

- 1) There were differences among the early Christians.
- 2) Yet, they accepted one another in spite of those differences.
- 3) Rom. 12:10—*“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.”*
- 4) They worked at being one....doing things together.
- 5) Eph. 4:3—*“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

D. Great Challenge:

- 1) Learning to cooperate with people you differ with!
- 2) People need to learn how to express their feelings & thoughts....
 - a) Without threatening others....
 - b) Or being threatened!
- 3) To respect & take each others' feelings & thinking into account.
- 4) To learn to accept conflict & disagreement as normal & inevitable.
- 5) And to find a way to go together in spite of such.
- 6) Early church faced problems...solved Quickly, Intelligently, Justly (Acts 6)

III. INTIMACY**A. Close relationships come from opening up to one another.**

- 1) Willingness to reveal the **Real Me**, the **Inner Me** that few see!
- 2) Marriages do not succeed because of not **Opening Up** to one another!
- 3) There is an obvious danger:
 - a) If I open up, I may be hurt!
 - b) Intimacy is feared almost as much as it is desired.
 - c) 2 Cor. 12:15—*“And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.”*
 - d) But Paul didn't stop loving people or giving himself to them.
- 4) Not sharing one's self with others keeps a wall between the two.

B. Illustrating Levels of Intimacy:

- 1) **Lowest Level**---Talk about facts, general information.
- 2) **Fair Level**---Talk about ideas of others.
- 3) **Moderate Level**---Talk about own ideas & opinions.
- 4) **High Level**---Talk about personal information about self.
- 5) **Highest Level**---Talk about your feelings about each other.

C. Biblical Illustration:

- 1) Look at Jesus' relationship with His apostles...how it developed.
- 2) Towards the end of His public ministry:
 - a) John 15:15—*“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”*
 - b) Key words:
 1. Servant does not know....no intimacy.
 2. But a friend knows....he is told everything.
 - c) Jas. 5:16—*“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed...”*
 1. You don't do this with just anybody!
 2. It needs to be someone you trust...feel open to.
 3. Someone that we can share feelings with in a relationship of trust.

IV. EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**A. Especially needed when we are hurting.**

- 1) Lack of emotional support is a major cause of broken relationship.
- 2) We need someone:
 - a) Who will listen, understand, and show they care.
 - b) Who will encourage and protect...especially when we feel vulnerable.
- 3) We never grow too old to need this!
- 4) Marriage & Family is one of the greatest places to find this emotional support.
- 5) And so should also the church!

B. This support is not:

- 1) Trying to solve the other person's problems for them.
- 2) Not telling the person what to do.
- 3) Not casting reflection upon their intelligence or competence.

C. We are naturally drawn to those who supply this emotional support.

- 1) Illustrate:
 - a) Unfaithfulness to a marriage mate often comes because of this.
 - b) Cannot find the emotional support in the relationship.
 - c) So...look elsewhere for it.
 - d) Sexual infidelity may be more of an incidental than intended.

- 2) Phrases used to justify this infidelity to a mate:
 - a) *“She really understands me.”*
 - b) *“He took time to listen to me.”*
 - c) *“He is the first person who ever understood how I feel.”*
- 3) Emotional support is a strong need in all of us.

D. Emphasis of Scripture:

- 1) Gal. 6:2—*“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ.”*
- 2) Rom. 12:15—*“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”*
- 3) We all have responsibility to stand on our own two feet in life.
- 4) Yet, none of us can successfully make it without other’s help.

E. One of the great values of the church:

- 1) It functions as a body....for the good of its members.
- 2) Eph. 4:16—*“The whole body is joined and help together with each joint that helps it. It grows with love and builds itself up. Each part does its job.”*
- 3) 1 Cor. 12:25—*“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”*

CONCLUSION

1. Relationships are built with: **Compatibility, Cooperation, Intimacy, and Emotional Support.**
2. **Questions:**
 - a) Do we really want good relationships with others?
 - b) Are we willing to give of ourselves to help make it work?
 - c) Am I willing to stop blaming, fighting, withdrawing from others?
 - d) Am I willing to be supporting and cooperative?
3. The greatest relationship of life is with God & His Son.....
4. What are you doing about such?

Lesson Three

“HANDLING DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIPS”

(Matt. 5:38-48)

INTRODUCTION

1. Associating with people brings its joys & CHALLENGES too!
 - a) Sooner or later we run into people who are: Abusive, Mistreat Others, Are Unfair in Their Dealings.
 - b) What do you do....
 1. When someone lies about you?
 2. When someone undermines you before others?
 3. When you run into a rough person who doesn't care what he say, nor to whom he says it?
 4. That treats you in a humiliating way or derides you?
 - c) If left to natural uncontrolled reactions:
 1. We all know what we would like to do!
 2. We would retaliate...hit back...even with force or cruelty.
 3. Many, many people do live this way!
 - d) But it is also obvious:
 1. That their relationships are shot!
 2. The condition is worsened by their rough actions.
 3. The injuries are compounded.
 4. And we are not the better for it.
5. Jesus taught & showed us a better way to handle difficult relationships.
 - a) Matt. 5:38-48
 - b) He describes the kind of wrongs to illustrate his point:
 1. It may be physical injury to your person! “...*If he strikes you on the right cheek.*” (v. 39)
 2. It may be property injury. “...*take away thy coat.*” (v. 40)
 3. It may be outrage against your liberty! “...*if he shall compel thee to go a mile.*” (v. 41)
 4. It may be outrage against your person! “...*curse you, despitefully use you.*” (v. 44)
 - c) Jesus says:
 1. “*turn the other cheek.*”
 2. “*let him have your cloak also.*”
 3. “*go with him two miles.*”
 4. “*bless, do good to, and pray for them.*”
 - d) What is Jesus trying to tell us?
 1. Obvious...He is giving a principle by which to govern our lives.
 2. Deals with problem of Retaliation, Revenge, Getting Even.

3. It is not dealing with our defense of others, but of ourselves!
4. What we are to do when WE face a difficult relationship situation.

DISCUSSION

I. A CLOSER LOOK AT THE PRINCIPLE!

A. Background:

- 1) Mosaic Law enjoined fairness & justice among the people.
- 2) The Ruler, Magistrate, Judge was to render Justice fairly.
 - a) Not a life for an eye;
 - b) Not an eye for a life;
 - c) But rather...an eye for an eye; a life for a life!
- 3) In view of the harshness of men of that time, this was mild & fair.
 - a) Often, would get killed for any wrong.
 - b) If rich or powerful, get away with murder, no punishment.
 - c) Greatest unfairness was to the poor.
- 4) What Jesus is here giving does not invalidate the Law of fairness & justice, nor our civil courts of today!
 - a) He was teaching against individual Revenge, Retaliation.
 - b) Private Vengeance was not to characterize God's people.
- 5) His teachings here must be understood in the light of:
 - a) His own examples among men;
 - b) The approved examples of other godly men & women;
 - c) Other passages that deal in same area...that could modify our understanding to some degree!

B. It is obvious what Jesus is teaching is not easy, but necessary!

- 1) Because of man's tendency to:
 - a) Push for his rights;
 - b) Set the record straight;
 - c) Show that person, he can't get by mistreating me!
- 2) We need Jesus' help to deal with difficult situations.
- 3) That is the reason why God has placed His Spirit in us.
 - a) To help us realize our higher calling;
 - b) To imitate Deity, not our fellow-sinners;
 - c) To rise above the carnal level of life...to the Spiritual plane;
 - d) To give sufficient instructions to help us understand our responsibility.

II. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN "TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK?"

A. We must realize the reality of unfairness in this world!

- 1) Most people:
 - a) Are out to protect their own interests;
 - b) They think of themselves first;

- c) They will react to any threat to this!
- 2) We start as little children saying: “*It is not fair.*”
 - a) And, we can still say it as Adults, with full conviction.
 - b) We all want to be treated fairly!
 - c) But...it just doesn't happen that way all the time.
 - d) Ours is an UNFAIR, UNJUST world!
 - e) We will be misunderstood intentionally.
 - f) People will take out their anger & frustration on us.
 - g) Will say & do unfair and untrue things about and to us.
- 3) How do we turn the other cheek?
 - a) Do we sit around feeling sorry for ourselves?
 - b) Do we react against their abuse?
 - c) Or, do we accept the reality of unfairness as a part of life?
 - d) Do we accept the reality & REJOICE!
 - e) Matt. 5:10-12

B. The Christian must not retaliate!

- 1) To do so:
 - a) Is to become like the one who has done us harm.
 - b) Revenge can have very destructive factors for our lives.
 - c) It can become an all-consuming desire.
- 2) We are warned against such. (Rom. 12:17, 19)
- 3) We have a great example in Stephen. (Acts 7:54, 57-58, 60)
 - a) Stephen was full of faith, wisdom, and the Holy Spirit.

C. We must get our feelings under the control of the Direction of God.

- 1) It hurts to be abused!
- 2) So, we must guard against allowing these hurt feelings to become ill feelings.
- 3) Heb. 12:15—“*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness spring up and trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.*”
- 4) Negative feelings will take control of our lives, if not dealt with!
- 5) Self-control is a Christian virtue that is a necessity in our lives.
- 6) Stephen had brought his spirit under the control of God's Spirit.

D. Turning the other cheek involves positive action!

- 1) Jesus spelled it out in Matt. 5:38-48:
 - a) “*Let him have your cloak.*”
 - b) “*Go with him two miles.*”
 - c) “*Give and Loan to him that asks.*”
 - d) “*Bless, do good to, pray for, love.*”
 - e) “*Overcome evil by doing good.*”
- 2) The quicker the positive action, the better.
 - a) Better for me.
 - b) Better for relationships with other persons.

- c) Gets me out of the negative outlook.
- 3) It is doing good to people who do not deserve it!

CONCLUSION

1. We need to MASTER the art of turning the other cheek!
2. Jesus set the perfect example:
 - a) No one was treated more unjustly than He;
 - b) He was a victim of cruel emotional insults;
 - c) Rejected by his own people that He came to help;
 - d) Lied against by the religious leaders;
 - e) Betrayed by one of his own disciples
 - f) Mistreated & misunderstood by his own family
 - g) Blasphemed, ridiculed, laughed at, scorned;
 - h) Unjustly tried, convicted falsely, and put to death cruelly for something he was not guilty of.
3. And Yet... ***"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."*** (1 Pet. 2:23)
 - a) Not once did he react to unjust treatment with wrong actions.
 - b) Not once did he strike back in Vengeance.
 - c) He exercised enormous self-control and inner strength and love.
4. We need this example to help us deal with Difficult Relationships in life.
5. A great relationship is with God....Why not come into this relationship?

Lesson Four

“MAKING MYSELF EASIER TO LIVE WITH”

(Isa. 55:6-11)

INTRODUCTION

1. Questions:
 - a) Are we easy to live with?
 - b) Do we rub our children, wife or husband, or friends the wrong way?
 - c) Would we mind our wife or husband answering that question publicly?
 - 1) If so, maybe we need to get a little more concerned about our relationships with others.
 - 2) Maybe there are some changes that need to take place in our life.
2. If changes are to be made....Must take place first in the heart!
 - a) Our thinking needs to be changed!
 - 1) Rom. 12:2—***“And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”***
 - b) Isa. 55:7-9
 - 1) Outer change is dependent upon inner change.
 - A) Wrong thoughts keep us in sin.
 - B) Negative thoughts keep us from accomplishing our goals.
 - C) Thoughts stir the emotions.
 - D) Emotions stir the Will.
 - E) The Will moves the body into action.
 - 2) God wants to help us make those changes for the better.
 - A) He wants to control our thinking.
 - B) He thinks He can do a better job than we can...HOW ABOUT THAT!!
 - C) He wants to exchange our thoughts for His.
 - 3) Whoever controls our thinking, controls us!
 - A) Acts 6:5—***“...and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.”***
 - B) Who was controlling Stephen’s thinking?
 - C) If God is in control:
 - 1—He will determine our character;
 - 2—He will shape, condition, and affect our Destiny.
3. We believe it is obvious:
 - a) Greater Relationships are made possible by making ourselves easier to live with.
 - b) Which calls for changes in our thinking.
4. Want to look at 4 Scriptures that will help make us easier to live with.

DISCUSSION**I. LUKE 9:51-56****A. James & John took offense quickly at their rejection.**

- 1) Even asked the Lord about calling fire down from heaven to consume them.
- 2) Can see animosity, open hostility from James & John.
- 3) The Lord rebuked them---wrong spirit towards people.

B. The Lord wants to re-program our thinking, our emotional reactions to certain words & actions.

- 1) Not to be touchy!
- 2) Not to “wear our feelings on our sleeves.”
- 3) Not to make “mountains out of molehills.”
- 4) Not to be easily set off with any little thing.
- 5) Even... *“Love your enemy, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you...”*
(Matt. 5:44)
- 6) Not easily offended.

II. MATTHEW 7:1-5**A. Jesus is saying, “Don’t be so picky, harsh, critical, judgmental.”**

- 1) Don’t be a chronic complainer!
- 2) Don’t think that no one can do anything right!
- 3) When around such a person:
 - a) Everyone is in fear of being rebuked for any imperfection.
 - b) Or be judged too harshly.

B. We can be so much easier to live with if:

- 1) We have a positive outlook, instead of a negative one;
- 2) We build people up, not tear them down.
- 3) The Harsh, Critical Person becomes very hard to live with!

C. John 21:20-22

- 1) Jesus was trying to help Peter get his thinking on straight.
- 2) He was too concerned about others and what they were doing.
- 3) After telling him his fate, Peter asked about John’s fate.
- 4) Jesus’ answer: *“What is that to you, follow me.”*
- 5) We need to keep our eyes on ourselves, how we should live.
- 6) I will not give an account for anyone else but myself.
- 7) So, get off the Judgment Seat....and get on the Mercy Seat and live relaxed.
- 8) Jas. 4:12—*“There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?”*

II. EPHESIANS 4:2**A. We need to be more tolerant of people....especially close ones!**

- 1) *“Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowances for each other’s faults because of your love.”*
- 2) If people did not overlook my faults, I wouldn’t last long.
- 3) My wife would never have stayed with me this long.

B. The way we make allowances for others is to look at ourselves.

- 1) We have faults too....we need other’s patience & longsuffering.
- 2) So, we should extend such to them.
- 3) Our parents often exemplify this concept so vividly.
 - a) One reason we love to go home....
 - b) To be among those who make allowances for our weaknesses & still love us in spite of them.
 - c) Why can’t we do that with others as well?

IV. ACTS 15:36-41**A. Background:**

- 1) Paul & Barnabas had already made one missionary journey—short.
- 2) On 2nd journey, went further, took others.
- 3) John Mark had been on the first one, but had turned back.
- 4) This was disappointing to Paul....
- 5) As they were getting ready for the 2nd journey, Barnabas wanted to take Mark again.
- 6) Paul didn’t.
- 7) Sharp contention....they went their separate ways.
- 8) Paul evidently didn’t handle this situation too well.
- 9) Later, he was proven wrong in his evaluation of John Mark.
- 10) And admits it.
- 11) 2 Tim. 4:11—*“Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”*

B. Illustration:

- 1) Teacher asked students...*“Why did the Puritans come to this country?”*
- 2) Reply: *“To worship in their own way & make other people do the same.”*
- 3) Do we want our freedom, but tend to not let others have their’s.

C. We can make ourselves easier to live with by granting to others the right to their opinions.

- 1) Stop arguing with people.
- 2) Stop trying to get people to agree with your opinion.
- 3) Give them Dignity...Allow them their viewpoint.
- 4) When disagree....do so agreeably....leaving their feelings intact.
- 5) If you express your opinion...let others do the same!

- 6) Recognize rights of others.

CONCLUSION

1. Close relationships can be made thru effort.
2. Easier relationships are possible when I make myself easier to live with....by letting God be in control in my life.
3. Have you surrendered to God, yet?

Lesson Five

“POSITIVE STEPS TO DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS”

(Job 19:13-20)

INTRODUCTION

1. Verse 19—***“All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me.”***
 - a) The NEB says: ***“My intimate companions”***
 - b) What a disappointment!
 - c) When your closest relationships of life turn on you!
 - d) Job knew the meaning of LONELINESS!
2. Dr. James J. Lynch states in his book on ***“Mental Health”***:
 - a) ***“Loneliness is the number one cause of illness and death in America.”***
 - b) ***“Lonely people are not only unhappier,...but they die sooner than those who enjoy warm relationships.”***
3. Eccl. 4:9-10—***“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.”***
 - a) It would seem obvious....the cure for LONELINESS is close, meaningful relationships.
 - b) We need each other in so many ways.
 - c) But especially do we need such in times of crisis like Job.
4. Jesus seems to have had at least 3 basic circles of relationships:
 - a) He made an impact upon a large number of people...but only a portion became real followers.
 - 1) The Bible speaks of the 70 that Jesus sent out.
 - 2) Speaks also of the 120 in the upper room waiting for the beginning of the kingdom.
 - b) We are all much aware that out of this larger group, He chose a smaller group of 12 men, called apostles.
 - 1) He spent much time with them.
 - c) But even among these 12....there were some who seemed to have been a more intimate circle.
 - 1) Peter, James, John
 - 2) Even Mary, Martha, & Lazarus from the larger group.
 - 3) John 11:5—***“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”***
5. Today, these same 3 circles seem to characterize our relationships.
 - a) There is the broad general group of casual relationships.
 - 1) In the church and out.
 - 2) Relatives.
 - 3) School-mates, neighbors, etc.
 - b) Then, Out of the larger group, there is a closer group that we spend more time with and share more with.

- c) Some even have that 3rd circle of close, intimate relationships because they are willing to share their inmost thoughts with each other.
- 6. All degrees of Relationships take time and effort.
 - a) Probably the close intimate circle is the hardest to make & keep.
 - b) Such relationships cannot be made or maintain out of neglect, lack of nurture and cultivation.
- 7. Look at 3 things that help to deepen Relationships.

DISCUSSION

I. NEED TO BE A FRIEND!

A. Prov. 18:24—*“A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”*

- 1) Some doubt the first part of verse being correctly translated.
- 2) And yet, the truthfulness of the statement seems to be obvious.
- 3) If we are to have friends, we have to be one.
- 4) Illustration:
 - a) Get within short distance of a dog....his tail begins to wag.
 - b) If you pet him, he almost jumps out of his skin to show you how much he wants to be your friend.
- 5) Close relationships must be wanted & sought.
- 6) Must be more interested in them than others.

B. Prov. 19:6—*“Many curry favor with the great; a lavish giver has the world for his friend.”*

- 1) Difference needs to be made between:
 - a) Truly giving....to be a real friend to others;
 - b) Or, trying to buy friendship.
- 2) John 15:13—*“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.”*
- 3) Prov. 17:17—*“A friend is a loving companion at all times, and a brother is born to share troubles.”*
- 4) Prov. 18:24—*“...but a friend stick closer than a brother.”*
- 5) Sayings:
 - a) *“Close relationships are seen when all others forsake you, but that one.”*
 - b) *“A close relationship is like toothpaste. It comes thru the tight squeeze.”*
- 6) Loyalty is the key word!

C. The truly close friend is more of a giver, than a taker.

- 1) Close relationships depends upon our willingness to give of SELF, TIME, ENERGY.
- 2) Illustration:
 - a) Marriage is falling apart.
 - b) Key factor....each one is trying to get, not give to the other.
- 3) Phil. 2:4—*“Look to each others’ interest, not merely your own.”*

- 4) Rom. 15:2—*“Each of us must consider his neighbor and think what is for his good and will build up the common life.”*

II. BE YOURSELF!

A. Prov. 27:5-6—*“Open reproof is better than love concealed. The blows a friend gives are well meant, but the kisses of an enemy are perfidious (deceitful).”*

- 1) Intimacy can only come when we open ourselves up to others.
- 2) To let others see us like we really are.
- 3) To be willing for a person to see us and rebuke us...for our good.

B. We have a tendency to hide ourselves from 3 classes of people:

- 1) Those who might use our secrets to hurt us;
- 2) Those who are unworthy of our self-revelation;
- 3) Those we do not know well enough to take off our masks and disclose our real selves unto.

C. We can only get real close to those who will allow it.

- 1) Who take off the mask.
- 2) Who share their true selves.
- 3) People can only really know us to the extent we allow it.
- 4) Without unmasking, no close relationships are possible.

III. LET THEM BE THEMSELVES!

A. Marriages often fail because:

- 1) We are unwilling to love people for who they are;
- 2) We will not allow them to be themselves.

B. Matt. 11:19—*“The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.”*

- 1) How could the Holy, Righteous Son of God be a friend of Publicans and Sinners?
- 2) It is obvious:
 - a) He accepted them where they were...as they were!
 - b) He offered a relationship with them.
 - c) They quickly became followers of Jesus.
- 3) Non-judgmental acceptance is a priceless gift of any close relationship.

C. John 13:9-11

- 1) Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples on the night of His betrayal.
- 2) He got up and washed all of their feet.
- 3) Peter objected at first, gave in, and said: *“All of me.”*
- 4) But Jesus even washed Judas' feet:
 - a) Loved him in spite of what he was going to do.
 - b) Allowed him to make his choice.
 - c) Still willing to be his friend, if he so desired.

D. Job 42:10—“*And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.*”

- 1) They had turned their backs on him from his view point.
- 2) But he still accepted them....prayed for them!

CONCLUSION

1. Jesus invites us to come into a relationship with Him & the Father.
2. He has done all He can to be our friend....It is now up to us!
3. 2 John 9

Lesson Six

“THE WAY TO LASTING RELATIONSHIPS”

(Matthew 2:12-17)

INTRODUCTION

1. The death of someone close to us will take its toll!
 - a) These women lamented, wept, greatly mourned....
 - b) And they could not be comforted.
 - c) But, our sorrow is really for ourselves!
 - d) And the loss will take time to heal.
2. But other things besides death can sever our RELATIONSHIPS!
 - a) Homes breakup....with hurt and a vacuum left.
 - b) Even in the church....often hear of close relationships being broken up.
 - c) You are fortunate if you have never lost a close relationship.
3. Some of these losses we can have no control over.
4. But there are others we can do something about....If we care enough!
5. This lesson:
 - a) Look at 4 Scriptures that will help us have lasting relationships.
 - b) And to have them in spite of conflicts & problems.

DISCUSSION**I. MATTHEW 5:9—“*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*”****A. Not everyone is a peacemaker!**

- 1) Some people are:
 - a) Troublemakers;
 - b) Instigators of conflict;
 - c) Divisive in attitude & action;
 - d) They cause turmoil among people.
- 2) Tit. 3:9-10—“*Keep away from foolish arguments, lists of ancestors, and dissensions and strife over the Law; for they settle nothing and lead nowhere. If a man is causing divisions among you, after warning him once or twice, have nothing more to say to him, knowing that such a man has forsaken the truth, and stands self-condemned in his sin.*”

B. Jesus wants us to be peaceable, peace-seekers with others.

- 1) When conflict, misunderstandings, or hard feelings are aroused:
 - a) We act, take the initiative, to help make for peace!
 - b) God wants us to be reconcilers. (2 Cor. 5:18-20)
- 2) Peacemakers will pay the cost for peace!
 - a) If it requires humility, they will be humble.
 - b) If it requires strong action, they will do so in love.

- c) If it means going the 2nd mile, they will do that.(Matt. 5:41)
- 3) It is the peacemakers that:
 - a) Help to mend relationships;
 - b) Help them to endure & deepen for others;
 - c) As well as for themselves.

II. **EPHESIANS 4:26**—“*You are allowed to become angry, but don’t sin. And don’t let any day end without getting rid of your angry feelings.*”

A. **Unresolved anger can be dangerous to:**

- 1) Our health (physically & emotionally);
- 2) Our souls (spiritual relationship with God);
- 3) And it can be devastating to relationships with people.

B. **Illustration:**

- 1) Little Boy: “*What do you think of this devil business?*”
- 2) Little Girl: “*I believe it’s just like Santa Claus: it’s our Dad!*”
- 3) We tend to laugh at such....
 - a) But what could this reveal?
 - b) Is it possible she has a problem unresolved with her dad?
 - c) If so, unattended to, it could cause damage in her life later.

C. **Anger is a part of being human & living among humans.**

- 1) It often comes unexpectedly.
- 2) But, we must learn to deal with anger if we hope to keep relationships.
- 3) Quote: “*Anger is like a hot potato: If you don’t deal with it quickly, it burns you in your relationships.*”
- 4) If handled correctly, the relationship can often be saved.
- 5) However, UNRESOLVED, it can fester, grow, and be damaging!

D. **Illustration:**

- 1) A teen-age girl was visiting with her grandmother for several days.
- 2) One night she went out without telling anyone where she was.
- 3) Her grandmother’s reaction alarmed her..... not pleasant.
- 4) The grandmother tried to analyze why she reacted so strongly.
- 5) It was because of several incidences before this that had not been dealt with.
 - a) They were bottling up inside of her.
 - b) This minor incident was the “straw” that caused it to break.
- 6) She went to her granddaughter’s room:
 - a) Told her what she had seen about herself....was wrong.
 - b) Apologized, and asked for forgiveness.
 - c) The granddaughter saw her thoughtlessness & apologized.
- 7) The relationship was cemented & deepened.

E. **Anger must be dealt with, not allowing it to build up.**

- 1) Need to talk out the things that irritate & upset us, so they won’t build up.

- 2) Need to deal with what caused the anger.

III. MATTHEW 18:15—“If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

A. We must care enough to confront!

- 1) How can the other person ever know, if not told?
- 2) He can know of his offense by my straight forward communicating of the fact.
- 3) Only by doing so can relationships endure, last, and deepen.

B. But this communicating needs to be done out of a heart of love!

- 1) Eph. 4:15—“*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.*”
- 2) It takes the combination... Truth in love.
- 3) Every enduring relationship has to have both!

C. To speak the truth in love helps in several ways:

- 1) It keeps conflicts under control;
- 2) It keeps down open hostility;
- 3) It allows you to speak openly & honestly your own ideas & feelings without hurting others;
- 4) It helps you to be sensitive to the other person’s feelings;
- 5) It helps to heal the wounds and builds up the other person.
- 6) It causes us to examine our motives.
- 7) It keeps us from being Harsh, Rude, and Crude towards others.

D. Going to the other person with the right spirit....will probably end up in gaining a brother.

IV. HEBREW 12:15—“Watch out that no bitterness takes root among you, for as it springs up it causes deep trouble...”

A. Harboring resentment & bitterness will help destroy us & Relationships!

- 1) It causes deep trouble.
- 2) Illustration:
 - a) Couple been married 32 years.
 - b) Should have been happiest years of their lives, but they were miserable.
 - c) He had allowed himself to get caught up in an affair.
 - d) She wouldn’t forgive him, and her hate to festered on & on.
 - e) She stated: “*I would rather rot in hell and see him dead before I would forgive him for what he’s done to me.*”
 - f) She was warned:
 - A) Unless you deal with this bitterness of spirit.....
 - B) It will destroy both yourself & your husband.
 - g) She never forgave him!
 - A) He died year’s later...from a heart that just gave out.
 - B) She remained with an unbearable load of guilt mixed with hate.

- h) How different their relationship could have been if she could have seen the value of forgiveness!

B. Scriptures:

- 1) Matt. 6:12—*“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*
- 2) Matt. 18:21-22—*“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven.”*

C. Forgiveness helps to rebuild relationships...to make them lasting!

- 1) It not only helps the person who needs to be forgiven....
- 2) But, it helps the person doing the forgiving.
 - a) It Avoids possibly ulcers, colitis, high blood pressure, etc.
 - b) Keeps our relationship with God in-tact.
 - A) Matt. 6:14—*“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”*
 - c) But we get what we give!
 - A) Luke 6:37—*“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged.”*
 - d) Forgiveness sets me free also!
- 3) Illustration:
 - a) A beautiful daughter was raped, stabbed & left to die.
 - b) The man was found, tried, convicted, sent to prison.
 - c) But the mother held such feelings of hate & bitterness that she withdrew within herself for 2 years.
 - d) Finally, she realized she had to deal with herself.
 - e) She went to a religious service and heard a man speak about working with prisoners.
 - A) He told how he gave them Bibles.
 - B) Told them how God had given his Son to die so they could be set free from their sins.
 - C) How they needed forgiveness for the wrongs they had committed, just like all the rest of us.
 - f) The thought struck home to her heart!
 - A) She had seen the way to deal with her bitterness.
 - B) She sent a Bible to the man who had killed her daughter.
 - C) She wrote in it a note: *“Because Jesus has forgiven me, so I forgive you; and because Jesus said to love one another, so I love you in spite of what you did to my daughter.”* (Signed her name)
 - g) When she got home that day:
 - A) She fell across the bed & sob & cry for a long time.
 - B) She now realized a great truth:
 - 1—By her willingness to forgive....
 - 2—She had been set free of her bitterness of soul.

CONCLUSION

1. Christ has shown us the way to:
 - a) Joy & fulfillment;
 - b) How to bless others;
 - c) And how to build lasting relationships.
 - d) Relationships are built & sustained by:
 - 1—Being a peacemaker;
 - 2—Dealing with anger correctly;
 - 3—Confronting others with truth in love;
 - 4—Dealing with ill-will by forgiveness.
2. Are we building lasting relationships?
3. What about my relationship to God?

Lesson Seven

“IMPROVING MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD”

(Psalms 42:1-5)

INTRODUCTION

1. Men seek many things: MONEY, FAME, FORTUNE, POWER, SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE, THE GOOD LIFE, ETC.
2. But not many men really seek after God...to form a relationship with Him!
3. Yet...there are those, like the Psalmists, that realize their need of God!
 - a) The Psalmists saw a desperate need of God in his life.
 - b) Ps. 42:1-3
 - c) What a vivid way of describing one's need for God.
 - d) The satisfaction to be found in Him.
4. Shouldn't all men seek after God...to be in perfect relationship with Him?

DISCUSSION**I. WHY SEEK A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?****A. Because it is natural!**

- 1) He is: CREATOR; HEALER; SAVIOR; DELIVERER; ABLE TO BLESS, GUIDE, and SAVE man!
- 2) This Naturalness has been demonstrated among all peoples from the early beginnings of human history.

B. Because a man will be discontent until he does seek for & find God.

- 1) There is a certain discontent within man!
 - a) He is struggling for something beyond what he is.
 - b) A longing unfulfilled.
 - c) He can reach to the heights, and still be unsatisfied!
- 2) This is the unsatisfied human spirit thirsting for it's maker.
 - a) We want to know the ONE who made us.
 - b) To know Why He made us.
 - c) To know Why He set us here on this planet.
 - d) To know What He intends to do with us.
 - e) To know What He expects of us.
- 3) Jesus states that He can fully satisfy that thirst of man's spirit.
 - a) He offers the means of complete satisfaction.
 - b) John 7:37---“.....*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*”
 - c) John 4:13-14---“...*Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*”

- 4) Only the living God can satisfy the cravings of the Soul of man!
- a) Our hearts want rest...but it can only truly be found in God.
 - b) Matt. 11:28-29---“*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*”
 - c) Man may successfully suppress these feelings.
 - 1—But such numbness of feeling is not to be equated with satisfaction.
 - 2—Illustrate---
 - A—A man goes on a 10-day fast.
 - B—After 7 days he no longer wants food.
 - C—He is slowly starving to death.
 - D—So, it is spiritually!
 - E—We may trifle with the yearnings of our spirit until the yearning ceases!
 - F—And there will be the starving to death spiritually.
 - G—But the lack of satisfaction is still there.

C. Because He alone can help us escape the just penalty of our sin.

- 1) Isa. 55:6-7---“*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*”
- 2) Until we find God...we are under the curse of everlasting condemnation.
- 3) I Chron. 28:9---“*If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*”

II. HOW DO I IMPROVE MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

A. Once that I have found God:

- 1) How do I mature my relationship with God?
- 2) How do I deepen my feelings, faith, obedience to God?

B. Ist, I must WANT a deeper relationship with God!

- 1) God does not force Himself on me...I must want God in my life.
- 2) We need to ask some probing questions:
 - a) Is my relationship to God as meaningful as I would like?
 - b) Is my spiritual life lacking in Depth & Dedication?
 - c) Am I pleased with my rate of Spiritual Development?
 - d) Do I feel a need for RENEWAL in my Spiritual Life?
- 3) Sincerely asking such questions INDICATES my desire for such.
- 4) The self-righteous person:
 - a) Sees no need for such questions.

- b) I Cor. 10:13---“*Wherefore to him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.*”
 - c) Mark 13:15---“*Lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*”
 - d) The self-righteous see no need for improvement.
- 5) Spiritual Relationship with God can only be deepened where there is a felt need for such.

C. 2nd, I must continually deal with sin that would destroy this relationship.

1) Ps. 51:7-12

- a) David knew his sin had affected his relationship with God.
- b) He wanted it removed so his relationship could be restored.
- c) Listen to his petition again:
 - 1---Purge me with hyssop & I shall be clean;
 - 2---Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow;
 - 3---Hide your face from my sins;
 - 4---Blot out all mine iniquities;
 - 5---Create in me a clean heart;
 - 6---Renew a right spirit within me.
- d) But he also knew that sincere repentance was called for:
 - 1---Ps. 51:16-17—“*For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifice of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*”
 - 2---It is the realization of the terribleness of our sin before God.
 - 3---It is being truly sorry for offending God.
 - 4---II Cor. 7:10---“*For Godly sorrow worketh repentance...*”

- 2) Sins not dealt with properly (in God’s way) destroys our relationship with God.
Isa. 59:1-2

D. 3rd, I must make this the primary relationship of my life.

- 1) I can have other, meaningful, deep relationships in life with my **Mate, Parents, Children, Friends, Christians, etc.**
- 2) But, they must NOT challenge the primary place of God in my life.
 - a) Lk. 14:26---“*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciples.*”
 - b) Matt. 6:33
- 3) My relationship to God must be kept in 1st place.
- 4) There should never be a time that God could doubt my sincere desire to put Him first in my life!

E. 4th, I must engage in those activities that help to deepen relationships.

- 1) Closeness comes from intimacy!
 - a) Revealing of our inmost thoughts, desires, and aspirations.
 - b) But at the same time, our struggles, sufferings, sins, etc.
- 2) This is accomplished through Prayer to God constantly! Phil. 4:6-7
- 3) It is also accomplished thru our listening to Him in reading & studying of His Word.
 - a) II Pet. 3:18---“***But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ....***”
 - b) Jn. 17:3---“***And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.***”
- 4) And also accomplished by engaging in those activities that stabilize our Relationship with God:
 - a) Worship activities
 - b) Godly living
 - c) Doing good works, etc.
 - d) Those things that prove to God that He is 1st in my life.
 - e) And that I really want a close relationship.

CONCLUSION

1. We can have a deep relationship with God...if we desire it.
2. Jas. 4:8---“***Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.***”
3. Have you found God in your life?
4. And is that relationship deepening into a meaningful relationship with Him?

Lesson Eight

“THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD”

(1 Jn. 2:12-17)

INTRODUCTION

1. Unfortunately, there is a natural problem between the Christian and the world.
 - a) Jn. 17:14—***“I have given them your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”***
 - b) Jn. 15:18-19—***“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”***
2. How can Christians stop the world from hating us, ridiculing & persecuting us?
 - a) Very simple—the world loves its own.
 - b) Start believing like the world.
 - c) Start acting like the world.
 - d) Luke 6:26—***“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”***
3. How should a Christian look upon the world?

DISCUSSION**I. WE HAVE QUIT THE WORLD.*****A. 2 Cor. 6:17-18***

- 1) We can't go out of the world.....but:
 - a) We can forsake the world.
 - b) We can be a separate community—Gal. 3:26-27
 - c) We can try to completely separate ourselves from impurity!
- 2) Rom. 6:1-2
 - a) We have made the decision to die to sin.
 - b) We decide to return no more.
 - c) Israel had a hard time learning this lesson.
 - d) Num. 14:3-4—***“Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt? So they said to one another, Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.”***

B. We have quit the world to escape its punishment!

- 1) We flee....as Lot fled from Sodom & Gomorrha. (Gen. 19:17)
- 2) If we gain whole world and lose our soul...we lost all. (Matt. 16:26)

II. WE HAVE PUT OFF THE WAYS OF THE WORLD.***A. Rom. 12:1-2***

- 1) We no longer desire to walk in the vanity of our minds. (Eph. 4:17)
- 2) We have put away falsehood, wrath, stealing, corrupt speech, bitterness, envy, anger, clamor, railing, and malice. (Eph. 4:31)

- 3) The world wants to fashion us according to its ideas:
 - a) To refuse to train & discipline children.
 - b) To believe the home and family is not important.
 - c) That divorce for any reason is acceptable.
 - d) That women should not be in a submissive role.
 - e) That homosexuality is an acceptable way of life.
 - f) That man is saved by faith only.
 - g) To want a religion that makes me feel good.
 - h) That any church is acceptable, etc.

B. But, the Christian wants his mind to be fashioned by God!

III. WE HAVE DECIDED TO NO LONGER LOVE THE WORLD.

A. 1 John 2:15-17

- 1) We have realized:
 - a) We can't love God and the world.
 - b) A choice is called for.
- 2) That friendship with the world is enmity with God. (Jas. 4:4)

B. The reason why we do not love the world—it will perish!

- 1) 1 Jn. 2:17—***“The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.***

IV. WE HAVE DEDICATED OURSELVES TO THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD.

A. The world is lost and will perish!

- 1) We are under obligation to proclaim God's saving message to the world. (Mk. 16:15-16)
- 2) Col. 4:5-6—***“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”***
 - a) We realize the world is watching.
 - b) Many can be saved, and are saved by the lives we live.

C. We are to love the lost world, but not love their ungodly and unrighteous ways.

CONCLUSION

1. In summary:
 - a) We have quit the world.
 - b) We have put off the ways of the world.
 - c) We no longer love the world.
 - d) We have dedicated ourselves to the salvation of the world.
2. God has given all men the choice:
 - a) Become separated from the world;
 - b) Or, perish with the world!
3. What choice have you made?

Lesson Nine

“The Christian and His Government”

(Rom. 13:1-7)

INTRODUCTION

1. In 1958---A Presidential proclamation established Law Day as May 1st.
2. The purpose of such a Day:
 - a) To encourage respect for Law in our country.
 - b) To encourage the American people to greater appreciation of freedom.
 - c) To stress “Just Laws,” and “Just Administration” of Law.
 - d) To let the world know we are a country ruled by Law.
3. All Christians should be happy & grateful for such high purposes & aims.
4. But a more important question could be—What is my relationship to my Government?
 - a) What obligations and responsibilities do I owe my Government?
 - b) Am I to be totally removed from it?

DISCUSSION**I. WHAT SHOULD MY RELATIONSHIP BE TO MY GOVERNMENT?*****A. Be grateful for a government that has a regard for the Sovereignty of God and the rights of the individual.***

- 1) A regard for the Sovereignty of God.
 - a) Our laws are based upon the understanding that there is a higher Being to whom we are accountable.
 - b) The Apostles illustrated this concept.
 - Acts 4:19-20—***“Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge you. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”***
 - c) 1st Amendment to Constitution: *“Congress shall make no laws respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”*
 - d) As long as such is held to:
 - We shall enjoy religious liberty;
 - Have freedom to worship, assemble, propagate, and serve God without governmental interference or control.
 - e) Many nations do not have this right!
- 2) A regard for the rights of the Individual.
 - a) His rights and need to serve God above all else. (Matt. 6:33)
 - b) Recognition by the Courts of the Land.
 - c) Not to take away certain inalienable rights.
 - d) Not to allow our rights to take away another’s rights. (Matt. 7:12)

B. Be a Law-Abiding Citizen.

- 1) Because God has commanded it.

- a) Rom. 13:1—***“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”***
- b) 1 Pet. 3:14-15—***“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.”***
- 2) Because true freedom can only be had by Law-abiding people.
 - a) With rejection of Law comes chaos.
 - b) And then comes bondage.
- 3) Because to resist the government is to resist God.
 - a) Rom. 13:2—***“Whoever resists the power, resist the ordinance of God.”***
 - b) Because they are the servants of God. Rom. 13:3-4
 - c) Righteous people generally have no reason for fear.
- 4) Because we want to have a good conscience before God.
 - a) Rom. 13:5—***“Wherefore you must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.”***
 - b) Not only out of fear of punishment, but to keep our conscience clear.
 - c) This puts us on our honor.
 - d) It also shows honor and gratitude to those who have sacrificed so much to have the freedoms we enjoy.
- 5) Because it is the best way to put to silence false accusers. 1 Pet. 2:13-17

II. OUR CHALLENGE:

- A. We are to pay taxes to support the government. (Rom. 13:6-7)***
- B. To Pray for them. (1 Tim. 2:1-2)***
- C. Not to speak evil of such. (Jude 8-9)***
- D. To encourage them in the way of justice & righteousness.***

CONCLUSION

1. We live in a wonderful country.
2. We had better not take these advantages for granted.
3. Need to take full advantage of freedom of religion.
4. Let’s be law-abiding citizens and uphold Law and Order in our midst.

Lesson Ten

“THE CHRISTIAN AND THE CHURCH”

(Eph. 1:15-23)

INTRODUCTION

1. How do you view the Lord’s church?
 - a) Do you feel it is unimportant?
 - b) Is it something you can take or leave as you please?
 - c) Is it like a club that you can join or not join?
 - d) Is it just another denomination among denominations?
 - e) Can one accept Christ, but ignore the church?
2. What should be my relationship to the church?
3. How we view the church can help to determine our relationship to it.

DISCUSSION**I. HOW DOES GOD REGARD HIS CHURCH? (Eph. 1:15-23)*****A. He planned it before the world was made.***

- 1) Eph. 3:10-12
- 2) It took thousands of years for it to come into being.
- 3) But finally, men heard: **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”**

B. He purchased it at a great price!

- 1) Eph. 5:25—**“Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it.**
- 2) Acts 20:28—**“Church, which He purchased with His own blood.”**
- 3) No greater price has ever been paid for any institution.

C. It has an exalted head over it.

- 1) Eph. 1:20-23
- 2) No greater head than Jesus.
- 3) All things put under His Headship.

D. It is made up of Redeemed people.

- 1) Acts 2:38, 41, 47
- 2) The saved are constantly being added to this group of people.
- 3) Rom. 8:16-17

E. It is that body of people the Lord plans to come back for someday.

- 1) Eph. 5:25-27
- 2) Rev. 3:21—**“To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”**

II. WHAT SHOULD BE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE CHRISTIAN?***A. It provides a common body for the saved.***

- 1) Eph. 2:16—**“....might reconcile both unto God in one body.”**

B. It is a creation of a brotherhood of redeemed people.

1) Rom. 12:5—*“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”*

2) Matt. 23:8—*“But be not called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all of you are brethren.”*

C. It provides an atmosphere & fellowship where growth & edification can take place.

1) Eph. 4:11-15

2) Spiritual growth is imperative.

D. It provides a fellowship through whom God can work.

1) Phil. 2:13—*“For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”*

2) Eph. 2:10—*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”*

3) Provides a collective means of doing God’s Work.

E. Provides a fellowship through whom God can be glorified.

1) Eph. 3:21—*“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.”*

III. A PROPER VIEW OF THE CHURCH IS IMPORTANT!

A. A proper view:

1) The people God planned for before creation. (Eph. 3:10)

2) The people purchased by the blood of Jesus. (Acts 20:28)

3) The people God saved and redeemed to Himself. (Eph. 5:23)

4) The people Jesus is head over. (Col. 1:18)

5) The people that Jesus has promised to return for. (Eph. 5:27)

6) The people that carry out God’s work and thereby glorify Him. (Eph. 3:21)

B. A Proper view helps to bring about proper actions.

1) Helps us to put the church first. (Matt. 6:33)

2) Helps to set our affections on things above. (Col. 3:2)

3) Helps us to be submissive to the correct head. (Col. 1:18)

4) Helps us to do God’s work correctly. (1 Cor. 12:20)

C. Incorrect understanding:

1) Can lead to incorrect attitudes.

2) Cause a person to try to make the church something God never intended.

3) Corrupt the purpose of the church.

4) Have no desire to have a relationship to the church.

CONCLUSION

1. How correct is our view of the church?

2. How important is the church to each of us?

3. How grateful are we to be a part of the church of the Lord?

4. Would you turn your back on the church?

5. Are you a part of the church?

Lesson Eleven

“THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS NEIGHBOR”

(Matt. 22:34-40)

INTRODUCTION

1. Illustration:

- a) We lived on two acres in Berkeley Springs, WV.
- b) It had a lot of trees on the property—some very old.
- c) It also had a lot of sassafras trees.
- d) Its root system can literally break rocks into pieces.
- e) All it needs is a crevice in which to start.

2. Hate seems to have a similar potential!

- a) It has the same power to break into pieces.
- b) It can undermine business success.
- c) It can ruin one’s health.
- d) It can rob us of friends—leaving us lonely.
- e) It drives men to insanity.
- f) It makes murderers of people.
- g) It eats away the finest qualities of the soul.
- h) It shuts the doors of heaven against us.
- i) etc.

3. But by learning to LOVE:

- a) We escape the blight and terrible consequences of hate.
- b) And enter through a door to a brighter and better world.

4. No wonder Jesus stated that “Loving our Neighbor as our self” is the 2nd greatest commandment!

- a) The Jewish leaders had put emphasis upon such commands as:
 - 1) Law of the Sabbath
 - 2) Law of Circumcision
 - 3) Law of Wearing Phylacteries.
- b) The Talmud had listed 613 Laws in the Old Covenant.
 - 1) 365 negative laws.
 - 2) 248 affirmative laws.
- c) Jesus gave two that summed up all of those laws!
 - 1) If we love God and our neighbor.....
 - 2) We will fulfill the Law of God.

DISCUSSION**I. THE JEWS WERE NOT WITHOUT TEACHING ON LOVE*****A. Scriptures:***

- 1) Lev. 19:13—“*You shall not defraud your neighbor, nor rob him.*”
- 2) Lev. 19:17—“*You shall not hate your brother in your heart.*”
- 3) Lev. 19:16—“*You shall not go up and down as a talebearer among your people.*”
- 4) Lev. 19:15—“*You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment.*”

- 5) Lev. 19:18—***“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”***
- 6) Exo. 20:17—***“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house, wife, manservants, maidservants, ox, ass, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”***

B. Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan was a rebuke to the Jewish people.

- 1) The despised Samaritan loved his neighbor. (Lk. 10:25-37)
- 2) The Jew did not!
- 3) We must be sure that we love our neighbor.

II. WE ARE TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR AS OURSELVES!

A. To love ourselves is not condemned.....unless:

- 1) We love self to the exclusion of others!
- 2) When we love ourselves:
 - a) We take care of our body. (Eph. 5:28-29)
 - b) We uphold our good name. (Prov. 22:1)
 - c) We will not speak evil of self. (Eph. 5:28-29)
 - d) We see to the salvation of our soul. (Matt. 16:26)
 - e) etc.

B. How did the Samaritan show his love?

- 1) He lost time caring for the man.
- 2) He put himself to an inconvenience of walking.
- 3) He gave personal attention to the person in need.
- 4) He spent money on the unfortunate man.
- 5) He did not let society’s attitudes keep him from helping the needy.

C. How can we show our love?

- 1) Help supply his physical needs.
- 2) Uphold his good name—do nothing to hurt his standing.
- 3) Tit. 3:2—***“Speak evil of no man...”***
- 4) Be concerned about his salvation (teach him, persuade him, and point him to Christ & His Way).
- 5) If he strays—seek him out. (Gal. 6:1-2)
- 6) 1 Peter 2:17—***“Honor all men....”***
- 7) Respect their rights and their feelings.
- 8) Rom. 13:10—***“Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”***
- 9) Rom. 15:2—***“Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.”***
- 10) Eph. 4:25—***“....speak every man truth with his neighbor...”***

III. JESUS’ CONDEMNATION OF THE LACK OF LOVE!

A. Some of Jesus strongest teachings were about those who neglected their neighbor!

- 1) The Good Samaritan. (Lk. 10:25-37)
- 2) The Rich man & Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31)
 - a) Poor Lazarus at his gates begging.
 - b) Turned him away.
 - c) Wound up in Torments.

- 3) The Rich Fool. (Lk. 12:15-21)
 - a) Hoarding it all for himself.
 - b) He was not rich towards God.
- 4) Matt. 25:41-46

CONCLUSION

1. Three attitudes illustrated in the story of the Good Samaritan:
 - a) The robber saw in the man someone to exploit.
 - b) The priest & Levite saw in the man someone to Ignore—avoid.
 - c) The Samaritan saw in the man someone to serve.
2. What is our relationship to our neighbor?
3. Our relationship to God depends upon our:
 - a) Loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength;
 - b) And loving our neighbor as our self.

Lesson Twelve

“THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS BROTHER”

(John 13:31-35)

INTRODUCTION

1. John 13:34—*“A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”*
 - a) Jesus spoke these words on the eve of His great sacrifice.
 - b) It cost Jesus His life to practice what He preached!
2. This new command was to become the central principle of a New System.
 - a) It was to regulate the relationship between brothers & sisters in Christ.
 - b) Its importance is stressed throughout the N.T.

DISCUSSION**I. REASONS FOR HAVING THIS LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER:*****A. Because Jesus commanded it. (Jn. 13:34)***

- 1) He not only commanded it, but exemplified it.
- 2) Jn. 15:13--*“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”*

B. Because such determines if we are a true disciple of Jesus.

- 1) John 13:35—*“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples.”*
- 2) If they can know—then we can know also.
- 3) Love to one another is:
 - a) The greatest argument to convince the world;
 - b) Proof of my own discipleship;
 - c) Proof that is recognized by my fellow-Christians, as well.
- 4) Not to be known by:
 - a) Peculiar manner of dress;
 - b) Peculiar customs held to;
 - c) Peculiar speech;
 - d) But, by love for one another.
- 5) Quotations from writers of 1st century:
 - a) *“See how they love one another! They are ready to lay down their lives for each other!”*
 - b) *“Their master makes them believe they are brothers.”*
 - c) *“They love before they know each other.”*

C. Because such determines if we truly love God.

- 1) 1 Jn. 4:20—*“If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”*
- 2) Love of God does not exist where hatred of brother exist!
- 3) Love of brethren is a test of our love for God.

D. Because such determines if we have passed from death unto life.

- 1) 1 Jn. 3:14—*“We know that we have passed from death unto life,*

because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death.”

- 2) Death to life is the conversion process.
- 3) It is a change of heart—repentance that leads to obedience.
- 4) It is a change of relationship—new creature in Christ.
- 5) We walk in a new kind of life after Christ.
- 6) What is our surety that this has taken place? (IF WE LOVE OUR BRETHREN!)

E. The necessity of love for our brethren should be obvious!

- 1) This is not just a game we are playing.
- 2) This is for real...high stakes are involved—for eternity.
- 3) It is not optional, nor idyllic.
- 4) It is practical, workable, possible, and necessary!

II. WAYS TO EXPRESS THIS LOVE!

- A. *John 15:13—“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”*
- B. *Rom. 15:7—“Wherefore receive one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.”*
- C. *Rom. 15:2—“Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.”*
- D. *Rom. 15:14—“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.”*
- E. *Heb. 3:13—“But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”*
- F. *Heb. 10:24—And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.”*
- G. *Phil. 2:3—“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”*
- H. *Gal. 5:13—“For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”*
- I. *1 Thess. 5:14—“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.”*
- J. *1 Thess. 5:13—“And be at peace among yourselves.”*
- K. *1 Jn. 3:17-18—“But whoso hath this world’s goods, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”*

III. WHEN TRUE LOVE IS PRESENT:

- A. *Brethren will not bite and devour one another—not fuss, fight, argue!*
- B. *Will put an end to envy, jealousy, vain ambition, bitterness.*
- C. *Will produce peace, harmony, contentment, order & beauty in church.*
- D. *Will humble the haughty spirits....bring to repentance.*
- E. *Unity will come and stay among brethren.*
- F. *Will always be willing to forgive.*
- G. *Hypocritical love will cease.*
- H. *Will prefer one another.*

CONCLUSION

1. Who wouldn't want to belong to such a fellowship!
2. How beautiful for brethren to dwell together in true love.
3. The world will be attracted by it.
4. What is our relationship to our brother?

