

*Building Quality
Relationships*

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Chapter One

Differing Levels of Relationships

The level of your relationships with friends, associates and Christians will vary. Jesus had twelve disciples, but when He pulled apart from the crowds to pray, He took only three with Him—Peter, James and John. Repeatedly, Jesus called these three to Him. His level of relationship with them appeared to be more intimate than with the other disciples.

Jesus had a quality relationship with Lazarus, Mary and Martha. When Lazarus became ill, Mary and Martha sent for Jesus, but He didn't come in the time frame they expected Him to come. At some point in time, everyone faces disappointments in relationships. Mary and Martha were disappointed because Lazarus died, yet they knew Jesus could have healed him. When Jesus did arrive, He raised Lazarus from the dead.

We are talking about all kinds of relationships: between a father, mother, husband and wife, son, daughter, brother, sister, a relative, guardian, or business associate.

Many people have difficulty relating to others. You can take the principle of faith and believe for quality relationships, whether it is on a business level, a friendship level, a spiritual level, or in the marriage, home and family.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32 NIV

Chapter Two

Establishing Right Relationships

You must go to the right places to establish right relationships. It amazes me that people will go to a bar looking for a husband or a wife. Then, when the marriage doesn't work out, they wonder why.

When people have major problems in their life that have not been solved and you hook up with them, you simply multiply your problems.

Some people get into relationships out of the wrong motivation. For those considering marriage, you should become related with someone of the opposite sex in a friendship relationship first on the basis of your mutual pursuit of Jesus Christ rather than on the basis of a romantic relationship or a physical attraction.

As a friend, you are called to do whatever you can to lift a person to be closer to Jesus than ever before.

- Are the people you associate with bringing you closer to Jesus Christ?
- Do they make you want to love Him more and live for Him more fervently?
- Do they make you want to read the Bible and pray?

Your relationships should be with people who are seeking God first in their own lives. That doesn't mean you will no longer relate to people who aren't saved. Jesus was a friend of sinners. He mingled with those who weren't serving God. He ate a meal with Zacchaeus while he was still a sinner. He spent time with people who weren't right, but He was always there for a two-fold purpose: 1) To lift their lives; and 2) To call them into relationship with God.

Testing a Person's Motives

It doesn't hurt to evaluate the motives of those with whom you are closely associating.

Here are six simple tests to help you determine another person's motives:

1. *Do they verbally confess Jesus as Lord?*

Paul said, **"No one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit"** (1 Corinthians 12:3).

First John 4:2,3 says:

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,

And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

2. *Test their spirit.*

First John 4:1 says, **"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."** If you are born again, the Spirit of God within you will bear witness with the Spirit of God in another person.

3. *Check the fruit that is coming from the person's life.*

Jesus said, **"By their fruits you will know them"** (Matthew 7:20). In Galatians 5:22,23, Paul identified the fruit we should be bearing in our daily lives as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

4. *Is a genuine, Holy Ghost love for other people being manifested in this person's life?*

Jesus said, **"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"** (John 13:35).

5. *Check the person's doctrine. Does it line up with God's Word?*

Second John verse 9 says, **"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son."**

First John 2:22,23 says:

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. If a person doesn't believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Bible says their doctrine is off. If you reject the Son, you reject the Father. God is Father only to those who have made Jesus Lord of their lives.

6. *Check the person's actions.*

First John 5:3 says, "**For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.**"

Is the person obedient to the Word?

By evaluating the motives and fruit in people you closely associate with, you will know how to relate to each one more effectively.

Chapter Three

To Have Friends, Be Friendly

A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Proverbs 18:24

The friend who sticks closer than a brother is Jesus Christ. If you are going to have friends and have quality relationships, you must be the kind of friend others would like to have as a friend.

Emptiness and frustration often occur in people's lives because they are seeking from another person that which only God can be in their lives. God wants to be your all in all. He wants to satisfy your life. When you find your fulfillment in Him, He will make you into the type of person others will want as a friend.

When people first come into the Kingdom of God, they sometimes have difficulty relating to Christians who have different goals. To learn to relate to one another, *each person must be friendly*. If you are open and friendly with other people, they will be open and friendly back to you.

There is a story of two different people going into the same town. Someone asked one of these people, "What kind of people are in that town?" He said, "They are all bad people. No one is happy. They are disappointed and discouraged." The other person was asked, "What kind of people did you meet in this town?" He responded, "They are nice people, friendly and kind."

It was the same town, so what was the difference? One person went in with an unfriendly attitude of discouragement. The other person went in with an attitude of friendliness and kindness. What's on your face and in your heart will often bounce back at you from someone else!

You can have an unlimited number of friends if you will be friendly. Wherever you meet people, even if it is an instantaneous relationship formed through circumstances rather than an ongoing thing, it can be quality. You can still impart something wonderful into their lives and receive from them as well.

I have great joy in my relationship with my children. We enjoy genuine conversation and fellowship on a continual basis. Be encouraged to know you can have quality relationships with people of all ages.

Proverbs 17:17 says, "**A friend loves at all times.**" Have you ever heard the term "fair weather friends"? When things are going great and you are riding high, they are there, but when the tough times come, sometimes these people cannot be found.

Why not be the one to reach out to your friends when they are going through a difficult situation? What a wonderful testimony to hear of a person who has reached out to others who are ill, shut in, or have gone through a difficulty. Many of these people tell us, Thank God, someone reached out and touched my life. They loved me, even though I was messed up!"

Be a friend in all kinds of weather.

Chapter Four

Letting Love Cover

And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8

Sometimes a marriage relationship will go through difficult times, because each person wants a perfect mate. The person you marry will probably be different than the way you envisioned them to be. Often, people try to change their mate to make them into the image they have in their mind of them. In the process, they assume the work of the Holy Spirit in hammering and chiseling away. It's called "nagging."

I recall talking with a couple going through great difficulty because one continually hammered at the other to change this and that. A marriage relationship is not based upon a person doing or being everything just like you want them to be. You are to accept them with an unconditional love—a love that is unchanging that is able to cover a multitude of sins.

We used to hear the expression, "Please be patient with me. God is not finished with me yet." The truth is, we are all in the process of maturing in Christ—no one has arrived!

In our society right now, if a marriage partner doesn't change and become perfect overnight, the other partner often looks for a quick "out," with the excuse, "I don't love you anymore." One of the reasons for divorce is that people have not learned to love with an unconditional love. They have not learned that love covers a multitude of sins.

Unconditional love is the basis for lasting friendship.

Chapter Five

Eliminating Jealousy and Strife

A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.

Proverbs 16:28

A *perverse* person is one who is wicked, unclean, or devilish. A gossip, a whisperer, or a slanderer is out to separate and divide.

When you have meaningful relationships, there will often be someone who is jealous of them. They will try to divide and separate those friendships, because they don't have a similar relationship in their life. The devil knows that two people with a quality relationship have power ten times greater than their individual power. The principle of Deuteronomy 32:30 applies: **"How could one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight?"**

A whisperer separates chief friends. This means if you are going to build quality relationships, you cannot listen to gossip about the people with whom you are establishing a relationship.

I have seen married people listen to a so-called friend talk about their mate and point out the mate's faults. Their words drove a wedge between the couple. As a married person, don't listen to a negative report about your mate. If there is something to work on, to deal with, to pray about, to encounter, or to change, that is a different issue. I have seen the adverse effects of a mother's negative words on a daughter's marriage relationship.

Your ears don't have to be a garbage dump to someone else's junk. Don't allow someone to dump their perversion in your spirit. I have watched close friends, ministry friends and spiritual friends be separated by listening to negative words.

Guard your friendships.

Chapter Six

Dealing With Offenses

Jesus taught us how to handle offenses in Matthew 18:15-17. To maintain quality relationships, we need to follow His instructions:

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Many people who are offended in a relationship will shove it under the rug and allow it to become a festering cancer of bitterness on the inside of them. If you are going to build quality relationships with your husband or wife, with a son or daughter, in business, in ministry or in the church, go to the person who has caused the offense. In humility and meekness, ask if you understand properly what they said or did.

Many of the things people get offended over were never intended as an offense. The devil twists it in a person's mind and makes it look or sound like an offense. If you take it that way and hammer away at someone, you may find that their whole intention and purpose were not for bad against you, but it may have been for good.

When you take the time to confront when there has been an offense, usually you will regain a brother or sister, husband or wife, and you will remove the offense. If the person does not receive you and the offense isn't resolved, take someone with you, not to stack the case against the other person, but so you can have an objective viewpoint.

In a disagreement, some situations look very slanted when you look at them from your own viewpoint, but when it gets out in front of other people, there is a broader perspective.

I don't believe this means each Sunday we're to air difficulties that aren't settled among the people. Instead, bring it to the leadership of the

church. Let the spiritual leaders meet with both individuals. If a brother or a sister will not be reconciled in a relationship, then they are a danger to the entire Body in the sense that the venom of bitterness in them is contagious and can spread to other people. There have been times we have had to ask people to step out of ministry involvement because their attitude was affecting other people. That's the only purpose for it. We're not to kick people out of the Kingdom of God, but those in positions of leadership should pray for these people to have a change of heart so they can be restored with a right attitude.

To reconcile:

1st-Go to the person privately to listen and share.

2nd-If it is not reconciled, take two or three others to arbitrate the disagreement.

3rd-If there is no reconciliation, tell the spiritual leaders of the church to get their help.

Chapter Seven

Keeping Your Focus on Jesus

One thing that causes a relationship to be less than it should be is when people expect more from the relationship than God intends. Sharon and I went through this situation when we were engaged. We began to look to each other as our source rather than to God, and God dealt with us that we had to get our eyes back on Him.

Some relationships are like that where you cling to a particular person as if they were your life. We must find our joy and fulfillment in Jesus Christ. We cannot make any person our God and expect our relationships to be all that God intends them to be.

If you are going to have good relationships, don't borrow money from your friends, and don't be the one to loan money to others. I have seen many broken relationships in our church over loans. If you are going to give money to someone, then release it as a seed. Bless the person so you are released from it. If you can't give it freely, then think twice about loaning it. Although people mean well and intend to pay it back, in many cases it is never repaid.

If you are the one in need, it would be better for you to believe God for your finances. It would be better for God to provide the money than for you to get it in a loan from an individual person. If you must borrow, consider a bank or loan company that gives you a payback plan with interest.

Romans 13:8-10 says:

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

You can wrap the Ten Commandments up in one law—"**Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them**" (Matthew 7:12).

Chapter Eight

Sowing Into the Lives of Others

Here are three important keys for strengthening quality relationships.

1. *Be a good listener.*

Learn to listen with your heart as well as with your ears. There are times when people talk but what they are saying isn't what they really mean. Instead, there is a need for someone to acknowledge them or speak to them. God gave you one mouth and two ears. That means you need to listen twice as much as you talk!

2. *Recognize that others need your strength and your touch.*

A few years ago, Paul Chase, one of our missionaries in the Philippines, called me and said, "Billy Joe, we are grateful for your support, but what we desire more than anything is a relationship with our home church."

There was a time when we sent people out without a thought about the need of a relationship with them on the field. I mean, we said, "Bon voyage. See you later!" With over 130 different people in various parts of the world in addition to a church staff and several thousand members, it was beyond me to keep a personal relationship with each missionary on the foreign field.

After talking with Paul, God dealt with me that there had to be a relationship. As a result, we developed a Missions Correspondence Department where someone can communicate with our missionaries on the field on a regular basis. Now there is someone who not only gives them the information they need, but a special touch of love and care. Our missionaries are stronger because of a lifeline that is coming to them regularly.

Ephesians 4:11-16 says:

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

Till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—

From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Each part of the Body supplies strength to the other joints or parts, so we are compacted together by the love of God and built up into the fullness that God intended. This means *there is someone who needs your relationship. They need your input!*

3. *What you sow is what you will reap.* Galatians 6:7-10 says:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Too often, we have limited these verses to giving and receiving, but they are also applicable to relationships.

Paul is saying, "If you have an opportunity to do good and plant into someone's life, especially those who are of the household of faith, then take that opportunity, because the day is coming when you will have a reciprocal relationship coming back to you."

Many people in the church world today are like islands. They feel like they don't need anyone. They are so busy with their job, family and everything else that they don't want a relationship with the rest of the Body of Christ until they have a need. Then they wonder, "Where is the church?"

You will receive a return on that which you have planted in relationships. At Victory Christian Center, the people who are plugged into

a Care Group, a Sunday school class, a youth group, or another outreach group in the church will have someone to stand with them in times of difficulty. To have that type of relationship come back to you requires an investment.

This is where a lot of people get offended at the church. They say, "No one was there when we needed them." The question is, "Where are people related?" If they aren't plugged in anywhere, no one is aware of their need. As a result, there is a sense of being alone.

We need one another! You may be thinking, "I don't need anyone right now. Everything is going good." You are healthy and making a lot of money. You do things on the week-ends, and you are too busy at night. You don't have any time for other relationships.

It may not always be that way. Things can change and suddenly you need others. What about the people who are in need around you? When you are strong and things are right in your life, other people need *you* to be a strength to them.

Paul said, "**Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ**" (Galatians 6:2).

Chapter Nine

Reconciling Differences

Jesus said, "**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God**" (Matthew 5:9).

Sonship is evidenced by peacemaking. As we work and live close together, there is an opportunity for differences. To reconcile our differences, there are some basic attitudes we must possess.

1. *Humility*. It is easy to identify the speck in another person's eye, but it is hard for a proud person to see the log in his or her own eye. First Peter 5:5 says, "**Be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**"

2. *Self-control*. The wrath of man cannot produce the righteousness of God. To reconcile your differences you must be able to calmly discuss the issues and the facts, share your heart and be a good listener.

3. *Repentance*. First John 1:9 says, "**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**" We must repent of our sins toward God and also be willing to repent to others for sins we have committed against them.

4. *Faith*. Never lose faith that a difference can be reconciled. God could have looked at the human race and said, "*Irreconcilable*," but He never lost sight of His original vision to have a relationship and fellowship with man.

5. *Honesty*. Differences can be settled where people are willing to speak the truth in love, put all the facts on the table and allow the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to settle it.

Paul said *we are to speak the truth in love*. (Ephesians 4:15.) When you are in a relationship and something isn't right, go to the person in an attitude of love and speak the truth, because the relationship degenerates when things aren't the way they should be. Speaking the truth in love will usually clear up misunderstandings.

This is the hard part for many people in relationships, because we have the attitude that we don't want to confront and we don't want clashes. We like to be at peace with all people, but if something isn't the way it should

be, if we keep ignoring it, it will never get better. It is better to talk it out in a spirit of love at an early stage in the relationship rather than let volcanic pressure mount to an explosion stage!

When Sharon and I were dating, we attended marriage seminars and read several books on marriage. We agreed that if something ever bothered one of us, we would confront it in love.

If we are going to have quality relationships, we must be responsive to reproof and correction.

Proverbs 15:31-33 says:

The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise.

He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.

The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility.

Proverbs 27:6 said, "**Faithful are the wounds of a friend.**" A faithful friend will speak the truth to you.

As a church, almost every week we receive constructive criticism, reproof, or correction from the members of our congregation who observe things that need to be altered. We tell our staff, "Don't be defensive about things you think should be a certain way. Instead, be responsive and analyze the input from their point of view."

It's like the old saying about walking in another person's moccasins before making a judgment. Be open and willing to receive rebuke and correction.

Pride will keep you from receiving reproof and correction. When we are proud and think we've arrived, we can't receive correction from anyone. Then relationships stagnate. They can go no further when there is a breakdown or a difference and it is not resolved. God wants us to be able to remove the hurdles and obstacles out of relationships so they can grow stronger, richer and better.

If you had a relationship with a loved one that was broken years ago and it has never been reconciled, humble yourself and call or write the person, asking their forgiveness. Open yourself up for correction, and allow them to share what is happening in their life. You may have to take some very bitter words, but as it comes out, there can be a miracle of healing and restoration in that relationship.

6. *Love*. To reconcile differences, there must be compassion for the other person. Your motive must be to restore rather than to punish.

Ephesians 4:1-3 says:

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,

With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Now is the time to reconcile differences and build quality relationships. It will take time and effort, but the rewards will be worth it. You have much to give and much to gain. Don't allow past failures in relationships stop you from building new ones. God did not call you to be an island, but He called you to be a part of His Body.

PERSONAL PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

Father, I desire to have quality relationships in my life. I now realize that the greatest relationship I can ever have is with Jesus Christ, the Friend Who sticks closer than a brother. I want to know Him, to fellowship with Him, to listen to Him, to spend time with Him and to allow Him to speak the truth into my life.

To have this type of relationship, I first renounce every work of darkness and repent of all sin. Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God and that You died on Calvary as my Substitute, paying in full for all of my sin, sickness, poverty and spiritual death. I receive you today as my personal Lord and Savior.

Lord Jesus, empower me with the Holy Spirit so I will first be an effective witness of You. Secondly, I need the Holy Spirit to strengthen me to be a strong builder of quality relationships, not only in my own life, but in the lives of others.

Thank You, Father, for perfecting me and everything that concerns me in Jesus' name. Amen.

Signature _____

Date _____



BILLY JOE DAUGHERTY is founder and pastor of Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Victory has a Christian school, Bible Institute and Missions Training Center. Other Victory outreaches include taking the gospel via radio and television to North America, along with shortwave radio and television to other nations, plus the distribution of books, tapes, and videos. He and his wife, Sharon, minister God's healing, saving, and delivering power as a team. Their family works alongside them in the ministry.