

RULES FOR RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS

23 April 2021

The Bible has the answers for all of life's questions. Christians go to the Bible for answers about many things, but they seldom look to God for answers concerning their relationships with others. If we would search the scriptures for those answers, we could learn to get along with each other.

SIX BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR RELATIONSHIPS

1. **TAKE THE LOWEST PLACE (Philippians 2:3-8).** Jesus Christ is our greatest example here (Lk 22:27). He is God almighty, the Creator of the universe, yet he humbled Himself, taking the form of a man, so that He might serve us.
 - a. The example is: the greater serves the least.
 - b. Serving others is visible, evident love and charity in which a person is showing a desire to make a relationship work, whatever the cost, whatever the inconvenience.
 - c. Since all of us are selfish (Phil 2:4, 21, 2 Tim 3:2, 1 Jn 3:17), we ought to serve others, appealing to their desire to be served, rather than to wait for them to serve us. Try it and see how it encourages a favorable response and strengthens that relationship.
 - d. If we would esteem others better than ourselves (vs 3), taking the blame (and rightly so) instead of blaming the other party for our problems, our relationships would flourish.
 - e. We need to think like Christ (vss 5-6). Even if you are higher, better, smarter, or wiser, making yourself of no reputation and taking the lower place will make your relationships better.
 - f. Don't expect perfection from the other party. We're all sinners. If we forget that, our relationships will fail. Taking the lowest place enables us to forgive other's imperfections.

2. **MAINTAIN THE LOWEST PLACE EVEN WHEN THERE IS NO RETURN (payback) (2 Cor 12:14-15).** Paul is our example here. He served the believers in Corinth, expecting nothing from them.
 - a. Many people continue their relationships as long as they're getting something in return.
 - i. If you are in the relationship because you love and care for that person, it will last.
 - ii. If you are in it for what you can get in return, you will leave, in search of someone who fulfils your every desire.
 - iii. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for me because He wanted a personal relationship with me. He knew I had nothing of value to offer Him in return.
 - iv. Enter your relationships for the benefit of the other person. That is a lasting bond.
 1. If your relationship is about how you will benefit from the other person, it will fail.
 - b. When you serve and care for others, don't do it expecting their appreciation; do it because you love them whether they appreciate you or not (**vs 15**). Do it for them, not for you.

3. **FORGIVE OTHERS NO MATTER HOW THEY TREAT YOU (Ephesians 4:31-32).**
 - a. No one has been as mistreated by others as Jesus Christ was. He said, "**Father, forgive them.**" His desire for a relationship with mankind was more important than mankind's mistreatment of Him.
 - i. Don't put a condition on your forgiveness. Forgive even if they don't apologize. Forgive even if they never forgave you. Do it for Christ's sake (vs 32).
 - b. Jesus gave Himself for men and women who didn't love Him because He loved us (**Eph 5:1-2**). He didn't do it for personal gain; He did it for love.

- c. If you don't give every effort to make your marriage relationship work, it will result in an extra-marital affair (**Eph 5:3-6**).
 - i. You desire to have a relationship. Make sure you make the right relationship work.
 - ii. People mistreat and abuse others when they don't get treated the way they want to be treated.
 - 1. We need to stop expecting something in return for our love and devotion.
 - 2. We need to be prepared to forgive others no matter how bad they treat us.
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4. **FORGET PAST OFFENSES (Philippians 3:12-14)**. You can't undo the past offense, but if you don't let it go, it will ruin your relationship. Forgive AND forget; don't bring it up again and again.
- a. Instead of looking back to past offenses, forgive, and look forward, and press toward the mark of being like Jesus Christ.
 - b. Instead of looking back to former sins, read the Bible every day and let Jesus Christ teach you how to move forward from that and how to live in a different way.
 - c. People quit their relationships because "*It didn't work out.*"
 - i. It didn't "*work out*" because you didn't do the WORK to MAINTAIN the relationship.
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5. **GOD IS A TRINITY (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)**. Because God is a triune Being, everything in His creation speaks of His eternal power and Godhead (Rom 1:20). This includes personal relationships. There will be 3 parties.
- a. Marriage: 1. Husband 2. Wife 3. Third party
 - i. If the third party is money, material things, in-laws, another man or woman, etc., the marriage will break down and fall apart.
 - ii. If the third party is Jesus Christ, the marriage will be a success.
 - b. Children: 1. Child 2. Parents 3. Third party
 - i. The third party may be TV programs, schoolmates, siblings, cousins, video games, social media, etc. Those things will wreck the parent/child relationship.
 - ii. Parents need to teach their children that Jesus Christ is their best friend.
 - c. Relationships that have Jesus Christ as the third party will be strong like a threefold cord.
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6. **IN ALL THAT YOU THINK AND DO, KEEP YOUR PARTNER IN MIND (Song of Solomon 8:5-7)**.
- a. The heart speaks of your emotions. The arm speaks of strength, activity (vs 6).
 - b. Death cannot eliminate love (vs 6). Floodwaters (trials) cannot drown out love.
 - c. Material possessions are not as valuable as your relationships with loved ones (vs 7).
 - i. Don't let any worldly thing interfere with your relationships. Relationships should always come first. They should be more important to you than any worldly thing.
 - ii. Love can withstand whatever tragedy comes your way.
 - iii. What are you investing in?
 - 1. If you live your life for money or material possessions and property, those things will become precious to you and make you covetous and weaken your personal relationships.
 - 2. If instead, you live your life for your family members, they will become precious to you and they will become relationships that will stand the tests of time and eternity.
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