

## Redeemed for Relationship

The Bible talks a lot about relationships. The reason for this is that the Author of the Bible is a relational God and He created us for relationships. But, relationships are hard work. They are hard work because you and I are imperfect people building relationships with other imperfect people. Charlie Brown, the great philosopher, once said, "I love mankind. It's people I hate." Rather than adopting Charlie Brown's philosophy, we turn to the Bible which is filled with advice to make relationships work.

One particular biblical principle has been very helpful to me in my relationships. *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with everyone"* (Romans 12:18). We cannot change another person. We can only change ourselves and that by the instruction of God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. Below are a few Biblical principles to guide us so that we might build and sustain healthy relationships.

**First, learn to confront with care.** *"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you"* (Matthew 18:15). Speak *"the truth in love"* (Ephesians 4:15). Love seeks to speak the truth, rather than keep the peace. But, we must do it with gentleness and respect. Here are a few practical helps when confronting with care:

- a) **Examine our hearts.** It may be that the offense against us is perceived and not real. We need to **focus on positive things** in our relationships, as well as the offense.
- b) **Don't forget the past.** It is a sad thing when one failure leads to the brokenness of a longstanding relationship.
- c) **Speak gently** as to your perception of the episode, not judgmentally.
- d) **Seek understanding together.** *"Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry"* (James 1:19).

**Secondly, be open to God to reveal your weaknesses through others.** *"How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye' when all along you have a plank in your own eye"* (Matthew 7:4). Humility is an essential quality of great relationships. I love the story of the man who goes to a psychiatrist. He walks into the office of the doctor with a cantaloupe on his head and pieces of bacon wrapped around his ears. Then, he announces to the doctor, "I have come to talk to you today about my brother."

**Thirdly, don't compare ourselves to others.** *"We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves to themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise"* (2 Cor. 10:12). Relationships are built on love, not performance. This is what grace is. Competition and comparison in relationships bring nothing good out in our relationships.

**Fourth, guard against bitterness in relationships.** *“Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil a foothold... Get rid of bitterness...”* (Ephesians 4:26,27,31). Most of us are going to deal with anger at one time or another, especially when one close to us hurts or disappoints us. Do not harbor the anger. A nursed anger leads to bitterness, and when bitterness takes hold in our hearts, it produces a far more destructive element in us than the offense against us.

**Fifth, repay an offense against us with kindness.** *“Don’t repay evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing”* (1 Peter 3:9). *“Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone”* (1 Thessalonians 5:15). Such relational commands are a reminder that relationships are built by Spirit-produced character.

**Lastly, be diligent in rejoicing and weeping in relationships.** *“Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep”* (Romans 12:15).

God is a relational God. He has created us for relationships with Himself and with others. He redeems us in Christ for relationships. He instructs us in His Word about them. The people of our lives are God’s earthly and eternal treasure to us. By the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in us, we can enjoy them as the rare and precious treasures that they are.

Great Peace in the Lord,

Eddie