

Lesson 14

Teacher's Manual

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

READ & MEDITATE ON: I Corinthians 13:1-13 MEMORIZE: Matthew 22:37-39

INTRODUCTION

It is of utmost importance that every saint of God maintain good human relationships. It is our solemn duty and scriptural responsibility to live peaceably with all men: our family members, fellow-Christians, business associates, civil authorities, friends and acquaintances (Romans 12:18).

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto ALL MEN, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
Galatians 6:10

We see that we have two categories of neighbors to get along with. First: every man, woman, boy and girl in the world. Second: our brothers and sisters in the Lord. This requires a constant control of our actions, attitudes and speech. For our own happiness and for the reputation of God and His church, it behooves us to maintain, "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men" (Acts 24:16).

I. BASIC RELATIONSHIPS

A lawyer approached Jesus Christ one day and asked Him which was the great commandment in the Old Testament Law. Jesus answered by saying:

To know how to love our neighbor as ourself, Jesus gave us this practical guideline in Matthew 7:12:

"...all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:..."

These are no doubt the greatest words ever spoken in regard to good human relationships. They have been paraphrased and are commonly known today as The Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

C. Inward

Our Lord commanded that we love our neighbor as ourself. Evidently Jesus knew that we humans loved ourselves. In fact, He wanted us to base our love for others on the self-love we possessed. It is not anti-scriptural for a person to love themselves. To love a normal, happy life every human being must have a healthy respect for themselves that comes only through a positive self-image. If you do not love yourself, you will find it difficult, if not impossible, to express love. This is because true love is giving of yourself to others. If you do not respect and love yourself, how can you possibly feel right about giving of yourself to someone else? The only way a person can respect and love himself is to have a right relationship with God. Then, and only then, can a person be free from the attitudes and actions that destroy human relationships.

When a person is in right relationship with God, he can love himself and give of himself to others unreservedly as did Jesus our Lord. We can clearly see how love is the primary factor in achieving good human relationships. Herein we discover the wisdom in God's two greatest Old Testament Commandments. In the New Testament, God has given us a new commandment: to love as He has loved us (John 13:34). That is, sacrificially. "Eagerly pursue and seek to acquire (this) love--make it your aim, your great quest..." (I Corinthians 14:1, AMPLIFIED). The great love chapter of the Bible, if applied to our lives, can bring about the best of Godward, manward, and inward relationships. Consider it carefully as quoted from The Amplified Bible:

"If I (can) speak in the tongues of men and (even) of angels, but have not love (that reasoning, intentional, spiritual devotion such as is inspired by God's love for and in us), I am only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers-- that is, the gift of interpreting the divine

A. Family

The deterioration of the family in modern society and the resulting increase in broken homes gives clear warning to the child of God to maintain proper relationships at home. The father and husband is to take his place as the loving, sacrificial leader and provider. Mothers and wives are to be submissive and obedient to their husbands, love their children and keep their homes. Children are to respect and obey their parents in all things. These God-given roles and responsibilities must be accepted if we are to experience harmony in our domestic lives. (This subject is more fully covered in Level I, Lesson 8, The Christian Family).

B. Church

As a part of the family of God and the body of Christ we are all members one of another (Romans 12:5, Ephesians 4:25). As such, we become very close to each other. This closeness in Christ brings rich fellowship. However, it can also bring friction if we are not full of the Holy Ghost. It is not uncommon for those who are nearest and dearest to us to hurt us the most. Because our brothers and sisters in Christ are so close, we should be especially considerate of them. The apostles give us many instructions on how we are to treat "one another."

Paul, in the book of Romans, said: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another...Be of the same mind one toward another..." (Romans 12:10,16). "...Love one another..." (13:8). "Let us not therefore judge one another any more...Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (14:13,19). "Be likeminded one toward another...receive ye one another, as Christ also received us..." (15:5,7). In I Corinthians 12:25, he told the saints to, "...care one for another." To the Ephesians, he wrote, "...forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (4:2-3,32). "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (5:21). In other epistles Paul told Christians to, "...edify one another" (I Thessalonians 5:11), "...exhort one another" (Hebrews 3:13), and, to "...consider one another to provoke unto love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). James told us to, "Speak not evil one of another..." (4:11), "...Grudge not one against another..." (5:9), "...Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another..." (5:16). Finally, Peter said in his first epistle to "...love one another with a pure heart fervently..." (1:22) and to, "...use hospitality one to another..." (4:9).

"SERVANTS, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye MASTERS, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven;..."

Ephesians 6:5-9

"SERVANTS, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;... MASTERS, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven."

Colossians 3:22-23, 4:1

See also I Timothy 6:1-2, Titus 2:9, and I Peter 2:18. The proper attitude is the key to job satisfaction. The above scriptures continually emphasize working, "as unto the Lord." Seeing our jobs as an opportunity to serve God, we will work for our employer as though we were working for God Himself! A person with this kind of attitude will develop work habits that can result in promotions and pay increases as well as good job relationships. (These principles would certainly apply to teachers and students as well!)

D. Government

God's Word teaches us to honor the leaders of our nation (I Peter 2:17). As the people of God, we are also instructed to be subject to the rulers of our land. Civil authorities are elected or named for our benefit. They provide a semblance of order in our governmental systems (Romans 13:1-5, Titus 3:1). The Bible also requires us to pay our taxes without trying to cheat the government (Matthew 22:21, Romans 13:7). Respect for the laws of the land is one of the hallmarks of a Christian. We should be the most law-abiding citizens in our communities.

III. PLEASANT WORDS

"Pleasant words are as an honeycomb,
sweet to the soul, and health to the
bones."

Proverbs 16:24

One of the easiest ways to make or break relationships is by our words. This is why the Bible exhorts us to use "pleasant words." Words can make an ordinary person into an attractive person, or an attractive person into an ugly one. Words can heal deep wounds, or pour salt on them. Words can soothe a ruffled temper, or provoke a man to wrath. Words can give hope to the discouraged, or plunge them into the pits of despair. Words can point the way to Christ, or drive people away from Him. They can honor God, or curse Him. They can build up, or tear down a family. They can make and keep friends, or lose them. They can make the difference in being hired or fired, promoted or demoted. They can make a church alive or kill it. As Proverbs 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Your personal reputation will be established by that small piece of flesh between your teeth. The words that proceed out of your mouth will leave a lasting impression on people. The use you make of your tongue will not only label your character, but will affect the eternal destinies of those to whom you speak. No wonder Jesus said,

"...Every idle word that men shall speak,
they shall give account thereof in the
day of judgement. For by thy words thou
shalt be justified, and by thy words thou
shalt be condemned."

Matthew 12:36-37

It is not an easy matter to cultivate attractive, wholesome speech. "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." (James 3:7-8) This scripture lets us know that it is humanly impossible to tame the tongue. But with God all things are possible. The powerful and unruly tongue of man can only be brought under control by the One who has all power in Heaven and earth: Jesus Christ. Through the filling of God's Spirit we have been given superhuman power to tame the tongue. God proved His Spirit's ability to bring the human tongue under His control on the day of Pentecost. With God's help, WE CAN develop "Spirit-controlled communication." When under the control of the Holy Spirit, our words will be honest, kind, edifying, graceful, gentle and pure.

A. Honest

"...Putting away lying, speak every man
truth with his neighbor..."

Ephesians 4:25

"...Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak..."

James 1:19

The wise man Solomon said, "...A fool's voice is known by multitude of words," (Ecclesiastes 5:3), "...but even a fool when he holds his peace is esteemed to be a wise man full of understanding" (Proverbs 17:28). An old nursery rhyme says:

A wise old owl lived in an oak,
The more he heard the less he spoke.
The less he spoke the more he heard.
Why don't we copy that wise old bird?

God's people, above all people, should be known for their pleasant words. Let us seek to compliment people, express our appreciation, be kind, simple, truthful, and pure in our speech--everywhere, everyday, in every way to everyone. God wants to take control of our tongues and help us to have good relationships for His name's sake. Remember, the words we speak will determine to a great extent the kind of relationships we will have at home, at work, at school, at play, and in church.

IV. FRIENDLINESS "FOR"CHRIST

As we grow in love and improve our relationships with people through the influence of Christ's Spirit, we will find a new desire to want to be with others. Our new personalities manifesting the fruit of the Spirit will attract others to us. Our transformed lives will give us numerous chances to share the good news of salvation. We will become (as our Lord was) a "...friend of sinners." Our shyness and aloofness, caused by our fears, will melt away as God's perfect love casts out our fears (I John 4:18). In this cold unfriendly world, few people have had anyone show genuine interest in them. There are many empty and lonely souls who have never really had anyone to care for them or take the time to get to know them. Seldom does anyone outside the church have more than a superficial friendship. It is not uncommon for many to be rejected and unloved by their own families. No one can care for them like God's people can. And if we do not care--who will? There was someone you passed by today that silently cried...

"I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul."

Psalms 142:4

O: OCCUPATION

Work--Where do you work? How long? What exactly do you do?
Education/Training--Did you have any special school for that job?
Hobbies/Interests--Do you like sports? Have any hobbies? What do you do for relaxation and enjoyment?

(This is an excellent place to find a common interest or a way to get together with an individual to develop a friendship. At this point you can also inconspicuously get their address and phone number for calling upon them in the future.)

R: RELIGION

Denomination--Do you go to church anywhere? What kind is it?
Church location--Where is the church building?
Services--When are your meetings? What are they like?
Minister--Who is the Pastor?
Involvement--Are you active in church work? What type?
Experience--What are your personal beliefs?

This unoffensive way of approaching religion will allow you to discover your new acquaintance's position in God. Because you have shown interest and listened attentively and respectfully without arguing, whoever you are conversing with will now listen in the same way as you simply SHARE YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY with them. Their reaction to your conversation and testimony will often disclose their receptivity to the truth and can open doors to explain Acts 2:38 salvation. (How to effectively share your testimony and the gospel will be covered in the next lesson.) Ask them if they are interested in a home Bible study (see Lesson 20). They might like to attend a church service with you. In either case ask, and then follow-up with a letter, phone call or personal visit. (Gently insist on picking them up for church if they would like to attend a service with you.) It is sometimes proper to pray a brief and simple prayer with them before leaving their company. It is almost always convenient to leave them an unoffensive tract. USE WISDOM AND BE PATIENT. It takes time to win a friend and lead them to Christ. Involve them one step at a time. Remember:

"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly."

Proverbs 18:24

Pleasant personal relationships and the friendships that result will bring deep fulfillment to you and will be one of the greatest means you will have to share your faith. Love is the all-important ingredient we must have if we are to enjoy good human relations. As Christians, we possess

the greatest potential to have rewarding personal relationships, for our God is love. Jesus said that we ought to love God supremely and our neighbor as ourself (Matthew 22:37-39). Our love for God is best displayed in our love for our fellowman. If we truly love our neighbor as ourself, we will introduce them to the Saviour. However, it must be remembered that an effective Christian witness requires that we maintain proper personal relationships both in and out of the church. For, "By this," said Jesus, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). "...Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him" (I John 3:18-19).

We should always go out of our way to befriend people and we should be constantly looking for a means to introduce them to "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Nearly all great soulwinners agree-- the best way to win someone to God is to win them to yourself. Here are some suggestions for meeting and making new friends with their salvation in mind:

A. Hints On How To Win Friends

- * Be neat, fresh and clean to present a good first impression.
- * Be natural, casual and sincere.
- * Become genuinely interested in others. They are important.
- * Put on and keep on a big Holy Ghost smile.
- * Go out of your way to greet folks enthusiastically.
- * Learn, use and remember a person's name.
- * Be complimentary and always display a positive attitude.
- * Exercise the utmost courtesy, manners and politeness.
- * Respect others' opinions. Never bluntly tell someone they are wrong.
- * Never condemn, degrade, or make fun of people or their religion.

B. Pointers In Making Conversation

One of the best ways to be a good conversationalist is simply to be a good listener. When others speak we should always listen carefully and intently. Try to understand the other man's point of view. Talk in terms of other people's interest about their "F.O.R."--FAMILY, OCCUPATION, and RELIGION. With these things in mind, here is a series of questions you can ask to make friendly conversation in witnessing "FOR" Christ:

Introduction--"Hi, what's your name?"

F: FAMILY

Home--Do you live around here?

Marital Status--Are you single/married? How long?

Children--Do you have any children? How many? Names? Ages?

Other--Relatives, national origin, mutual friends, etc.

B. Kind

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren..."
James 4:11

C. Edifying

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."
Ephesians 4:29

D. Graceful

"Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."
Colossians 4:6

E. Gentle

"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."
Proverbs 15:1

F. Pure

"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile..."
I Peter 3:10

The Psalmist said, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord." (Psalms 19:14) To be pleasing to God, we must refrain our lips from: CRITICISM, COMPLAINING, CONDEMNING, CURSING, LIES, LEWDNESS, SARCASM, SLANDER, GOSSIP, and HARSHNESS.

There are times we need to exercise control by being silent. There is, "...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak," (Ecclesiastes 3:7). God gave us two ears and only one mouth. Perhaps this is nature's way of telling us we need to listen twice as much as we talk.

The ordinances of men should be obeyed, unless they are opposed to God's laws or if they involve us in evil. While we recognize that human government is of divine origin, we take a definite position regarding the bearing of arms and the taking of human life. Though we strive to fulfill the obligations of loyal citizens, yet we are opposed to participating in combat service in war, or aiding in the actual destruction of human life. Christian men are to freely and willingly respond to the call of the government in certain non-combatant capacities, but not in the bearing of arms.

Undue criticism of authorities, especially in the interest of inciting rebellion, is unscriptural. We are instructed rather to intercede and pray for our rulers.

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, . . . supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

I Timothy 2:1-2

Guided by the principles of decency, justice and righteousness, we will be able to establish an image of a true Christian among those who are "without." Such a life makes an impact on the world and proves the power of God and the truth of His Word.

E. Others

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches"

Proverbs 22:1

The new Christian has changed his name--from gambler, thief, self-righteous, hypocrite, liar, etc.--to Christian, holy, witness, son of God, Holy Ghost vessel, etc. As a child of God we not only have our own name to protect, but the name of the Lord. We must live a consistent Christian life wherever we are and whoever we are with: unsaved friends, casual acquaintances, those in our neighborhood, office clerks, store attendants, waiters in restaurants, and complete strangers. Every human being we come in contact with should be able to detect we are a representative of the King. If you were put on trial for being a Christian, and everyone you came in contact with was to testify concerning your life, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Certainly, these apostolic exhortations give us plenty to work on in improving our relationships with those in the church!

C. Employment

About one-third of the average person's life is spent earning a living. Since so much of our time involves our vocation, we should adjust our life and attitude so that we give it our best and have fun doing it. The child of God should enhance his Christian witness by being the most cooperative and dedicated worker on his job. But doing a good job is only half enough. Getting along with fellow workers (and the public, if your job involves that) is very important, too. The people you work with every day on the job get to know you pretty well. Here, your life is daily scrutinized by others. They see you in times of stress, in moments of temptation, when you are mistreated (it has been said that one of the tests of a person's religion is how he acts when he is treated unjustly), when you are sick or well, and when things just did not seem to go right. Whatever a person really is will eventually be known by his co-workers.

There are horizontal and vertical relationships we deal with at work. Vertical relationships deal with our superiors and those under us. Horizontal relationships are with those on an equal level. The Christian should demonstrate an attitude of cooperation with his colleagues--submitting himself to those who have authority over him and having a keen sense of fairness and impartiality to those under him. Always maintain your integrity at your place of employment. Loyalty to the company is important, but people and principles come before profit.

Some jobs may have conditions which allow unlimited conversation between workers. Others do not. Since you are working for someone else, you are selling your time and attention. Do not cheat your employer by spending an inordinate amount of time "witnessing" to others while on the job. There will be opportunities for discussion at break or lunch times and after work. Take advantage of the time--not your employer. One of the best ways to witness on the job is with literature. Carry tracts in your pocket, purse, or lunch kit. When there is no time for long discussion, a piece of gospel literature for the person to take home will be a continuing witness.

What does the Bible have to say about Employer-Employee relationships? Plenty! We only need to understand that scriptural references to servants and masters are applicable today to employers and employees. Although we are not under the ancient system of slavery, the principles for servants and masters remain the same. Following are the Bible's "job descriptions" for employers (masters) and employees (servants):

will and purpose; and understand all the secret truths and mysteries and possess all knowledge, and if I have (sufficient) faith so that I can remove mountains, but have not love (God's love in me) I am nothing--a useless nobody. Even if I dole out all that I have (to the poor in providing) food, and if I surrender my body to be burned (or in order that I may glory), but have not love (God's love in me), I gain nothing. Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy; is not boastful or vain glorious, does not display itself haughtily. It is not conceited--arrogant and inflated with pride; it is not rude (unmannerly), and does not act unbecomingly. Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it--pays no attention to a suffered wrong. It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. Love bears up under anything and everything that comes and is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances and it endures everything (without weakening). Love never fails--never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end...and so faith, hope, and love abide; (faith; conviction and belief respecting man's relation to God and divine things; hope, joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation; love, true affection for God and man, growing out of God's love for and in us), these three, but the greatest of these is love.

I Corinthians 13:1-8, 13

II. PERSONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Most of our problems in life can be traced to a lack of ability to get along with others. If we are to enjoy living we must learn to maintain good human relationships. The people we associate with fall into several categories including: family, church, employment, government, and "others." These relationships are so closely inter-related that a problem in any one area tends to create problems in the other areas. And, an improvement in any one area brings improvement in the others. Let us turn our thoughts to the dynamics of life's relationships and how to better each of them.

"...Thou shalt love the Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy NEIGHBOR as THYSELF. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Matthew 22:36-40

Our Lord, who came not to do away with the law but to fulfill it, felt that love was the most important ingredient in religious life. Indeed, God is love (I John 4:16). A close look at the above passage reveals not only the command to love but shows us to whom our love is to be directed. It is significant to note that Jesus pointed out THREE BASIC RELATIONSHIPS that every human being has. They are: (1) with God, (Godward), (2) with our neighbors (manward) and, (3) with ourself (inward).

A. Godward

The Bible tells us that God is love (I John 4:8). We know that Jesus Christ was God manifest in flesh. Therefore, Jesus is the personification and revealer of God's love. From Christ we learn about the highest form of love: sacrifice. "For God so loved... he gave..." (John 3:16). Because He gave Himself to us, we now desire to give ourselves to Him. In other words, "We love him because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). It is required that we love Him with all our heart, soul and mind. Godward love includes: communicating with God through prayer, learning about God through Bible study and adoring God through worship. We must also obey God in everything: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments..." (I John 5:3). What is one of His foremost commands? Jesus said, "These things I command you that ye love one another" (John 15:17).

B. Manward

When a person loves God with all that is within him, love for mankind is the ultimate result. When we receive the Spirit of God, we receive the Spirit of love and, ... "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost..." (Romans 5:5). One of the only visible indications of our love for God is love for our neighbors, which is the second greatest commandment.

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

I John 4:20-21