**GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR RELATIONSHIPS**

Sunday School Lesson 20

*Building Right Relationships*

Matthew 5:23-24

7/30/2023

**Introduction:** After taking a break in our lesson series on relationships last week, we pick back up this morning with the final lesson in the series. In our previous lesson, we looked at five principles for maintaining a good relationship with others in the church. Let’s review those principles before continuing. 1. We must remember that the members of the church are our family. For a local church to thrive, it’s critical for the members of that church to understand the familial relationship that they ought to have with one another. 2. We must understand that love is the primary necessity in the church. Love isn’t turning a blind eye toward open sinfulness, but it also isn’t being critical by trying to search out faults in our brothers and sisters in Christ. 3. We must be willing to be open with others in the church. We need to overcome our pride issue and be willing to follow the Biblical pattern for addressing our faults. We don’t need the church to be filled with Christians with a Pharisaical attitude. We need open and honest Christians who are willing to both give and receive help. 4. We should cultivate a servant’s relationship with others in the church. Having a servant’s heart will help to keep us humble about ourselves and thoughtful about others. 5. We should be willing to spend time together with others in the church. You should consider whether you enjoy being around your church family. In this day where so many Christians are embracing “digital” church, we must keep to the pattern of the New Testament church when it comes to fellowship and interaction with each other. Regarding this week’s lesson, we are going to finish our series by looking at some general principles for relationships. Let’s consider the following:

1. **WE MUST HAVE A BALANCED APPROACH TO THE PAST AND FUTURE IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS.**

* Ephesians 5:15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Matthew 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. 2 Corinthians 1:7 And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. The Bible calls us to walk circumspectly. This means that we are called to walk with a cautious, willful look to those things around us. This includes both those things behind us and those things in front of us. It is needful to be retrospective in our relationships, as we seek to constantly build on whatever relationship foundation has already been laid. We ought to consider wrongs that we have done and be sure that we have sought after true reconciliation with the wronged party. We ought to also consider the good things that others have done toward us in our relationship with them. In addition to being retrospective, we also need to be prospective. We ought to look to the future with a hope of what the relationship might be with the help of the Lord and His Word.

1. **WE MUST MAKE A CONSTANT EFFORT TO SEEK PEACE WITH ALL MEN.**

* Heb. 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Rom. 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. (1 Thess. 5:13) Blessed are the peacemakers. As believers, we are to seek peace with all men. This is a constant battle that requires a daily dying of our flesh and a surrendering to the leading of the Holy Spirit of God. Peace is often not easily accomplished in this world.

1. **Remember the effectiveness of a soft answer in resolving conflict in relationships.** Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. With regards to peacemaking, we ought to give heed to the usefulness of a soft answer. It has great power to deal with angry people. The problem, of course, is that we don’t often feel inclined to give a soft answer. We’d prefer to yell back or give a passive aggressive answer that makes us feel good about ourselves. It takes real wisdom from God to give a soft but true answer.
2. **Remember the effectiveness of a kind action in dealing with adversarial relationships.** Romans 12:20-21Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. In addition to a soft response, we are also shown in the Bible how effective a kind action can be in dealing with an adversary. Most people expect an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. There is great power in being able to show kindness to those who seek your harm. It’s a display of Godly love. After all, Christ’s response to His adversaries was to die on the cross for them.
3. **WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF TIMING IN A RELATIONSHIP.**

* Ecclesiastes 3:1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 7 a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; Colossians 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Psalm 37:34 Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. We must be mindful of timing in any relationship. When young people are dating each other for potential marriage, timing is very important. As mentioned previously, parents must be mindful of timing when handling things pertaining to their children. In the church, we must consider timing when it comes to teaching a new Christian. When someone is hurting, we must consider timing in addressing that hurt. Some folks need time before they are ready to hear. There is a time to speak. There is a time to stay silent. If we seek wisdom from the Lord regarding the matter of proper timing, we will make good choices that will help strengthen our relationships. As a pastor, there have been times where I have strongly wanted to say something to an individual, but the Holy Spirit impressed upon me to wait for the proper door of utterance. We need not to be foolish in our speech by being hasty to answer. The Lord shows us in His Word that He will help us to know how to answer.

1. **WE MUST REMEMBER THAT IT TAKES TWO FOR A SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP TO HAPPEN.**

* Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Matthew 10:14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. 1 Corinthians 4:12 and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: After spending twenty weeks reviewing principles for relationships, we hopefully will be inclined to put these principles into practice. As we do this, though, we must remember that it takes two people for a successful relationship to happen. Consider our relationship with God. He has done everything right and perfect for us to have a great relationship with Him. Yet, how few people actually have a good relationship with God? You need to understand that you could put in a great deal of work and see no gains in your relationship with an individual. Jesus tells us that there are going to be people who reject us. This can be especially frustrating for us, and it can lead us to doubt whether it is even worth it to put in the effort to have right relationships. Hopefully, we will consider the principle that it is always right to do right, even if the consequences that come along do not always feel right.

1. **WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT LITTLE THINGS MATTER IN A RELATIONSHIP.**

* Matthew 25:23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 27 thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. In our relationships, we tend to focus on the big and obvious issues that come up, but I’ve found that many problems in relationships first start over neglect in handling the little things that come along. Additionally, it’s true that many great relationships have been formed through a willingness of a person to do little things to help build that relationship out. The Lord speaks of the damage of a master/servant relationship when the little things are neglected. Whether it’s a marital, parental, or friendly relationship, we ought to consider what small tasks can be done to help strengthen the relationship bond. Our pride and selfishness often limit us from doing these things.

1. **WE MUST BE WILLING TO INVEST OUR HEART, TIME, AND EFFORT INTO OUR RELATIONSHIPS.**

* Deuteronomy 6:5 and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. What is the basis of our relationship with the Lord? What does He want from us. Aside from our faith, we know that He wants our heart, soul, and might. He wants us to give up life for Him because He first gave up His life for us. As we consider having Godly relationships with others, we must be willing to give of ourselves for them. Otherwise, we are only looking at the selfish aspect of the relationship. We must be willing to give our heart. If we get hurt, it’s okay. We must be willing to give our time. If we don’t have as much time for ourselves, it’s okay. We must be willing to give our effort. If we are tired, it’s okay. Let’s develop great relationships with others!