Building an Indestructible Life

*Positive Personal Relationships*

Matthew 5:21-26, 43-48; 7:12

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Introduction

1. Let's start with something that we likely can all agree on, and that is, what none of us want in our lives:
   1. We don’t want strife, enmity, jealousy, anger, arguments, factions, envying. We don’t want to be miserable. We don’t want relationships that are unstable.
   2. What we do want in our lives regarding relationships are peaceful, harmonious, positive relationships: love, happiness, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness. So that we all are encouraged in our Christian walk. This is what we want….
2. What does God want for us in our lives regarding personal relationships?
   1. Galatians 5:22-23 (also 5:19-21) love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
   2. Ephesians 4:1-3 …with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

*So, this is what we want…this is what God wants. How are we doing at this particular aspect of our Christian walk? Is there room for growth in this area?*

1. It’s not difficult to have positive relationships when times are good.
   1. Who has a pet that you dearly love? Why do you love it?
      1. Why do you love your pet so much?
      2. Do you and your pet ever argue?
      3. Does your pet ever say mean things to you?
      4. Does your pet ever talk about you behind your back?
   2. So, with pets it is not difficult to have a peaceful harmonious positive relationship. Why?
      1. They don’t disagree.
      2. They don’t get mad at you.
      3. They don’t care if you say something mean or spiteful.
   3. When do personal relationships become difficult? How do we handle ourselves and conversations in these crucial moments?
      1. They are difficult when…
         1. We disagree.
         2. We have to make difficult decisions.
         3. We feel hurt by someone’s words or actions.
         4. Jealousy, envy, faction, strife, anger is in play.
         5. We are tired.
         6. We are betrayed.
      2. How do we handle it? How do we want to handle it?
         1. Disagree? My position is right. My opinion is correct. And what we don’t want to admit…is that I think my opinion is more important/valuable than yours.
         2. Hurt? Lash back. Put the bully in his place. Inflict same or more harm on the other person.
         3. Wrong? Save face. Defenses up. Deflect. Bring up something they’ve done wrong.
         4. Betrayed? Ruin them. Make them feel as bad or worse.
      3. What is our basic instinct? What do we want to do….? The fact is we know the answer to these questions…because we have similar feelings in these situations. And the truth of the matter is that we’ve all reacted badly and not followed biblical principles when we’re hurt or feel like we’re being attacked.
2. What does the Bible say about how I should act in these crucial moments?
   1. Look at SELF.
      1. Do we do this? Do we look at ourselves? When things are falling apart, do we tend to take a good look at self?
         1. Absolutely not! We focus on and/or blame the other guy.
         2. When things begin to go badly, we convince ourselves that it is the other guy’s fault. **(*the problem is that he’s doing that too!*)**
         3. Worse yet, we use the other guy to justify our bad behavior: “I probably should not have said that, but he just made me so mad!”
         4. Scriptures that obligate me to keep my cool and do right, even when the temperature is turned up (Ephesians 4:26, Proverbs 17:27-28, Proverbs 12:18; Proverbs 10:19; James 1:19-20).
      2. Why is focusing on self so important in maintaining positive relationships?
         1. I am rarely innocent.
            1. We tend to maximize the faults of the other guy and minimize the “minor flaws” that we have.
            2. A heaping dose of Matthew 7:1-5. We CANNOT help others in this relationship until we have fixed ourselves.
            3. Even if my fault is comparatively smaller, I still need to begin by looking at self and becoming the person I need to be to improve the relationship.
         2. I am the only person I can change.
            1. I cannot make the other guy do better, but I can make myself do better!
            2. So, start with something we can fix. When a relationship is going badly, I cannot sit back, blame the other guy and wait for him to do something to make this better…which is what typically happens.
            3. The spiritually mature Christian will think: **I need to do something** to make this better.
            4. Why is this so hard to do? We are accustomed to focusing on OTHERS and convince ourselves that this problem cannot be resolved until the other person gets fixed.

*I know WHO I need to start with, but WHAT do I do with me?*

* 1. Start with HEART.
     1. This principle drives us to evaluate our motive in a relationship.
     2. Motive = the engine that drives our words and actions. Before we can ever achieve the outcome we desire, we have to know what the desired outcome is…what we want. What are we really after? MOTIVE.
     3. Ask these questions to identify our motive:
        1. What do I want out of this?
        2. What do I want for the other person?
        3. What do I want for this relationship?
     4. This is really tough!
        1. Sometimes I have to wade through emotions – anger, fear – and not allow those to shift my motive to something destructive. For example, when my best friend insults my beliefs, my motive is not to win the debate, but to win them for Jesus.
        2. Sometimes I have to think bigger and look further. It’s not about winning a battle. It’s about winning the war!
     5. James 1: 26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.
     6. Colossians 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.
     7. Ephesians 4:29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

1. As Christians we always must be “the better person” or take “the high road.” This means being Christlike! We never get to have the perfect comeback or zinger to harm someone. We must always show respect. We must always show love. Why? Because, that person was made by God with a body and a soul. And Jesus made a tremendous sacrifice for that person. And my ultimate reason for being here on this earth is to reflect Christ’s love in everything I do.
   1. Relationships take work. God provides the tools, advice, and commands to help us.
   2. The Greatest Commands (1 John 4:7-8; Luke 10:27; 1 Cor. 13). 1 Cor 13 is powerful; powerful because it is so very practical. It puts hands and feet on Jesus’ command to love one another (John 13:34-35). It tells us what that command looks like (I Corinthians 13:4-7).
   3. Love bears and endures. It calls to mind the commandment of unity Paul mentions (Ephesians 4:1-3).
   4. But what are we to do with the other things he mentions: believes and hopes ALL THINGS. What does that mean?
      1. We know it cannot be taken at face value … that we believe ANYTHING. But what does it mean?
         1. Love patiently accepts all things. It trusts. It hopes. And it endures.
         2. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.
         3. Of those whom we love, we tend to believe the best. We trust them that they act with the best motives; therefore, we will not judge or condemn them on fragmentary evidence. Even when circumstances are adverse, love hopes for the best (Harkrider).
      2. If he is correct about the meaning of Paul’s words, then this verse exposes a significant failure on the part of most disciples. WE DON’T DO THIS.
         1. If there is a negative way to interpret words, expressions, behaviors, that’s where we tend to go! Our impulse is the opposite of what it should be.
         2. As we do this, we expose hypocrisy in ourselves. We want others to assume the best about our actions. We do not want others to assume the worst in us (Matthew 7:12).
      3. To illustrate: when the subject is a child’s actions, how desperately do parents want others to assume the best about their child? …even to the point of being blind to bad behavior?

We want the same thing that God wants in our lives: peaceful, harmonious, positive relationships so that all are encouraged and that God is glorified.

1. Look at SELF
2. Start with HEART
3. Show biblical LOVE