

# Building Healthy Relationships

---

As a new Believer in Christ, you can have a huge impact on the relationships that exist around you. The transformation in your attitude and behaviour that inevitably occurs is going to make a profound statement! You could be the key to opening up someone's heart to Christ and ultimately put them on the path to the Saviour. Not only that, but conducting yourself in a godly manner within all your relationships expresses a real gratitude to Jesus Christ and is in fact a reflection of God Himself!

So, how do we go about conducting ourselves in an impacting manner that glorifies (manifests the characteristics of) God? Under the guidance of God's Word, let's explore four of the primary areas in our lives where we encounter key relationships:

## STANDING OUT IN THE HOME:

### **The Child** → **Parent Relationship:**

Ephesians 6:1-3      *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother" - which is the first commandment with a promise - "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*

Obedying this command is absolutely imperative if we want to bring glory and honour to Christ. Please note that it DOESN'T say "Obey your parents, but only if they treat you right". No. We must obey our parents regardless of their conduct towards us. They may be harsh and unloving, mentally unstable, or even drunkards, but we must show them respect and obedience because this is the RIGHT thing to do. Now obviously, if they command us to do something that goes against the Scriptures and God's basic laws for mankind, then that is where we would respectfully decline and subsequently share the reason for it. We should then willingly accept any consequences resulting from our stand.

Even if our obedience seems unappreciated and difficult to put into practice at times, it WILL be noticed by God and we will be blessed for it. And regardless of your situation, your godly conduct towards your parents will sow gospel seeds in their hearts and minds that may eventually reap a harvest in due course.

### **The Parent** → **Child Relationship:**

Colossians 3:21      *Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*

In the same way, if you are a new Christian parent, then the manner with which you lead will have a huge impact on the lives of your children. According to the Scriptures it is especially important not to frustrate and embitter your children. Some of the ways in which we could embitter our children include:

- Being inconsistent (imposing many rules, yet not always enforcing them)
  - Being too liberal (children feel insecure without boundaries and they will not learn self-control & respect)
  - Being too harsh (discipline without love is like a hot day without water!)
-

# Building Healthy Relationships

---

- Simply not being there for your kids – too busy with work etc
- Constant criticism and negativity – we should encourage and build up, not nit-pick and tear down.

2

Although parenting can be difficult at times, we need as Christians, to be like God in our parenting. As believers we are to be a reflection of God in the parent/child relationship. This is the most fitting display of the rapport we ourselves have with our Heavenly Father. Some ways we can demonstrate this to our children is by:

- Being consistent
- Being loving
- Being firm, yet fair
- Rewarding good, disciplining bad
- Teaching them wisdom in all aspects of living
- Comforting them in times of sorrow
- Celebrating with them in times of joy
- Protecting them in times of danger
- Being patient and long-suffering!
- Being gracious, compassionate and forgiving (*Nehemiah 9:17b*)
- Disapproving of sinful conduct in every area of life (*Psalms 5:4; 97:10*)

## The Sibling Relationship:

**Matthew 5:21-22**     *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.*

In the above verse, the word 'brother' is used in a broad, generic sense in terms of social relationships. So this applies not only to our siblings, but to everyone. To become angry with anyone, even our siblings, is reflective of a selfish and murderous heart. You think you deserve better. You think you ARE better. You look at them with contempt and derision (the word 'Raca' expresses this). Compassion and mercy have completely disappeared. Thinking of others as better than yourselves is nowhere to be found!

**Ephesians 4:32**     *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

**Philippians 2:3-4**     *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

---

# Building Healthy Relationships

---

Philippians 2:14-15 *Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe ...*

This is where you can have a real impact, particularly if you are younger and still living at home with your siblings. Now most of us know all about sibling rivalry, and most of us can empathize with some of the nastiness, jealousy and bullying that commonly occurs in the sibling relationship. However, as a new creation in the Lord, any hostility towards others has no place in our lives. Any kind of retaliation or reciprocation of nastiness has to cease immediately. Now we have a wonderful opportunity to express the forgiveness of God. We should be slow to take offense. We can put into practise treating others as we would want to be treated, regardless of their conduct towards us. Imagine the impact we can have!

Our call to obey God's commands regarding our conduct towards others is not limited to only people we like, or people we don't know. Anyone can be nice to those they love – that's easy. Our practise of these things applies much more to our enemies and towards those who seek to harm us. Just as we were once enemies of God and He reached out to us, so we too should extend our mercies to those who are just as sinful as we are. We have all been in the same boat.

Luke 6:27-36 *"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

The above passage is not implying that we be door-mats, or weak, cringing, cowardly Christians. Rather, the intention of this passage is to depict that we remain calm and live at peace with our fellow man as far as it depends on us. We should be meek, not weak. Meekness is power under control. We should not be easily stirred up to anger and neither should we be suck-ups. There's always a balance.

## The Husband/Wife Relationship:

Colossians 3:18-19 *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.*

---

# Building Healthy Relationships

---

Ephesians 5:21-29 *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now **as the church submits to Christ**, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, **husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies**. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church...*

In today's feministic, liberalistic society, the idea of submitting to our husbands may seem an antiquated and old-fashioned thing to do. However, Scripture has never condoned the kind of submission where an oppressive and aggressive husband lords it over his wife while she passively defers to him in everything. If we look at the verses surrounding these issues we can see that BOTH the husband and wife are to be submitting to each other and regarding the other to be more important than themselves (Philippians 2:3). The Bible has never depicted the woman as inferior – she merely has a different God-ordained role to play. The married couple are expected to fulfil their roles while loving each other sacrificially and unconditionally. It works well this way.

However, if you have become a believer while married to a non-believer, it may be more difficult. Yet we are still to do our part regardless of the behaviour of our partner or their lack of reciprocation. We should stay in our marriage situation patiently living in a way that not only builds the relationship but honours God.

## STANDING OUT IN THE WORKPLACE/SCHOOL:

### **The Employee** **Employer Relationship:**

Colossians 3:22-24 *Slaves, **obey your earthly masters in everything**; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favour, but **with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord**. Whatever you do, **work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord**, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

Titus 2:9-10 *Teach slaves to be **subject to their masters in everything**, to try to **please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them**, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in **every way** they will make the teaching about God our Saviour **attractive**.*

This can be a challenge for some of us in the workplace today. There seems to be a general air of disrespect towards our employers and opportunistic tendencies to slack off from duties and get away with not doing what one knows they should. However, now that we are new creations in

---

# Building Healthy Relationships

---

Christ, we must be different! We must work with excellence just as if we were working for the Lord Himself. Our labours, attitudes and conversations, even on breaks, must reflect the character of Christ. We must cultivate the desire to work with excellence. Some ways we can do this is by:

- Using our time wisely and conscientiously on the job
- Refraining from disrespectful talk towards, and about, our boss
- Conducting ourselves in a professional and hard-working manner
- Being reliable and trustworthy with all merchandise, projects and time
- Maintaining confidentiality where needed
- Being friendly and considerate towards all those you come into contact with
- Going 'above and beyond' our duties where we can
- Always being punctual and never leaving too early
- Adhering to workplace etiquette, dress code, rules and regulations

The same can be said if we are a student in a school or university. The standard is to be maintained in our attitude towards the teachers and other students and in all our work efforts. Courtesy, respect, reliability and integrity combined with a standard of excellence in all our doings will reflect the character of our Father in heaven and make an impression that lasts!

## **The Employer** **Employee Relationship:**

Colossians 4:1 *Masters, provide your slaves with what is **right and fair**, because you know that **you also have a Master in heaven.***

If you are the one in charge, overseeing the company in an authoritative position, then what an opportunity to reflect the excellence of Christ! It is imperative that everything be managed honestly and fairly to a high standard. All local laws should be adhered to in regards to the work environment, code of ethics, and health and safety. Pay should be fair and deposited on time, every time. Standard of dress should be high and/or appropriate to the job. The conduct expected of employees should convey decency and respect for others in speech and behaviour. Professionalism in every aspect and area of the job will speak volumes, especially in a world where the standards are dropping and integrity seems to have gone out the window. Christ wouldn't rip someone off, so neither should you.

Ephesians 6:9 *And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. **Do not threaten them**, since you know that **he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven**, and **there is no favouritism with him.***

As managers and employers, we are to be compassionate and fair. There should be no place for work place bullying, and neither should we show favouritism to individuals. It's good to remember as Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6:9, that just as we may be in authority over others in the work place, God is in authority over us in all of our life.

---

# Building Healthy Relationships

---

## **STANDING OUT AMONGST OUR FRIENDS:**

1 Timothy 4:12     *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in **speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.***

Titus 2:2-3        *Teach the older men to be **temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.** Likewise, teach the older women to be **reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.***

Regardless of your age, gender, occupation or status in society, we are called to set an example and to stand out from the crowd. We can be a calming influence, a positive encouragement, a source of comfort and a trustworthy and reliable friend who can be depended upon in all circumstances. Included in all this, whether with our friends or alone at home, our choice of movies, music and entertainment should always reflect the standard of our Lord as seen in the Bible. To feed our minds upon immorality, gratuitous violence, blasphemy and profanities not only grieves our holy God, it displays to our friends an unchanged life and displays a greater love for worldly standards than for Christ.

Every area of our lives should be guided by God's Word. If we study it carefully, we will find a vast richness inside, which, when applied, has the potential to give us an insight and wisdom far beyond our years. We can find God's guidelines regarding:

- Our Finances
- Romance and Marriage
- General Relationships
- Troubles and Persecution
- Worry and Sorrow
- Anger and Lust
- Eating and Drinking
- Hygiene and Health

If we allow ourselves to be guided by the Scriptures on these things, then not only will we benefit ourselves, it will benefit (and amaze!) others.

## **STANDING OUT AMONGST THE GENERAL PUBLIC:**

Titus 3:1-5        *Remind the people to be **subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.** At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous*

---

# Building Healthy Relationships

---

*things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of **rebirth and renewal** by the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 13:1-2 *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.*

There is a God-ordained hierarchy that exists within society that is reflective of how God is a God of order and peace. This hierarchy begins in the home where the husband (not the children!) is the head of the home and the wife supports him alongside. From there it reaches out into the workplace and to the local law-enforcers and Government of the land. Without these in place, chaos, anarchy and confusion would reign.

As a citizen in our society, all traffic laws and local laws should be adhered to and respected. There is no room for speeding, drink-driving, road rage and flagrant disregard for road rules as a child of God Almighty! There is no excuse for taking unfair advantage of all-you-can-eat restaurants, or refusing to take your place quietly in a queue, or discarding your litter onto the ground instead of into a bin. We are called to live in peace and show consideration to all men. The gospel of Jesus will not look attractive to others if you are habitually flouting the law, being aggressive, rude or disrespectful.

See also **'The Sibling Relationship'**, because the exact same attitude applies here too. How do we respond to being pushed in on while waiting in a queue etc? Take a look at the following verse:

**Romans 12:18** *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

We should not allow ourselves to become angry when others treat us poorly. We shouldn't go around with the attitude that we deserve to be treated better. Such an attitude is proud and self-serving. Let's recognise that we have ALL treated others unkindly or with disregard at some time. Maybe we were at a low point, having a bad week, or perhaps we just felt like being mean. Regardless of the reason, let's not forget that our Heavenly Father showed us mercy when we didn't deserve it. With this in mind, how much more should we, as fellow sinners, show mercy to others who are no better or worse than us?

---