

THAT THEY MAY BE ONE

Principles for Better Relationships

Challenge yourself: Think of the person you like the least.

Now ask yourself: “Why did Jesus come to this world?”

1. Two primary reasons Jesus came to earth:

- a. To reconcile us to the Father by His perfect life and death. (Rom. 3; 2 Cor. 5:7-21)
- b. To reconcile us to each other in perfect agape love relationships (which restore us to the image of God). (John 17:21-23; Eph. 2:13-18)

2. Jesus prayed for our unity: “That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17:21, NIV, 1984)

3. This is our Lord’s will for us—that we might be one so that the world will believe in Him.

“It’s not the opposition of the world that most endangers the church of Christ. It is the evil cherished in the hearts of believers. . . . On the other hand, the strongest witness that God has sent His Son into the world is the existence of harmony and union among men of varied dispositions who form His church.” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 549)

7 Principles for Better Relationships

1. Intercede in prayer for people instead of trying to change them or trying to do the Holy Spirit’s work yourself.

- a. Claim promises such as these: 1 John 5:16; Isa. 42:7, 16; Acts 26:18; Isa. 65:1; Jer. 24:7; Jer. 3:22; Ezek. 37:2, 3.
- b. As we spend time with the Lord, He may show us we are part of the problem or set a mirror before us so we can see our need for change. (Gal. 6:1-3; Luke 6:37, 38, 41, 42)
- c. Live the fruit of the Spirit and “preach” at others less.
- d. Take action only if the Holy Spirit leads us.

2. Respect diversity of temperaments and God’s created differences in people.

- a. The Lord has created and gifted us differently so the Body of Christ will have all its complementary parts. (Eph. 4:1-32)
- b. Sacredly regard the feelings and respect the rights of those with whom God has placed us in relationship.

“Marked diversities of disposition and character frequently exist in the same family, for it is in the order of God that persons of varied temperament should associate together. When this is the case each member of the household should sacredly regard the feelings and respect the right of the others. By this means, mutual consideration and forbearance will be cultivated, prejudices will be softened, and rough points of character smoothed. Harmony may be secured, and the blending of the varied temperaments may be a benefit to each.”
(*Child Guidance*, p. 205)

3. Assume the best about the motives and actions of others.

- a. Listen more. Seek first to understand clearly and then to be understood. Don't take things secondhand from secondary sources.
- b. “Christlike love places the most favorable construction on the motives and acts of others. It does not needlessly expose their faults; it does not listen eagerly to unfavorable reports, but seeks rather to bring to mind the good qualities of others.” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 319)

4. Follow Christ's specific instructions and do not talk to others about problems.

- a. Only say those things which can be helpful for building others up according to their needs. Even if something is “true,” don't talk to others if it can't help or resolve the problem. (Eph. 4:29-32)
- b. Follow the “gospel order” in all situations:
 - Matt. 18:15-17: When a brother in Christ sins against you—
Go to the person “alone” first.
If needed, take one or two others as witnesses.
Lastly, if needed, take it to the church for discipline.
 - Matt. 5:23, 24: If someone has “aught against you”—
Before you worship, go and seek to be reconciled.
 - Never talk to those who are not part of the situation or solution process.

5. Yield our “rights” and “expectations” to God.

- a. Jesus did not go around defending His rights or getting angry when His expectations weren't met. Many of our relationship problems are caused by our concern for our “rights.”

“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Ps. 119:165, KJV; see also Luke 6:27-36)
- b. There is a time for “tough love,” but be sure it's the Lord's will, not self-centeredness.

6. Praise God for the source of irritations.

- a. Make a list of the good things about the other person and praise God for those things.
- b. Pray for the “problem person” to be blessed. (Matt. 5:43, 44)
- c. Praise drives evil angels away.

“When things go crossways at your homes, strike up a song about the matchless charms of the Son of God, and I tell you, when you touch this strain, Satan will leave you.” (*Review and Herald*, Aug. 5, 1890)

- d. By beholding we become changed—so dwell on the good. (Phil. 4:4-8)

7. Five minutes can solve most difficulties if pride and self are laid aside!

“I saw that the remnant were not prepared for what is coming upon the earth. Stupidity, like lethargy, seemed to hang upon the minds of most of those who profess to believe that we are having the last message. My accompanying angel cried out with awful solemnity, ‘Get ready! get ready! get ready! for the fierce anger of the Lord is soon to come. His wrath is to be poured out, unmingled with mercy, and ye are not ready. Rend the heart, and not the garment. A great work must be done for the remnant. Many of them are dwelling upon little trials.’ Said the angel, ‘Legions of evil angels are around you, and are trying to press in their awful darkness, that ye may be ensnared and taken. Ye suffer your minds to be diverted too readily from the work of preparation and the all-important truths for these last days. And ye dwell upon little trials and go into minute particulars of little difficulties to explain them to the satisfaction of this one or that.’ Conversation has been protracted for hours between the parties concerned, and not only has their time been wasted, but the servants of God are held to listen to them, when the hearts of both parties are unsubdued by grace. **If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties.** Angels have been grieved and God displeased by the hours which have been spent in justifying self. I saw that God will not bow down and listen to long justifications, and He does not want His servants to do so, and thus precious time be wasted that should be spent in showing transgressors the error of their ways and pulling souls out of the fire.” (*Early Writings*, pp. 119, 120)