

“Community Papers for Small Groups”

Dialogue questions for helping each other in the Christian walk this week.

November 6, 2011 Cypress Bible Church Dave Gibson

The truth: Having great relationships with others...always starts with a great relationship with Jesus.

Introduction:

Here’s a shocker: Relationships are difficult. Some are more difficult than others of course but in many relationships we can feel pretty helpless. And much of the quality of a given relationship does depend on the relational skills and attitudes of the other person.

While we do not control over other people in their relationship choices we do have a very high leverage way to be skillful in our own relationships.

The way to be skillful in our relationships, counterintuitive though it may seem, is to cultivate our relationship with Jesus. The better my relationship with Jesus the better my relationships will be with others. The more distant I am from Jesus, the more my relationships with others will be messed up.

Colossians 3:18-4:1 makes it so clear that great relationship with others always start with a great relationship with Jesus.

Getting Started:

- Have you known someone who moved away from Jesus and then experienced increased relationship struggles with others? What happened and what did it look like?
- Have you known someone who suddenly drew very near to Jesus and then experienced increased health in their relationships with others?

Examining the Text:

- Please read Colossians 3:18-4:1.
- What are the seven references in this passage to having our relationship with Christ impact and control our relationships with others?
- How would you summarize—in two or three principles—the guiding truths from these seven references?

- From verse 23: This is written to first century slaves but what is the principle that we can follow from this command?
- As you look at the commands given to each “role” (wife, husband, child, father, slave, and master) in these verses are there any parallels to the way that God relates to us?

Examining our lives:

- Please read the following “Top Ten List!” and pick out a single action that you need to take in order to be closer to Jesus.
- Please read the following “Top Ten List!” and pick out a single action that you need to take in order to improve the health of one of your relationships.

Top Ten Ways!

Top ten ways to draw near to Jesus:

1. *Read* the Bible every day.
2. *Pray* throughout the day—like a hacking cough—pray every few minutes.
3. *Study* one of the Gospels carefully—Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.
4. *Read* one Proverb every day and look for the character of Jesus in that Proverb.
5. *Write down* 25 things that Jesus has done for you and thank Him for them.
6. *Try something new* in dealing with an area of continual disobedience in your life.
7. *Make a list* of 45 things that are true about Jesus and praise Him for each one.
8. *Read *The Jesus I Never Knew** by Philip Yancey.
9. *Reflect* on the return of Jesus to take us to heaven and think about your own readiness for that day.
10. *Find* a quiet, lonely place and *read* the entire Gospel of Mark.

Top ten ways for a wife to be subject to her husband:

1. Engage him with respect.
2. Engage him with grace.
3. Engage him with truth.
4. Engage him on difficult issues in the appropriate setting.
5. Never ridicule him—in private or in public.
6. Never belittle him—especially to your children—but never.
7. Beware of your language and metaphors when talking about him.
8. Give him input and then respect the decisions he makes.
9. Verbalize your pride in him whenever you can and for whatever you can.
10. Don’t roll your eyes, name call, sneer, or say, “Whatever!” in tense conversations.
11. Bonus: Don’t compare him to other husbands.

Top ten ways for a husband to love his wife:

1. Verbalize your love for her.
2. Verbalize your pride in her whenever you can and for whatever you can.

11. Affirm her and praise her in front of your children, friends, and everyone.
12. Make sacrifices to help her.
13. Figure out her “love language” and respond in that language. (gifts, quality time, acts of service, physical touch, words of affirmation)
14. Surprise her with flowers, acts of service, or gifts that she was not expecting—a non-special day act.
15. Cowboy Up! and do something romantic! But do not follow it with sarcasm or a goofy disclaimer or humor.
16. Be present when you are present.
17. Give your children nurture and structure.
18. Provide for her and do your best to address her fears and insecurities.
19. Bonus: Always engage her before making a decision or a change.

Top ten ways for a husband to not be embittered against his wife:

1. Do not hold a grudge against her for any harsh words or ugly metaphors.
2. Do not hold a grudge against her for any belittling actions.
3. Do not hold a grudge against her for ways she may have belittled you in front of others.
4. Always go to her to initiate reconciliation after times of alienation.
5. Never make mental or verbal comparisons of her to other women.
6. Examine your expectations of her to see if they are biblical and reasonable.
7. Respect her opinions and do not view differing opinions as disrespectful.
8. Never assume you know her motives. (You may not even know your own.)
9. Stay in relationship connection with her and work to draw near to her.
10. Practice the eleven ways to love her listed above.

Top ten ways to children to obey their parents in all things:

1. Do the thing they are telling you to do right away—no delays, no “I’ll do it later.”
2. Do not sass them.
3. Give input and opinions without rebellion and without “copping an attitude.”
4. Never belittle them behind their back while you are on the way to a grudging compliance.
5. Develop habits of doing what you are supposed to do so that you do not need to be told repeatedly.
6. Never bring up the failings of your siblings.
7. Tell the truth, fess up to sin, and never project blame on your innocent siblings. (At least “innocent” in this particular incident. To have a truly innocent sibling you would have to be a half-brother or half-sister of Jesus.)
8. Do not be deceptive!
9. Do not go ask Mom if Dad already said, “No.” And vice versa.
10. Do forgive your parents when they need forgiveness

Top ten ways for fathers to exasperate their children:

1. Provide all “structure” and no “nurture.” (All rules and no relationship.)
2. Provide all “nurture” and no “structure.” (All affection and no discipline.)
3. Try to re-live your childhood through them.

4. Only engage them when they are messing up.
5. Compare them to others.
6. Never say, “I love you.”
7. Never say, “I am proud of you.”
8. Make it clear that your career or hobbies come first.
9. Never make sacrifices for them.
10. Never take them on regularly scheduled outings—just the two of you.
11. Bonus: Ridicule their culture, clothes, friends, preferences, habits, and hair.

Top ten ways for slaves to obey and serve their masters from the heart:

1. Focus on serving Jesus in every task you do.
2. Focus on being rewarded by Jesus in every task you do.
3. Work diligently when you are being watched and when you are not.
4. Throw yourself into your work when you are doing work. (But be present at home when you are at home.)
5. Reflect on the possibility of negative consequences and let this deter you from laziness or dishonesty or sin.
6. Never belittle or bad mouth or ridicule your master behind his or her back—or to their face for that matter.
7. Fix in your heart the best interests of your master and then live out of the commitment.
8. Discipline yourself to do the parts of your job that you do not like in a timely and diligent manner.
9. Make sacrifices for your master.
10. Give any input or opinions with grace.

Top ten ways for masters to show fairness and justice to their slaves:

1. Do the right thing in every situation—rather than the easy thing.
2. Do the right thing in every situation—rather than the financially expedient thing.
3. Do the right thing in every situation—rather than the “help my favorite people” thing.
4. Do the right thing in every situation—rather than the “cover my tail” thing.
5. Do the right thing in every situation—rather than the make “myself look good” thing.
6. Do the right thing in every situation—rather than the “punish my enemies” thing.
7. Do the right thing in every situation—rather than the first response thing.
8. Do the right thing in every situation—because your Master in heaven sees it all.
9. Do the right thing in every situation—because justice matters to Jesus.
10. Do the right thing in every situation—because Jesus treated you with incredible grace.