

Making Life Work

January-February 2013 Pulpit Series (pt **1**)



"Discovering My God Focused Purpose In Living"

Christ E Free Church Pulpit Series
January-February 2013

Jesus Christ
Our Highest Calling,
Our Greatest Purpose,
Our Soul's Source and Joy
And Our All-Consuming Passion.

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INTRODUCTION

Take a moment and consider the various challenges of your life. Would you say *life* is working for you? Are there areas of your life that you view as a grueling rock pile of monotonous, unfulfilling punishment?

“*Making Life Work*”, is all about discovering God’s calling and purpose in living and making the most of our most important relationships.

Sometimes we think of God’s calling being connected with famous Christians, or missionaries or preachers. But discovering God’s calling and purpose in living is important for every Christian.

Ephesians 1:16-18 (ESV) I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, (17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, (18) having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may **know what is the hope to which he has called you,** what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Someone told me the picture on the front of this booklet should be changed because that one does not present a very attractive image of life. But that picture depicts how many people feel about life – it’s a rock pile. Each day they pound away at the rock pile, like a criminal on the chain gang. For many, their *life* is a rock pile, for some, their *marriage* is a rock pile, their *job* is a rock pile, even *church* may be a rock pile. Its something they pound away at day after day, week after week, year after year. It is hard work. It is monotonous. There seems to be no perceived purpose *in* it and no end *to* it. It’s a process of smashing big rocks into medium size rocks, smashing medium size rocks into small rocks, smashing

small rocks into even smaller rocks. Then it starts all over again. Its drudgery and its purposeless. To them, the rock pile of life is little more than grueling punishment.

Perspective

Now, imagine the difference it could make in the rock piles of our work and our relationships, if we knew there was a diamond somewhere in the pile. Imagine the difference in attitudes, perspectives and motivation, if we expected, at perhaps the next swing of the mallet, to discover a beautiful, valuable diamond. It may change the way we view the rock pile. In fact we may no longer view it as a boring old rock pile, but a treasure hunt, wondering what the next swing will bring. This is what *Making Life Work* is all about.

Making Life Work, is also about making the most of our most important relationships. This is part of who we are, why we are here and how God has put us together. Patrick Morely, with *Man In The Mirror* Ministries, says “if you were to take a knife and cut the scriptures, it would bleed relationships – *it bleeds relationships.*”

The 10 commandments are all about relationships. Commandments 1-4 refer to our vertical relationship which is our individual relationships with God. Commandments 6-10 refer to our horizontal relationships which are our relationships with one another. Likewise, the two greatest commandments are boiled down to the same thing – *relationships*.

Matthew 22:36-40 ESV "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" (37) And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (38) This is the great and first commandment. (39) And a second is like it: You shall love your

neighbor as yourself. (40) On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Making Life Work is all about finding the diamond of Gods purpose and calling, while living in the midst of this rock pile called life. It's all about gaining a growing clarity regarding our perspective and assurance on God's call and purpose in living, and a growing maturity in meaningful relationships with one another.




“My Life And God” (pt1)

First Things First


- Making the Most of Our Most Important Relationship -

Eph.1:16-18

Jan.13, 2013



I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, -Eph 1:16-18



If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him.

-- Voltaire, 1694-1778

French writer and historian.

INTRODUCTION

“*Making Life Work*”, is all about 1) Discovering God’s calling and purpose in living and 2) Making the most of our most important relationships. Discovering the calling of God in our lives and the purpose for which He made us, is important for every Christian.

For many, their *life* is a rock pile. It's something they pound away at day after day, week after week, year after year. There seems to be no perceived purpose *in* it and no end *to* it.

But imagine the difference it could make in the rock piles of our lives and our relationships, if we knew there was a diamond somewhere in the pile. It could change our world forever, and possibly even the world of others.

Making Life Work is all about putting God first and pleasing Him most.

-PLEASING GOD-

FIRST THINGS FIRST

God, and our relationship with Him is the beginning and basis of all things. Science basically tells us that matter is the basis of all things. Scripture tells us that matter is not the basis of all things, **God is**. He is the “matter Maker”.

God is before all things

God was the first in existence. He must be the first and highest purpose in our existence.

*For so many,
life is like
smashing rocks
on a rock pile,
there is no end
to it and no
purpose in it.*

Gen 1:1-2 In the beginning, God....

The God Cause

In being before all things, God is both Creator and Sustainer of all things. God is the cause of all things that exist, past, present and future.

Gen 1:1-2 *In the beginning... God* created the heaven and the earth. (2) And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. *And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

When there was nothing and before there was anything, there was God.

As Cause, God is Creator of all things

Psa 8:3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained;

Scripture is filled with claims that God is the source and cause of all that exists. And as Cause and Creator, God also sustains all things.

Psa 147:4 He tells the number of the stars; he calls them all by their names.

As the creator and Sustainer, He deserves to be the primary focus of all that He creates and sustains, namely us. God deserves to be our Highest Calling and our Greatest Purpose, our soul's source and joy and our all-consuming passion.

Likewise, as He is Creator and Sustainer of all things, therefore we believe He has a purpose for all things.

Ephesians 1:11 ESV In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

God's Will

God's will in the end times

Matthew 24:14 ESV And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

This is God's plan for what we refer to as "the end". He has a purpose in it and has set in motion, all that He has planned and ordained.

God's will for his church

Matthew 16:18 ESV And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

This is God's plan and will for the worldwide church of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has promised according to His eternal will, that His church will never suffer defeat. That is one tidal wave promise! At times, we are tempted to think otherwise, yet we have His word of promise on it.

God's will for your life and mine

Ephesians 2:10 ESV For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

This is God's plan and purpose for each individual person. To think that God has a divine purpose and plan for you may seem unimaginable. Nevertheless, you are on His mind and you are in His plan.

Deuteronomy 5:32-33 ESV (32) You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. (33) You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, ***and that it may go well with you***, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.

God's will for you is not to have a great life now or your best life today. It is for you and for me to have the whole of our lives bound up and consumed in our vertical relationship with God. All that we are and all that we have is all about who God is, and how we relate to Him. That is why we as humans exist – not for our own happiness, not for our own good and certainly not for others to make much of us. We exist to make much of God. It is why we exist.

It is a monumental blunder, when we take the Bible, remove God from its central focus and make mankind the main characters and central focus. It is at this point that heresy begins to blossom.

When we make *First Things First*, then God is rightfully placed as our highest calling, our greatest purpose, our soul's source and joy and our all-consuming passion. Anything less than that, becomes the monumental blunder of human existence, of which the Bible refers to as *Idolatry*.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 ESV "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, (2) that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. (3) Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, **that it may go well with you**, [Deut.5:32-33] and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. (4) "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. (5) You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (6) And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. (7) You shall teach them diligently to your children, and

shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (8) You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. (9) You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Making First Things First, is The most crucial basics of faith and foundation for a meaningful Christian life. It is making the most of our most important relationship.

[Eph.6:1-3 / Heb. 8:10-11]

3Jn 1:2 Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.

The purpose of life for all humanity, is making *First Things First* with God. Then the result is intended to be, “that it may go well with you”, in specific relations between you and God.

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: Is God my most important of all relationships? _____

Q: What areas of my life are presently going well for me? _____

Q: How am I doing in living my life and making my choices in compliance with the Word of God? _____

-----*Praying It Through*-----

Holy Father, I thank you for your involvement in my life. I thank you for your plan and purpose for my life. Open my eyes to see your will. Open my heart to obey your direction for me. Bless me to walk in your ways and in your path of righteousness always.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!*



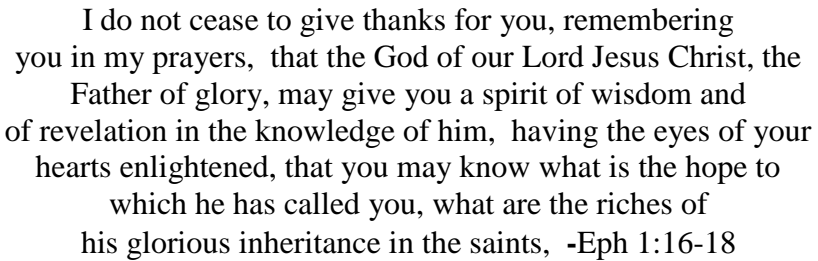
“My Life With God” (pt2)

The Jesus Connection

2 Keys To Every Life’s Doorway

Eph.1:16-18

Jan. 20, 2013



I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, -Eph 1:16-18

Jesus Christ is God’s everything
for man’s total need.
-Richard Halverson

INTRODUCTION

Consider these all-important differences of perspective.

Perspective #1: “Life is a rock pile”.

Result: There is no end *to* it, and no purpose *in* it.

Perspective #2: “Life is a treasure hunt.”

Result: I am on a lifelong adventure, searching for a treasured diamond of inestimable value. There are rock piles to go through, blisters to be endured, and burning heat to be experienced. But the diamond is the focus of my life and worth whatever work and discomfort which may be required, in order to discover it.

Perspective is everything!

It is the monumental blunder of all humanity, when we take our own lives and experiences and make them or ourselves the focus of life and the purpose of living. I think the Bible refers to that as *idolatry*.

“Making Life Work”, is all about discovering God’s calling and purpose in living and making the most of our most important relationships.

After making First Things First, which was our focus in the previous chapter, we must also consider....

THE JESUS CONNECTION

Jesus is the connection of all people to God. He is the all-important connection between heaven and humanity. Because Jesus exists, does not mean all people have been rightly connected to God. But because Jesus exists, all people do have the opportunity to be rightly connected with God if they so choose.

Jesus is the Doorway

Scripture clearly teaches that He is the only way. This is a most controversial statement.

<p>John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.</p>
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Or we might say, “No one gets rightly connected to God, without going through Jesus Christ.”

2 Keys to Every Life’s Doorway

Each person must Trust Christ and follow Him personally.

Key #1: Trusting Jesus for Salvation. This is the necessary *relational* connection between every person and God.

John 1:12 ESV But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

But for Making Life Work, something else is important. This is not something else to be done to work out our salvation. But something else must be done in order to Make Life Work for ourselves.

Key #2: Obeying the Lordship of Christ. This is the necessary *functional* connection for making life work.

James 2:26 ESV For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

If we remember, God created all things through His Son. The Son not only created all things, but He is continuously sustaining all things. For all He created and presently sustains, He has a purpose. And for all He has a purpose, He governs, guides and works out to accomplish His own perfect, divine will. This includes both your life and mine. We are His workmanship, created for good works in Christ Jesus. (Eph.2;10).

God has a purpose for each of us. That means there is a diamond hidden away in every person’s rock pile. Indeed, there are rocks that will need to be smashed, blisters that will need to be endured and blazing heat that will need to be experienced. But the diamonds are there and they are as real and as certain as the rocks. This perspective must affect our rock piles.

2Cor 5:17-19 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (18) All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

-Making Life Work-

2ND KEY LIVING

Making life work is everyone's responsibility in everyday life. Without Christ as the Connection of God's will into our lives, we remove God's key component for direction and blessing.

Colossians 3:23 ESV Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,

*The Jesus
Connection
is not simply
a good way
to go,
He is
God's Way
for us all!*

2nd Key Living refers to living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of life. We must realize that in everything we do and in all the choices we make, there are consequences. It is cause and effect. Here must lie our purpose and motives for obeying Jesus and saying "yes" to his direction and will for our lives.

To Please God is crucial to making life work! We are to do all that we do as though we are doing it for God Himself. That means our work, our families, our entertainment, our finances – all areas of our lives must be intended to bring Him pleasure and to experience our purpose in living.

If we live for ourselves, or if our choices and motives are self-focused, we are making ***the monumental human blunder***, of removing God from the central focus of Scripture, as well as from our lives and we place ourselves in the spotlight. This focus will have long and far reaching effects on us personally. That is the monumental blunder – failing to make First Things First and failing to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The Personal Connection

Each Person must be personally connected to God. Jesus is our connection to God the Father. He is Creator and Sustainer of all things. He has a purpose for all things. And to think that we can claim to believe in God, yet discount His intended involvement in our lives through His Son Jesus, is like thinking we can drive across the country without using a map

<p>Deut.5:33 You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, <i><u>and that it may go well with you</u></i>, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.</p>
--

Unity in the Trinity

Jesus is the necessary connection of all people to God. It is God the Father who plans and ordains our lives and it is Jesus, God the Son, to Whom the Father has given authority and responsibility to rule and govern our lives. It is the Son, Who puts Gods plans into action. The Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit who work in perfect unity, in order to bring about God’s perfect plan for creation and salvation.

In Gen.1:1, we are told that “God created the heavens and the earth”. In Heb.1 and Col. 1, we read that it is God the Son who

puts the plan of God into action. It is the Son whom the Father uses to create all things, and to sustain all things.

God the Father uses God the Son to govern all of creation and to keep it all in order. And the order of all creation includes your life. When we leave Jesus Christ out of the mix, and neglect His Lordship and governing influence, it is like the stars insisting on keeping themselves shining or like the earth rejecting the power that put it there and saying, “hands off, I’d rather do this myself”. But it cannot.

His Lordship

All of creation, needs the Creator to continue sustaining all that He has created. Nothing in all of creation governs itself. All of it was always intended to depend fully on the sustaining work of the Son, and that means your life and mine.

And when we attempt to bypass the rules of Gods Lordship which have been given to us in the Bible, we make a terrible mistake. When we think we can bypass the creator and sustainer of all things and try to do it ourselves – we are headed for the monumental blunder and ultimate disaster. Then the diamond is removed and our rock pile becomes nothing more than a rock pile, with no end *to* it and certainly no purpose *in* it.

“...and that it may go well with you...” - Deut.5:33

Can we understand that when we fail to live by the 2nd Key of the Jesus Connection, the opposite of this promise might be experienced in our lives. That is, when we do not walk it the ways of the Lord and when we neglect the Lordship of Jesus Christ His Son over our lives, then it should surprise no one, that not only does it not go well with us, but life goes catastrophically wrong when we leave Jesus out of our lives, our decisions, our marriages, our employment, our friends, our finances and our entertainment.

*I want to make clear, that **not everyone** who is struggling with being overwhelmed by life is living outside the Lordship of Christ.*

Many who are struggling to keep their heads above water, have good reasons for the situation they are in, and it is not their fault. Many are incapable of doing what it takes to work out their rock pile without receiving help for others. Single parents, physically handicapped, those laid off and others are facing life challenging problems, which are not of their own making.

Many and I say, many are in genuine need of help and are worthy of whatever we can offer them. The Bible is clear that if someone has the *ability* to help, we have the *responsibility* to help.

1Jn. 3:17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

Prov. 3:27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

Mat. 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Mat 7:12 "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

It is always a healthy consideration to ask, “*what if that were me in need, how would I pray others might treat me?*” For those who have done all they can in attempts to make life work for themselves, they are indeed the needy that are worthy of help. And that help must be provided , both *joyfully and compassionately!*

For others, however, *Making Life Work* for ourselves, means making some difficult decisions and taking some hard steps towards personal responsibility. It means seeking Christ's leadership in our lives – *in every area*. I have talked with people, shared, pleaded, counseled, instructed and even on one frustrating occasion, ordered someone to do what it takes to make their lives pleaseing to God, in order to make it work for themselves.

*Making Life
Work
is a challenge
that requires
work ---
lots of it!*

It has been my feeling, that far too many capable, able minded and able bodied people seem satisfied doing very little, but not so satisfied with where it has gotten them. Many people are not happy with where their choices have taken them, yet are not quite willing to give it all over to God.

Matthew 6:33 ESV But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

I believe that when we make First Things First, and God is really first in our lives, then we will stop acting like Christians and start living like Christians. If God is First, then life is all about Him and centers on Him. Marriage, school, life and work is all about God and discovering His calling and purpose in the midst of our rock piles.

The Choice

It is up to every Christian to purposefully choose and strive to live pleaseing to God. Disobedience to God, is equal to a purposeful rejection of God's blessings.

James 1:25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

God's word is purposed to lead us in God's way, in order to accomplish God's will for my life. It is His good pleasure to lead us in paths of righteousness¹. His name depends upon it.

Everyone has this personal responsibility to please God

Ephesians 2:10 ESV For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

That means God has a work and ministry for each Christian. Faith in God and obedience to His word is a non-negotiable. When we put God's word and will first in our lives, we are promised that "it will go well"². And that is from God's perspective.

Heb 11:5-6 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having *pleased* God. (6) And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Each Person must do what it takes personally to place God First, please God and make life work for themselves. To attempt to make life work, but omit God from your life, or even to neglect to make Him First and foremost, is a recipe for failure, disaster and eternal misery.

Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

¹ Psalm 23:3 | ² Deut.5:32-33

Everyone must step up to life's responsibilities. We need to be willing to make life work as God has purposed for our lives. For most people, life does not turn out the way we planned. Those whose lives have demonstrated great success and purpose, together with a tenacity that is unshakable, seem disconnected from our reality. Those people sell books focused on their experiences, yet it does not reflect the lives of most "normal" people. Those books cause us to sit up with wrapped attention and admiration, only to sink back into the shadows of normalcy once the book has been closed. This is a dream shattering, yet realistic observation. The fact is, life requires work and determination – and a lot of it! Lack of meaning or satisfication out of life, often fosters disillusionment. And disillusionment seems to loom around every corner and under every rock.

Faith And Experiences

Toyota used to have as their slogan, "Life is a journey, enjoy the ride." Along the journey of life, there are overwhelming obstacles, unexpected detours, unavoidable pot holes, necessary rest stops and innumerable course adjustments that must be made. Here are 2 facts of life: First, it requires a specific and living faith in Jesus Christ. And secondly, it requires continuous, clear minded, God focused thinking with corresponding course adjustments.

Faith leads us into experiences that will challenge us at every front.

<p>Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.</p>

What do you mean *leave everything*? His thinking was God focused and *First Things First* was his purpose. It seems to me, a key element of Making Life Work, is the anticipation of problems that may be encountered along the journey, as well as a willingness

to adjust course as needed. Those adjustments may be in the areas of finances, relationships, employment or even health.

The Jesus Connection is a costly one. Christ first – God’s way first will always cost us our own way. But in the end, discovering the diamond of God’s will in your life is pricelsss.

Experiences Test Faith

After dispensing my advice of “*Do what it takes to make life work*” to many people, I began to realize that everybody had a different standard of what it meant to *make life work*. For some, to make life work, means finding someone else who is willing to do their work for them. Some have expected life to just majically turn around, for a friend to put them up for a couple of months or for someone to bail them out of the mess they had gotten themselves into.

Noah waas a man whose faith was tested by life experiences.

Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Leo Tolstoy once stated, “Everybody wants to change the world. Nobody wants to change themselves.” There are many people, who find it easy to try and get help from others, without making the necessary life changes and course adjustments to make their life work out in a favorable manner.

What if those in the Hebrews chapter 11 chose not to change? What if they chose not to allow faith in God to influence their lives and govern their actions? I try to remember for myself, that the ultimate goal for every person should be to live a life pleasing to God, and secondarily, to make life work for themselves. ***I believe***

it is crucial that every person desires and is willing to do what it takes to please God and make life work. That is the focus of this series. We will examine item, by item and piece by piece, what it takes for the pieces of life to come together to make sense.

Making Life Work – application

Discovering the diamond in the rock pile means discovering the purpose and calling of God in each area or category of living. Sometimes we are not willing to work the rock pile. Its easier to quit. And when we aren't willing to work the rock pile, and discover the hidden treasures of God's kingdom - the diamonds remain hidden.

On our journey of life, perhaps we might consider making some priority shifts for 2013. Finding my God focused purpose in living. Finding my God focused purpose in my marriage. Finding your God focused purpose in my church, my employment – even in my finances.

So much of Making Life work, is putting First Things First, and living to please God, so that it may go well with us.

1) Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your person Savior? This is Key #1, our relational connection to God through Jesus.

2) Are you living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in your life, as you are seeking Him and His purpose in your life above all things?

This is Key #2 living and our functional connection to God and His will, through faith and obedience to Jesus Christ.

3) Perhaps a prayer for help is appropriate.

Dear God, please help me discover my God focused purpose in living. Help me to begin to see your diamonds in my rock piles of life.

Making Life Work is all about finding the diamond in my rock pile. Finding the diamond in my rock pile is all about discovering my God focused purpose in living.

When our purpose is different, our focus will be different. When our focus is different, our motivation will be different. When our motivation is different, our attitude will be different.

Then we will realize, “I am no longer here to smash rocks. I am now here, to discover diamonds.” Rocks will still need to be smashed. The sun will be just as hot and the blisters will be just as painful. But now your purpose is different. You are not on the treasure hunt of a lifetime – not to smash rocks, but to discover Gods will for each area of your life. That little difference now, makes all the difference.

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: How real is Jesus, in how you live day by day? _____

Q: Since Jesus created and sustains all things, do you feel it is reasonable to believe He has a purpose in all things? _____

Q: Do your choices and actions reflect your desire to live your life with Christ focused purpose? _____

Q: What areas of your life feel like a rock pile? _____

Q: Can you see any possibilities of discovering a diamond of divine purpose in any of your rock piles? _____

Q: What would it take for you to find meaning and purpose in just one of your rock piles? _____

-----*Praying It Through*-----

Holy Father, thank you for sending your Son to die for my sins. Thank you for your demonstration of love to me. Help me to live under the Lordship of Jesus in a manner which reflects my appreciation for what you have done for me.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!*



“My Life And Family”

Our Closest Earthly Relationships

Eph. 5 & 6 / 1 Pet.3 / Mat.7:12

Jan.13, 2013

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you,
do also to them,
for this is the Law and the Prophets
--Matthew 7:12

So live that you wouldn't be ashamed to sell
the family parrot to the town gossip.
--Will Smith

INTRODUCTION

For some people, life is like a rock pile. Day after day, year after year they smash away at the rock piles of life, with no foreseeable purpose in it and no end to it. Making Life Work is all about discovering the diamond of God's purpose and calling for each of us in the rock piles of life.

It is also about making the most of our most important relationships. Today our focus is “My Life & Family: Our Closest Earthly Relationships”.

Apart from our personal, vertical relationship with God, our family relationships are our most important earthly relationships. However, they often prove to be our most difficult of all relationships.

What we often fail to fully grasp, when it comes to family relationships is that they are still relationships that require work and special understanding. In relationships with others, we tend to put our best foot forward, and our best face on. But when it comes to family relationships, we often have no more good feet to put forward, nor do we have any more pleasant faces to put on.

When it comes to relationships, we can only be *fakes* for a limited amount of time. Then the real me is slowly, but surely revealed.

Did the person you marry change? Probably not. You are probably looking at the person, your spouse always was, we have simply run out of best feet and faces to put on.

This does not mean that everyone is living a lie. But what it is saying, is that many people go through life, with their best foot forward and their best face on and that can only last so long, until the truth begins to show itself. And it seems, living with someone, causes all these things to come to light more quickly than other relationships.

QQ: So How can we begin where we are, that is in our present family relationships and start to live pleasing to God and Make Life Work for ourselves, as well as for others in our families?

Relationships are means of communication. Where there are shallow and superficial relationships, there is shallow and superficial communication. Relationships begin to fail, because the

more we are together, the longer we are forced to relate with one another and the more the relationship demands increase. The more the demands on our relationships increase or intensify, the greater the challenge of remaining, patient, loving, understanding and Christ-like.

PLEASING GOD IN OUR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Let's begin with an important question to consider.

Do you know what God's calling and purpose is for you in your family?

Putting First Things First

Pleasing God is all about relationships that put *First Things First* and make the most of our most important relationships. Not only are family relationships our most important earthly relationships, they are often our most difficult of all relationships.

Scripture offers many lessons in relationships. Marriage is a relationship. So we must be able to see that the lessons in Scripture on relationships, should be directly applied, in order to help us make the most of our most important earthly relationships – those being marriage and family and children.

3 key texts on relationships

Text #1: The 10 Commandments - Exodus 20

Commands 1-4 are vertically oriented or are God focused relationships. Commands 5-10 are horizontally oriented or are *others* focused relationships

Text #2: The 2 Great Commandments - Mat. 22:37-39

Mat 22:37-40 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (38) This is the great and first commandment. (that is our vertical focus) (39) And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (that is our horizontal focus) (40) On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Text #3: The 1 Golden Commandment (or Rule) – Mat. 7:12

Matthew 7:12 "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, *for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

Unfortunately we often tend to treat relationships outside the family better than those inside the family. We must deal properly with relationships, by making the most of our most important earthly relationships.

This is the diamond of God's calling and purpose for us in the rock pile of our family relationships. Not that these rock piles are punishment, but because they require work and a lot of it.

Putting Lessons Into Action

It takes a deep conviction that this is God's calling and purpose for my marriage. If we don't have that conviction, we will not take the necessary steps towards making the most of these most important relationships.

So let's apply the Golden Commandment to our marriage relationship. Consider this.

How would I prefer my spouse to treat me?

However I would prefer my husband to treat me, is how I must be committed to treating him. How I would prefer my wife to treat me, is how I must be committed to treating her. This is the Golden Rule applied to the marriage relationship.

1Pet. 3:1-2 Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives-- (2) when they see your **respectful and pure** conduct.

Then our concern may be: “Well what if they *aren’t* won to Christ by the conduct of my living? Then what?” The answer is: Then we still have done what is right before God and that is all that is ultimately required of us. The results must be entrusted to God.

Our family relationships are our most important earthly relationships. Unfortunately, they are often our most difficult and challenging of all earthly relationships.

1Pet. 3:7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, **showing honor** to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

“So what if I honor my wife, but she does *not* return the honor?” Then you have still done what is required by God and that is the most important thing of all. We have kept *First Things First* – we have done what is right before God and the results are in His hands. This is Making Life Work and making the most of our most important relationships.

The fact of life is, our marriage relationships and our relationships with our children or your relationship with your parents, will never be perfect. There will always be challenges and difficulties and disappointments and victories. But what is of utmost importance, is that we implement these Biblical relationship principles to our earthly relationships as obedient Children of God. It is then God who is obligated to do His part. And this is doing our part to make the most of our most important relationships.

Relationships that are pleasing to God

Relationships that are pleasing to God are relationships that sincerely seek the diamond among the rock pile. Answer this.

Q: What is the purpose and calling of God for me in my marriage relationship?

Once that is answered, then what steps must I take in order to carry out and fulfill that God focused calling and purpose? We each must answer these questions.

Eph. 5:15-17 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, (16) making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. (17) Therefore do not be foolish, but **understand what the will of the Lord is.**

Or we might put it like this: “...do not be foolish but *discover the diamond of God’s calling and purpose in the rock pile of your marriage.*”

READ Eph.5:22-33. The final statement in verse 33 summarizes our marital relationships like this: “However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” So each of us must answer the question, How do I demonstrate love for my wife? Or How can I demonstrate respect for my husband?

The Parental Relationships

We can also apply these Biblical principles to our parental relationships with our children. From the Golden Commandment, we might ask, “how would I like my children to treat me?” Then that is how I must be committed to treating them.

Do unto my children, as I would have them do unto me. This is not a magic genie’s lamp where

Requiring different standards from others than we have for ourselves will foster disrespect and rebellion.

we get our wishes met and problems solved. This is no guarantee that that treatment will be returned. Nevertheless, it is what is right before God and what He expects of us in our closest earthly relationships.

Eph 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (2) "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), (3) "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." (4) Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up (5:29) in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Or we might put it this way: “don’t provoke your children to anger, but *discover the diamond of God’s calling and purpose for your parenting relationship with your children.*”

Parent’s may ask the question to their children, “How many times do I have to tell you?” The answer is, until we figure out how to say it in a manner in which our children are able to receive it. It does not matter how loudly you can scream - a deaf man, remains a deaf man at any volume. We devise new means of communicating with deaf people. Our relationships with our children are means of communication. We must learn how to communicate with them in a manner in which they can hear, understand and receive it. Relating is communicating.

Communicating is relating. Where there are shallow and superficial relating, there will likely be shallow and superficial communicating, where shallow and superficial interactions are taking place.

Marriage, spousal relationships are still intended to be Biblically governed relationships. Parents relationships with children and children’s relationships with parents are still intended to be Biblically governed relationships. Nowhere does that change. We must begin implementing Biblical principles for relationships with

the most important of the earthly relationships of our families.

Relationships

Relationships are how we relate or connect or deal with or interact with others. It involves our speech, communication, thinking, the messages we send, the way we treat one another. Communication takes place with words, body language, voice inflection and facial expressions. Whoever invented the “rolling of the eyes” facial gesture came up with a successfully, creative way of communicating detest toward another person without uttering a word.

Rolling the eyes, snarling, scowling, smirking, are all unspoken, non-verbal ways of offending those around us. Unfortunately these are often used on those relationships which are most important to us.



Outside the family, we keep our best foot forward, our best face on and our best attitude out front. But inside the family, we often say things, or do things we would never say or do to anyone outside our family.

Why is this so?

We don't typically utilize those facial gestures to people whom we have just met for the first time. Instead, we put our best face on and put our best foot forward. But due to the fact that our family relations are often our most difficult and the most well-worn of relations, we feel free to hurt, offend, gesture and communicate in offensive ways toward our spouse or children.

God gives us these passages based on Biblical, Christian relationships, that are to be applied in any

*Both marriage
and parental
relationships
must be
governed by
God's Biblical
relationship
principles. .*

and all relationship settings. These are across the board relationship rules that will please God. Respect, honor and Christ-like love should be part of all our earthly relationships.

If you teach your children one principle, but model something else, you are working towards the destruction of that relationship and training up your children in the hypocrisy of human nature. If you yell and disrespect your family member, and don't apologize, you are building anger, resentment and resistance in your family relationships. **Gary Chapman** says, "you cannot have a meaningful relationship without apology. If you do not apologize you will not experience the meaningful family relationships you may desire. In fact, you may destroy them.

If you dishonor and disrespect family members, but demand they treat you with honor and respect, you are raising a rebel and a potential time bomb of relational strife. I believe that to treat our children disrespectfully, and then punish them for disrespecting us, is catastrophic, both for the immediate family relations, but also for the future family relations of our children.

If you demand obedience, but fail to offer reasonable explanations for those demands, you are teaching rebellion. **Josh McDowell** states that "rules without reasons, results in rebellion"

Making Life Work - application

How might my family be different *tomorrow*, if I began living by God's relationship principles *today*?

What would my most important earthly relationships look like, if I began implementing God's Biblical relationship passages to my family relationships?

Doing What It Takes

Making the most of our most important relationships, requires that we are willing to do what it takes to make our most important earthly relationships work. It can appear to work in a one way relationship, but in actuality, it will never fully work until both personalities in the relationship are committed to doing what it takes to make their most important relationships work. That means work and a lot of it. It means sacrifice and a lot of it.

Everyone Benefits

When we attempt to make a relationship work with our family, it always benefits everyone, including us individually. This is because, we are personally doing what we believe is right before God to please Him in our earthly relationships – to treat others as we would want to be treated (Golden Rule), to love others (even in our own family) as we love ourselves (2nd Greatest Commandment).

The Golden Commandment

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." -Matthew 7:12

Or we might put it this way: "Making First Things First and treating others by Biblical relationship principles, allows for God to reveal to us, the diamond of His purpose in the rock pile of our most important and most difficult relationships.

It places God's will at the top of our priorities and allows God room to answer our prayers, fulfill His promises and accomplish His good pleasure and will in our families. This is the diamond of discovering our God focused purpose in living.

1) The Dangers of One Way Family Relationships.

They seldom experience the joy of traveling together.

They frequently experience the trauma of a head on collision.

2) The Blessedness of Two Way Relationships.

Peace is more likely experienced when people accept, honor, respect, love and encourage one another.

Joy is most often experienced when family members know others are on their side, they feel their support, appreciate their value and enjoy their company.

How to Exasperate Your Children

John MacArthur

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1) Excessive Discipline | 2) Inconsistent Discipline |
| 3) Unkindness | 4) Favoritism |
| 5) Overindulgence | 6) Overprotection |
| 7) Pressure to Achieve | |

“Ordinary Pastor”

- Be a hypocrite
- Be a bully to them
- Be harsh to them
- Be Emotionally Distant from them
- Show Favoritism to Other Kids
- Have Unrealistic Standards

Common Relationship Failures

Fail to listen attentively

Fail to understand accurately

Fail to respond appropriately

Fail to love affectionately

Fail to communicate receptively
Fail to see yourself realistically
Fail to encourage frequently
Fail to show kindness patiently
Fail to treat others respectfully
Fail to overlook faults forgivingly
Fail to parent together consistently

Dr. James Dobson (*FamilyTalk*)

- No job can compete with the responsibility of shaping and molding a new human being. --*What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women*, p. 165
- Christian men pass on to their children a spiritual heritage that is more valuable than any monetary estate they could have accumulated. --*Emotions: Can You Trust Them?* p. 48
- If we want to see honesty, truthfulness, and unselfishness in our offspring, then these characteristics should be the conscious objectives of our early instructional process. --*The Strong-Willed Child*, pp. 55–56
- I believe the most valuable contribution a parent can make to a child is to instill in him or her a genuine faith in Jesus Christ. --*Hide or Seek*, p. 169

Rules for every family

- Pray together.
- Err on the side of Grace.
- Show more Encouragement than criticism
- Have brief family devotions.
- Tell your spouse you Appreciate what they do/did.
- Don't hold back on the Hugs and the "atta boys".

- Spend more time Together.
- Listen a Lot more.
- Ask more Questions.
- Watch what your Children are watching on TV, YouTube, FaceBook, etc
- Show Interest in your Parent's day.

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: How are you feeling about your family relationships right now?

Q: What are the influences that cause you to perceive these relationships as either good or bad? _____

Q: How often do you implement God's Biblical principles for governing your family relationships? _____

Q: What area of family relations need work, but you have resisted committing it to prayer? _____

-----*Praying It Through*-----

Oh Lord, I love my family, but my family relations feel so much like a rock pile. It is here I experience the most pain. Please help me treat my family as you would have me treat others.

In Jesus' name,

Amen!

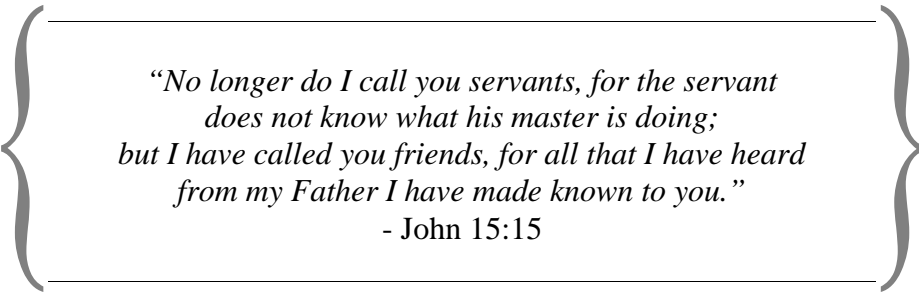


“My Life and Friends: My Realm of Influence & Impact”

- Discovering My God Focused Purpose In Friendships –

[John 15:15]

Feb. 3, 2013



*“No longer do I call you servants, for the servant
does not know what his master is doing;
but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard
from my Father I have made known to you.”
- John 15:15*

** Read the book of proverbs and mark the verses that
specifically address friendships and their influence.*

INTRODUCTION

Question: How do you define a friend? What relational criteria has to be met, in order for you to consider someone to be a “friend”?

A local class of Christian Jr highers answered the question:
Who is a friend?

- A friend is someone who leads you in the right direction.
- It is a person you can trust.
- Someone who is always there for you
- Someone who doesn't put you down
- Someone who will stay by your side, no matter what.

Friendships are our realm of relational influence. Friendships can be an important avenue of expressing our Christ like influence toward others.

Some friendships are with Christians. These relationships may involve nurturing one another's faith, serving Christ together in an area of ministry, worshiping together, or attending a prayer meeting or Bible study.

Relationships with non-Christians may involve opportunities to share Christ and lead them to saving faith. These friendships may take place at work, school, sports teams or with neighbors. This involves our Christian lives pointing others to Jesus.

*A friend loves
at all times,
and a brother
is born for
adversity.

Proverbs
17:17*

FRIENDS IN GENERAL

How would you define or describe a friend? What relational criteria has to be met, in order for you to consider someone to be a friend?

For some, a friend is someone whom they like, for one reason or another. For some a friend is someone who treats them like they like to be treated. Or it can be simply someone who makes you feel

good. For certain, a friend is someone we like doing things with or someone with whom we enjoy spending time.

World's definition

“Friend” - One who shows him or herself to be friendly. What does that clarify??

Merrriam Webster.

- 1 *a* : one attached to another by affection or esteem
b : ACQUAINTANCE
- 2 *a* : one that is not hostile
b : one that is of the same nation, party, or group
- 3: a favored companion

My take on friendship is, a friend is someone with whom we experience a deeper connection or affection.

Biblical Perspectives

Consider asking yourself this question: *Why am I friends with those whom I consider a friend?* Try to think of specific friends.

Biblically

FRIEND - Abraham, because of the intimacy of his relations, was called “the friend of God” (2Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23). “Yahweh spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man ...unto his friend” (Ex.33:11). The mutual friendship of David and Jonathan (1Sa 18:1), from which the author is made to say, “The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul,” is another example. (ISBE)

Friendships are relationships with greater depth and meaning than other relationships.

Jesus called his disciples “*friends*”.

John 15:15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

From this we might determine that a friend is one with whom we share a significantly deeper level of trust and closeness. With a friend, we may feel the freedom or even the desire to share information or disclose more intimate thoughts.

In these deeper relationships we call friends, there are certain common elements. There is honest communication, mutual appreciation, trusting disclosure, and unconditional acceptance. Simply stated, a friend is someone with whom we seem to “click”.

Some truths about friendships:

Friendships take time to grow.

Friendships have to be built.

Friendships take work.

FRIENDS AND THEIR INFLUENCE

Friendships represent our realm of relational influence. Friends or acquaintances can offer both positive and negative influence.

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."

-1Corinthians 15:33

Negative Influences

Jon has some non-Christian friends in VoTech. Their influence is different than most of his other relationships, certainly different than those in his youth group at church. Dan and Matt are making some non-Christian friends at the YMCA playing pick-up basketball. These influences are certainly different and sometimes

are negative influences. Jon, Matt and Dan's influence, however, is an opportunity to have a positive effect on those on their ball team or in their classroom.

Other's negative influence on you

Prov. 19:6 Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.

This describes someone who is a “*friend*” to others, but only for their own selfish benefit. Just because you are a Christian with Christian friends, does not guarantee those Christian friendships will be meaningful or necessarily positive.

Negative influence also affects Christian and non-Christian marriages.

2Cor. 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

Someone once told me, “Our daughter is engaged to be married. Please pray for her fiancé to get saved.” I wanted to say, “Why don’t we just pray she doesn’t get married?” That would be a more Biblical prayer because God has already told us that believers are not to be unequally yoked or married to unbelievers. The result is a spiritually mixed marriage that God has clearly taught is unacceptable. I find it not merely amazing, but disheartening that so many Christians seem to feel no obligation whatsoever, to keep that commandment. They do not understand the Biblical command to separate one’s self from negative, non-Christian relationship commitments.

Just One Drop

Here’s an experiment to consider. Take a glass of fresh clean water and take a few drinks, enjoying its clean, pure



thirst quenching effect. Then think what would happen if you took one drop of water from your toilet bowl and dropped it into your glass of water. How clean is it now? How pure and satisfying does it sound now? What has changed? It was only a small drop of toilet water.

Obviously, one small drop of toilet water makes a great big difference when it comes to contaminating our drinking water. *This is **not** intended to imply that the non-Christian people in our lives are synonymous with toilet water.* However, it does mean that just as you'd never consider drinking that contaminated water, God says Christians should not consider marriage with an unbeliever and becoming unequally yoked.

It is far too common that the unbeliever's negative spiritual influence overcomes the believer's influence. It is far too *uncommon* for an unbeliever to be won over by a believer, although it certainly could happen. Regardless of the possibilities, God says "Don't do it".

Your negative influence on others

Friendships are also our realm of influence and impact on one another. It is possible for one Christian to have a negative influence on other Christians. When we fail to live our lives and treat others according to the Biblical relationships principles found in Scripture, we run the risk of having a negative influence on others.

<p>1Thes. 4:1 Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.</p>

It is God's will for us, that as Christians we look to other mature believers, in order to see the model of how we should treat others.

Paul urges the Thessalonian Christians. He says, “as you received from us how you ought to live...”. That means how they were taught, and how it was modeled. Can you imagine the influence on younger followers of Christ, when they see other older, more mature believers modeling an immature manner of dealing with other believers? That is a negative influence that is too often demonstrated to younger Christians.

We are to be a positive influence on both Christians and non-Christians alike. When we live this way, Paul assures us that we “*please God*”.

Positive Influences

Relationships take work. They can seem like rock piles to us. Friendships can be frustrating and even exasperating. But for every friendship that seems like a rock pile, there is a diamond of God’s purpose awaiting discovery, for those who are willing to endure what it takes to uncover that relationship treasure.

Other’s positive influence on you

Someone who knows and fears the Lord will be a positive influence on everyone he or she comes in contact with.

<p>Pro 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.</p>

The woman who fears the Lord will evidence that in her relationships with others and her life will be a positive source of spiritual knowledge and direction. And perhaps others may come to fear the Lord because of her.

Pro 12:26 One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

The one who fears the Lord, is not simply a generically good influence, but is a guide to others along the path of righteousness. When we fear the Lord and walk in the path of righteousness, some maybe not many, but some will surely follow with us. Therein, lies the diamond of God's will and calling in our friendships.

Caring Discipline

Most of us would not consider a friend as someone who offers discipline, certainly not a rebuke. But the true believer, who is a true friend will offer positive influence and genuine help through discipline or warnings if necessary.

1Th 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle....

The word *admonish* means to warn someone. If we truly care about our friends, we will be willing to find some loving and receptive way in which to warn them of their dangerous or disobedient behavior. This is not merely being nosey, it is caring enough to lovingly confront.

The problem is that most people, rather than appreciating another Christian pointing out their weaknesses, respond in a very negative or antagonistic manner. "What do you mean I treated her harshly?" "What business is it of yours, how I treat my wife? You ought to mind your own business." And away we go, down the road of "don't point out my faults, when you have your own."

Gal 6:1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Genuine Christian Love

A true, caring sister or brother in Christ will be willing to humble one's self, take the risk and look for an appropriate way to restore an erring believer. And to be sure, the goal of confronting a brother or sister in Christ of their sin, must be *restoration*.

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

A Christian friend or brother in the Lord, loves at all times. They do not shrink away from adversity or trouble, even if that trouble might cause an initial feeling of surprise or betrayal.

If we observed a rattle snake coiled under our friend's chair, we would not hesitate to warn him of the physical dangers slithering nearby. Likewise, if we noticed any character issue that threatened to adversely affect a friend's faith walk, we should not hesitate to do what is best for his or her spiritual state. We are to seek to restore in a spirit of gentleness. IT is the "spirit" which makes all the difference, making our input palatable, receptive or detestable.

*A friend is
not someone
who just tells
us how great
we are!*

Your Positive influence on others

1Thes. 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish (warn) the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

Warning is an important part of Christian care giving. Specifically Paul urges the Church at Thessalonica to warn those who are idle or wasting away their lives. The word *idle* means "unarranged". It can mean someone who is idle or one that is unruly, insubordinate to both leaders and the guidelines of Scripture.

They were also told to encourage the feeble minded or fainthearted. This may well be a fellow believer who finds it a day to day challenge to make right, righteous choices in the Christian life.

This person needs, whether they are willing to accept it, a helping hand, a word of direction, and some Godly advice on the issues of life and the choices that may or may not be God pleasing (1Thes.4:1).

They also need to help the weak and to be patient with all. These people who need help may be lacking spiritual strength, may be young in the faith or timid in their faith to live as God's word directs. They not only need words of strength and maturity, they also need examples.

We could say, a Christian friend is one who nurtures you in your faith journey with Christ, because they care.

*A friend is
someone who
is genuinely
interested in
our faith
development!*

PLEASING GOD IN OUR FRIENDSHIPS¹

Thessalonians 4:1 urges Christians to consider the mature Christ like example of others, and to do so *to please God*.

Nurturing Influence

Scripture instructs us to be caring, interested and nurturing the faith of others. In Genesis, following the first human death recorded in Scripture³, God asks Cain where his brother Abel had gone. Abel's response was, "*am I my brother's keeper?*" It seems that God's answer was intended to be "yes, I do expect you to be your brother's keeper!" In other words, God does expect us to be concerned and interested in the physical, as well as spiritual wellbeing of one another.

We should have an attitude of giving, helping and serving others who are in our lives. Everyone needs help sometime. We are all at different levels of spiritual health. There is always someone we

³ Gen.4:8

can nurture alone in the faith. There are also those whom God puts in our lives who are there to nurture *us* along in our faith. We are to warn the unruly, encourage the

fainthearted, help the weak and to exercise patience with everyone. That is God pleasing influence!

Evangelistic Influence

Most Christians live among and in close proximity to non-Christians. If you believe in the sovereignty of God, you surely must consider the possibility that God has put some non-Christians in your life for a purpose. We are not to become as those who live in darkness, but we are certainly called to live among the people of darkness, as lights which point them to Jesus.

Not long ago I was in the local Burger King drinking coffee and preparing for a counseling appointment. I had some notes out on the table, along with my Bible. A man from across the room walked over to me, sat down and asked me what I was doing, as he had noticed my Bible. I told him I was awaiting a counseling appointment. He said, “good, are you going to preach to them?”, indicating that is what he would do. I responded, “no sir, I hope to pray with them and encourage them to make their choices and treat one another as we are directed in Scripture. He said, “oh.”.

Evangelistic or ministry relationships are seldom “preaching” opportunities, but rather nurturing opportunities. Unless you are an evangelist preaching from a pulpit, your most effective evangelistic strategy may be living the Christ like life, in the presence of those living in darkness. It may mean, your language is different, along with your attitudes toward others. As you are around these people, they begin to realize your difference. Perhaps in conversation, you have opportunity to mention something about God or something the Bible teaches.

Making Life Work – application

How can I practically apply more of this topic of friendship influences into my own Christian life? Please consider the following suggestions.

Faith comes by Hearing

At first the unbelievers around you may not know what to make of you. Then over a period of time, they begin to ask you questions about God, the Bible or faith in general. Little by little, their secret respect for you begins to grow and they see you as someone they can confide in and trust. Before long, you have the opportunity to pray for this person regarding certain life issues. Gradually, you begin to encourage them in their own faith development and direct them to faith in Jesus.

This is an important process in faith formation for unbelievers. They need to both see the Christian life in action, as well as hear it's hope filled gospel message. For many if not most people, it is not a "sinner's prayer" that gets them saved. Salvation is an event that takes place, often times after a process of hearing and learning before they actually come to the point of saving faith in Jesus.

Rom 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Proper Understanding

In Matthew chapter 13, Jesus tells the parable of the sower. It is one of the few parables He actually explains for the disciples and for us. Following the parable, He reveals that the key to the failure of the good seed of God's word to grow and bear fruit in the heart of any hearer. It was ultimately due to a lack of *understanding*⁴. He goes on to tell the reason for the productivity of the good seed

⁴ Mat.13:13 | ⁵ John 2:11

in the good soil of the ready heart, was due to a proper *understanding* of the word⁴

In the gospel of John, Jesus is at the wedding in Cana where He turns the water into wine. John tells us that with that miracle, Jesus displayed His glory and the disciples put their faith in Him⁵. Notice who is described as believing in Jesus – the disciples or the followers or learners of Jesus.

This wasn't Jesus standing on a street corner preaching the gospel of the kingdom. This was an understanding that occurred, after having been learners of the life and ministry of Jesus, and during that time at the miracle in Cana, they believed.

An Important Question

Am I a True Disciple of Jesus?

Are you a true disciple of Jesus Christ? Then, would you say you are an *obedient* disciple of Jesus Christ? In order to be an obedient disciple of Jesus, we must be personally involved in disciple making⁶. That means helping others understand the life, claims and ministry of Jesus, so that they come to a proper understanding and saving faith in Him.

Luk 14:27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

A true disciple of Jesus is a genuine, obedient follower of Jesus. A true follower of Jesus is one who works at nurturing the faith of others, helping them to become disciples.

When we see it this way, we realize there is no such thing as a disobedient disciple of Jesus. If we are disobedient in making

⁶ Mat.28:19

disciples then we are not disciples at all. We either are disciples of Jesus because we are disciple makers, or we are not disciples at all, because we are not involved in helping others become His disciples.

Am I a true disciple of Jesus?

Making Life Work can take place when we see our friendships as realms of relational influence for genuine kingdom growth. We can see our challenging friendships, not merely as rock piles, but a search for the diamond of God's purpose and calling in helping others to discover the truth about Jesus. When we are involved in this kind of relationship with others, we are not only making life work for ourselves, but we are helping others take steps toward making life work for themselves – *for eternity*. There is no greater friend than that!

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: In what friendships have you been a good influence and a blessing to others? How? _____

Q: What friendships have affected you negatively? How? _____

Q: Has anyone ever lovingly confronted you in some area of lifestyle? What made it acceptable or detestable to you? _____

Q: Has God's Word ever convicted you of some area of life that you felt you needed to change? _____

-----*Praying It Through*-----

Loving Father, I know I have been a selfish friend at times, thinking mostly of myself. Forgive me for being so quick to speak my mind and so slow to hear the pain and needs of others. Help me to be a better friend, to love unconditionally and to be a Godly influence on those around me.

*In Jesus's name,
Amen!*



“My Life and Ministry: *Together For The Kingdom*”

Romans 12:16-18

February 10, 2013

(39) know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. (40) Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today, *that it may go well with you* and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time." - **Deu 4:39-40**

Theme: The Rock pile and the diamond of Church ministry relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Some of the greatest challenges in ministry, stem from filling positions, funding ministries and relational differences. We are presently engaged in a few nominations for committees and for ministry leaders.

Each of us need to consider the work involved, the time commitment, the need, as well as God's calling for you to get connected to some area of ministry. If not as a leader, then perhaps as a participant. And some of the greatest challenges as we work together for the kingdom of God, will be ministry related, relational differences.

Unfortunately many Christians perceive ministry as a rock pile that they are forced to endure, rather than privileged to enjoy. Part of *Making Life Work* is making the most of your most important relationships. Church fellowship and Christian ministry are all about relationships and these relationships are to be governed by God's Biblical relationships principles.

We will consider some of those today. It is this topic of Christian ministry relationships which is often at the root of ministry rifts and church splits.

[**READ** again Deuteronomy 4:39-40]

Applied to ministry relationships, we may understand that when we do ministry God's way and our Christian ministry relationships are in keeping with the relationship principles given to us in Scripture, then we can trust the fulfillment of God's promise to be accomplished and things "*will go well with*" us.

However, if we consider the flip side of that promise and we do not submit ourselves to God's Biblical guidelines for relationships, then we can only expect that it will **not** "*go well*" with us. *Making Life Work* means working on church and ministry relationships.

THE CHALLENGE OF CHURCH MINISTRY RELATIONSHIPS

We may think we can hide our self-focused attitudes and feelings, but we cannot. They will eventually show themselves in our

relationships, no matter how hard we may try to conceal them.

The ABC's of Ministry Relationships

Attitudes

Attitudes that cannot be concealed can impact our ministry.

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

It is good for those involved in ministry to take ownership of the ministry. That is good and healthy, as believers consider God's calling and purpose for their lives in their ministry. Therefore, the term, "my ministry" is fully appropriate.

However, possessiveness is never appropriate for the true follower of Jesus. No one but God can *own* a ministry. It is good to take ownership, but not possession. Thoughts like "this is *my* ministry" or "I've been involved in this longer than she has, so what right does she have to tell me what to do?" are inappropriate. These attitudes can present unnecessary relational challenges and have no place in the Lord's work.

Behavior

Living at peace with one another is a "*must do*" in the Lord's work.

Rom 12:16-18 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. (17) Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. (18) If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

When we feel as though things must be done *my way*, it may be a good indication that we are not going *God's way*. Threats to quit or leave are immature forms of manipulation. The best answer to living at peace in ministry relationships is not to separate, but to

work together to resolve our challenges which means some give and take.

Here are some suggestions for keeping peace in ministry groups.

The 4 “I s”

(1) Include others. No one likes to be left out. No one appreciates a “ministry hog” always making things go their own way. God has the people on your ministry team there for a reason. Help them discover how God may want to use them.

(2) Invite the input of others. Most people have ideas and desire to give meaningful input to a worthy cause. God can speak and give direction through people other than the Pastor, Sunday school teacher or deacon. We must allow for the input of others, in order for them to be a part of the team.

(3) Investigate the possibilities together. Some people are more creative than others. Some have broader network connections than you may have. What you consider to be a dead end, may come to someone else as a reminder of someone who might be able to help or resolve the problem. Once you experience this taking place, you may never want to do ministry alone again.

(4) Insert the ideas of others into the ministry plan. Being interested and giving your thoughts and input is taking ownership. Forcing your way, and disregarding the input and ideas of others amounts to being possessive and may actually squelch God’s working in the situation. When the input of others is appreciated, they thrive.

Time on the Bench

I enjoy coaching summer soccer teams. It’s not above my level of understanding and I like to watch the young athletes gain a love for the game and improve their skills throughout the summer. In this,

I have made a very important discovery; the longer a player sits on the bench, the more he loses interest in the game. Many times we have had an abundance of players, so we rotate them in and out. Those who sit on the bench, eventually began looking up their family members to go sit with them. Some would begin throwing rocks in the mud puddles. Others took up the game of tag. All had quickly become disinterested and distracted.

In ministry teams, it is important to remember the “4 I s”. If we fail to do this, people on our ministry team, will spend too much time on “the bench” being uninvolved, and may result in their loss of interest and possible disappearance altogether.

Considerations

Here, our focus is on the proper Biblical perspective of ministry relationships, which will be pleasing to God and will make life work in our ministries.

Consider others better than self

It is here that we must face our greatest antagonist in ministry, that is our selves. It is “self”, which Satan attempts to control. It is self which harbors unbiblical and non-Christ like attitudes regarding who I am and how I am to relate to others.

Philippians 2:3-4 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. (4) Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Involve everyone. Favor no one. Look for the value and diamond in the input of others. Putting other’s interests before your own, is hard enough in non-ministry relationships, but in ministry relationships there is much at stake. Missing God’s plan and purpose due to self-focused pursuits is a danger. Missing God’s blessing in a ministry, due to the selfish, divisive manner of some

will be costly. An attitude of division or possessiveness can quench the Spirit of God, restrict the flow of God's blessings and misdirect the purpose and outcome of an otherwise on-track ministry.

“consider others more important than yourselves”

“But if I do that, my ideas may not get implemented!” Yes, and as hard as it may be to swallow, that may actually be the Lord's will. I believe relationship integrity is at the core of every problem and the source of every blessing. Neglect God's Biblical relationship principles and not only will our Christian relationships suffer, but our ministries for the Kingdom of God will deteriorate. Strategies and game plans mean nothing, if the team work, ministry relationships and Christ like love are not being demonstrated. Not only does it matter *what* we do, it also matters *how* we do what we do.

Building Up or Tearing Down

Building up is often a challenge. Tearing down is easy. This addresses both attitudes, as well as motivation in ministry.

House of Cards

I used to be amazed to watch my Dad as he demonstrated to me how to build a house of cards. If you have ever attempted to build a house of cards, you realize it takes a lot of work and extreme patience. You have to work at carefully placing each and every card at its proper place. You have to exercise caution to keep from bumping the structure or even breathing on it, for that matter. You might take a long time, with a lot of TLC to build it up. Yet tearing it down is easy, even a baby can do that. Just bump it or blow on it, or perhaps even just stomp the floor or bump the table and it all comes crashing down.

If there is anything that comes easy to a Christian is criticism. We feel we are free to criticize the weakness and short falls of others, if we feel they are not measuring up to what we think they should be doing or how they should be acting. The truth is, if the tables were turned, others are able to look at each of us and find things to criticize us for. *Be thankful they don't!*

1Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

What I have found is that the people I hear criticizing the most are the ones who have their own faults which they are probably attempting to cover up. Criticism does a strange thing. Criticism does not simply highlight the flaws of the person being criticized. Criticism most significantly spotlights the flaws of the person doing the criticism. I have been around people who are criticizing another person, and people around them are looking at one another, as if to say, “Did I just hear him correctly?” Quite often the one doing the criticism is just as guilty, if not more so, than the one being criticized. Criticism most often lowers the “*criticizer*” lower than the ones being criticized.

This leads us to point number two, which is the core of our problems.

THE CORE OF OUR PROBLEMS

We are naturally self-focused

Because of our broken, fallen, sinful, human nature, we are all quite capable of criticizing, tearing down, and insulting others who we feel don't measure up. What is more difficult, and is in line with God's purpose in our ministry relationships is to be encouraging and building others up. People who have discovered

God's purpose and value in this, have discovered how to make a ministry work according to God's purpose and blessing.

Encouragement

Heb. 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

I believe the development of ministry relationships is just as important as the ministry itself. Relationships exhibit our character. Right relationships help others to develop and grow in their Christ-likeness and ministry relationships.

We are born knowing how to discourage. We have to work at learning how to break that sinful habit and becoming encouragers. Criticizers and discouragers, may cause people to work harder simply due to the fact that we don't want to repeat the same behavior that just got them insulted. That is negative influence. This leads to becoming a people pleaser.

However, encouragement actually causes people to want to change for the right reason, not to please the person who just criticized, but to strive toward increasing in Christ-like love and kingdom advancing good works. Wow! What a Biblical difference that presents.

Remember: Discouragement is normal. Encouragement is abnormal. Criticism is easy. Encouragement takes work. Tearing down causes people to change to please you. Building others up causes them to change for the right reasons – to please God. These are important in every relationship, in every ministry and in every endeavor, for every true believer in Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:3-4 (3) For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he

ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. (4) For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,

We are naturally self-focused, therefore we must be warned or instructed how to Biblically relate to one another for our kingdom work together.

Be like minded

Phil. 2:1-2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, (2) complete my joy by being of the *same mind*, having the *same love*, being in *full accord* and of *one mind*.

This does not mean we are carbon copies of one another. We don't all have the same thoughts or ideas. But we are expected to have like purpose, like goals, like direction. God does expect us to be able to work ***together*** to accomplish His kingdom work.

Clashes

Because of “self”, people and personalities tend to clash. Clashes tend to occur when we fail to be others focused. Ministerial relationships are intended to be teams. If the team wins, then that means every individual player on the team wins. If one person wins, then that means the entire team wins. We naturally excel at self-promotion. What we need to work on is excelling at promoting others and helping others win.

Excelling at Assists

During one basket ball game, “Jo” was expected to break the “1000 point” barrier. Everyone was paying careful attention and counting each basket that “Jo” made. Then the 1000th basket was sunk. The crowd erupted in applause, as “Jo” was acknowledged

for his accomplishment. Even the opposing team stopped and gave him some well-deserved high-fives and back-slaps.

However, after that bucket, “Jo” *and* the game changed dramatically. Each time “Jo” got the ball, he didn’t make the fast break or attempt to set himself up for another 3 pointer. He began making his way to about half court and began passing the ball away, and assisting others in scoring. It would have been very easy for “Jo” to continue sinking the baskets, but even when he was clearly open to drive to the goal, he looked for a team mate to make a quick pass, as he began excelling in assists on behalf of his teammates. This is what ministry is often about, helping others to excel in ministry by putting “self” after others.

Ministry Challenges

Are there ever times when we separate with someone in ministry? Perhaps. We know that Paul and John Mark separated in ministry. (Acts 15:36-40) They had a sharp disagreement and they went their separate ways in ministry. We know they disagreed. We know there were differing opinions as to whether or not John Mark should continue with them. Their concerns may have been valid. We are not told that they separated out of anger and bitterness.

There are times when one person’s vision is so strong and their passion so all-consuming for some perceived area of God’s calling, that to divert from that sense of calling in any way, would be to miss the call all together. Perhaps, if someone is convinced the leaders were leading in a direction they was not of the Lord’s directing and the leaders felt otherwise, then perhaps in order to keep the peace, separation may be wise. Sometimes a discerning, peaceful separation is far better than a nasty, divisive split.

BUT, to separate out of anger, bitterness, unforgiveness and neglect of attempting to reconcile according to Scripture, is wrong. Attempt to communicate. Attempt to seek peace. Attempt to

reconcile. Attempt to do all God expects of you in order to live peaceably with all men. Reconcile. But if you do feel it is necessary to go your separate ways, then it must be done peacefully, in love, and with great gentleness and humility. We are always obligated to conduct ourselves with Christ-like character. Christian Character is just as crucial in ministry relationships as it is with non-Christians. Ministry is often the proving ground for true Christ like character.

In the Lord's work, we are to be governed by the relationship passages in the Bible. We are called to evidence a higher quality of Christian living, being reflected in a deeper level of Christ like character.

As Christians, we are called to evidence a higher quality of Christian living, reflected in a deeper level of Christ like character.

THE WAY IT WAS MEANT TO BE

Church and ministry is not simply a reaching out, but also a developmental and maturing process within each servant. God means for all of us to minister at all times in an attitude of love and peaceful unity.

Peace with Passion

Each servant of Jesus Christ must be a minister of Peace with passion and diversity.

Unity of the spirit in the bond of peace

Ephesians 4:3 (ESV) [Be] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

This is non-negotiable.

Peace of Christ rule

Col 3:14-15 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (15) And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

This is God's expectation and calling for all. We often think of God's calling as a place or a ministry. What we sometimes fail to consider is God's call to holiness of character and peace in our ministry relationships.

We are called to a higher quality of Christian living, which is reflected in a deeper level of Christ-like character.

Gods Part In It All

God is not at fault in our ministry challengers, but He does have part in it.

Personalities

Personalities play a part in all relationships and in most ministry challenges. Some people are more detail oriented people. Some are more idea people. Some are more creative, or better teachers. Some may be good organizers or good fix-it people.

Some people are Type "A" personalities, then there are the rest of us who are normal. :))

God is a God of diversity. His plan is one of diversity.

"God made you special and He loves you very much."

- Bob the Tomato, *Veggietales*

We are all different, individual, unique, and specifically and purposefully, created and gifted for God's plan and purposes.

Spiritual Giftedness

It is often spiritual giftedness that causes challenges in our

ministerial relationships. We often have people with similar goals, focus, mission, passion and commitment,-- even the same love and vision. But different ideas and different personalities, along with different giftedness by God Himself, may contribute to the clash of Christian ministry relationships.

Rom. 12:6-8 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; (7) if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; (8) the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

1Co 12:4-12 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; (5) and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; (6) and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. (7) To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (8) To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, (9) to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, (10) to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. (11) All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (12) For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

Ministry takes a commitment to work on ministry relationships. It takes putting others first and acknowledging our differences, as well as God's giftedness for His service.

Things to consider in ministry differences:

- Personal preference vs God's purposes
- My life vs. their life
- My contribution vs their contribution
- My calling, vs their calling
- My ideas and input vs. their ideas and input
- My ministry interests vs. their ministry interests
- And Oh yes, God's will, vs. my own will.
- The importance of consistent growing Christian relationships in ministry is an ongoing challenge..

1Th 4:1 Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so *more and more*.

“more and more” – Pleasing God is the core and content of what we do. That involves demonstrating a Higher quality of Christian living, being reflected in a deeper level of Christ-like character.

Making Life Work – application

How do I allow the peace of Christ to rule in my life?

Col 3:12-17 (12) Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, (13) bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. (14) And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (15) And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (16) Let the word of Christ

dwelling in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (17) And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

v.12) “Put on” - When we get dressed, we tend to look into the mirror and think about how we look. Do I look cool, or pretty, or fashionable, or _____. Sometimes, we are more concerned about how we are dressed outwardly, than how we are dressed on the inside.

What’s in your closet? What’s in your spiritual closet? What are you wearing today? We can’t really tell until we engage in conversation or begin to disagree on some area of church life or ministry. Then our wardrobe begins manifesting itself. Then our love, and gentleness, and patience and the character of Jesus begins to shine through. Or we have a “*wardrobe malfunction*”. Anger, sarcasm, insult, demeaning comments may begin to be demonstrated.

3 Important Rules of Relational Etiquette

Listen Attentively – Am I giving my attention to what is being shared?

Understand Accurately – Am I getting the facts straight, the message clear, and the feelings accurate.

Respond Appropriately – Am I responding in a manner that would evidence a higher quality of Christian living, through a deeper level of Christ like character?

3 Important Questions to Ask

- 1) Do I demand my way, or do I allow others ideas to be considered?
- 2) Do I seek God's direction in ministry of all other influences?
- 3) When was the last time I pursued peace in a strained ministry relationship?

1 Possibility to consider

1) Have I thought about the source of where my problems are coming from? Ah yes, the enemy.

Spiritual attacks

Ephesians 6:12 ESV For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Always remember our enemy is not one another, it is Satan.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

-----*Thinking Things Through*-----

Q: How are you presently participating in ministry? How has that been working for you? _____

Q: What are some of the relationship challenges you've recently experienced in ministry? How did those differences work out? Were they resolved? Why or why not? _____

Q: How many of these challenges would you say were due to being sinfully selfish, or due to personality and/or differences in spiritual giftedness? _____

-----Praying It Through-----

Almighty God, what an awesome privilege to give myself to your service. It is amazing and yet challenging to serve you with some people in ministry. I have been hurt and angered. I acknowledge I have also hurt and angered some people. Please forgive me for my sins, and help me to be both forgiving and loving toward those I differ with, especially in the area of church ministry. Bless me to evidence a higher quality of Christian living, reflected in a deeper level of Christ like character.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!*

Don't close this booklet



Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior of *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; --
Romans 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come from
God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten
Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but
have everlasting life. --*John 3:16*

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him to die
in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal
life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- *Romans 6:23*

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of Jesus
Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still
sinners, Christ died for us. ---*Romans 5:8*

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." -- *Rom 10:13*

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he
gave the right to become children of God, - *John 1:12*

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you are
truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your
sins and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. *He already knows.*
- also Confess Jesus as you LORD.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:
Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,
Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

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May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit, in His Church and throughout our mission field.

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