

Lesson 19: Wisdom and Healthy Relationships

Text: Proverbs 18:24 A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother...

Purpose: The purpose of these proverbs is to give young people the basic tools that they need to be successful relationship builders and peacemakers.

Proposition: God wants us to be skillful relationship builders.

Interrogative: What principles will help us to have healthy relationships?

Section 1: Even the best relationships come under strain:

- We are sinners, relating to sinners.
- We live in a fallen world and things happen to us that put us under pressure where these pressures eventually strain our relationships.
- We often misunderstand one another, because we have different backgrounds and personalities.
- We often approach our relationships with others with unrealistic expectations which will ultimately pressure our relationships.
- We are often stubborn and unwilling to forgive when we have been wronged.
- We become self-absorbed and are unwilling to make the investments needed to maintain healthy relationships.
- We don't develop the skills that are vitally important in the establishment and sustaining of healthy relationships.
- We did not have good examples in our lives during our most formative years.

Section 2: We need to listen to the counsels we find in scripture:

Six Important Relationship Principles:

Principle 1: Maintaining relationships involves a significant use of time and resources:

Proverbs 18:24 A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother...

- You need friends, but it will come at a cost of time and resources.
- You will need to invest time in your friends.
- You will need to invest energy into your friends.
- You will need to invest materially in your friends.
- Friendship is really not just about you. It is ultimately about others. **Philippians 2:4** Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others...

Principle 2: People who are internally troubled, create problems wherever they go:

Proverbs 15:18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife...

- **Hot tempered/quick tempered:** The idea is that there is a problem going on under the surface, and as a result, the person quickly
- **A settled heart is essential to having healthy relationships:**
 - Unresolved sin undermines relationships:

- An unhealthy view of God undermines relationships:
- An unhealthy view of self undermines relationships:
- An unhealthy view of God's providence undermines relationships:
- An unhealthy view of the Christian life undermines relationships:

Principle 3: Self-control is one of the greatest qualities needed to have healthy relationships: Proverbs 16:32 He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city...

- **Learn to control your passions:**
 - **Quick to anger**
 - **Quick to assumption**
 - **Quick to excuse**
 - **Quick to confront**

Principle 4: We must learn to pick our battles with people carefully: Proverbs 19:11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression...

- **Resist your tendency to play God:**
- **Resist your tendency to keep a list of missteps:**
- **Learn to relate to people as they are not how you believe they need to be.**
- **This is not teaching we should never confront a matter:** some questions to ask yourself
 - Have I thought this matter through carefully?
 - Is this confrontation really about their personal growth or getting the matter off my chest?
 - Have I discussed this matter with a spiritually mature person who is not emotionally connected to this situation?
 - Am I responsible for this person's actions?
 - Are this person's actions causing harm to themselves or others around them?
 - Does this person have a heart to receive the correction?
 - Does my relationship to this person put me in a good position to address this issue, or should another make take on this confrontation?
 - Am I refusing to confront because I am afraid or lazy?
 - Can I confront in a spirit of humility and grace?
 - Have I evaluated myself for blind spots, before I take action to address this issue?

Principle 5: We must realize that God is the ultimate peacemaker: Proverbs 16:7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him...

- **The gospel:** This provides a basis for forgiveness and peacemaking
- **The gospel:** Equips us with the tools needed to be peacemakers
- **God's providence:** works in circumstances to bring peace between those who are at odds

Colossians 3:12-16 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...

Principle 6: We need good friends who can tell us when we are wrong: Proverbs 27:5-6

Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful... **Proverbs 9:8** Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee... **Proverbs 27:17** Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend...

- We need to develop edifying relationships where we are challenged to grow and mature.
- It is good to have friends who will tell us what we need to hear, not just what we want to hear.

Five Specific Skills Need to Maintain Relationships:

Skill 1: Realize that what you say, and how you say it are equally important: Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger...

- **A gentle response:** This could be referring to your tone, or your choice of words
- **Harsh words:** This is referring primarily to the words that you are using
- **Let your tone and your use of words be proportionate to the level of force needed to resolve the problem.**

Skill 2: Realize that at times, you will need to lay groundwork before you try to restore a broken relationship: Proverbs 21:14

A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath...

- A gift in secret: Before you sit down to address the issue, you send something to lay the groundwork.
- Jacob did this with Esau, to try to take the edge off of his anger.
- When we are heated, we will not have a productive conversation, therefore, we need to establish ways to calm down before we go to work restoring what has been broken.
- This is the role that a mediator may play in a conflict resolution.

Skill 3: Realize that bringing up past offenses is distasteful and damages relationships:

Proverbs 17:9 He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends...

- When someone wrongs you and they seek reconciliation, forgive them, and don't bring it up again.
- Bringing things up again says, I did not really forgive, I do not really trust, and I still think that you owe me something.

Skill 4: Realize that time between people at odds tends to make things worse, not better:

Proverbs 17:14 The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with...

- Picture a pitcher, a pipe, or a leaking roof. The longer the leak is left, the worse the damage it will inflict, and the more difficult it will be to repair the leak.
- Don't allow things to fester.
- Don't delay addressing issues between you and others.

- Maintaining healthy relationships involves constantly taking care of little issues that creep up between people.

Skill 5: Realize that you cannot make peace with someone who envies you: Proverbs 27:4

Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?

- We all understand the damage that is done by angry people:

Romans 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men...

- **Cruel:** Anger lies at the root of dehumanizing behavior (vicious personal attacks, evil acts of revenge)
- **Outrageous:** Goes beyond the limits of reasonable behavior
- **Envy:** Is worse than anger
 - **Every action will be critically analyzed and the worst will always be assumed**
 - **If you treat an envious person well:** it makes them feel belittled or patronized
 - **If you distance yourself from an envious person:** it makes them angry
 - **If you try to make a deal with an envious person:** they will never be satisfied.
 - **You cannot appease or work with a person who envies another.** It tears apart relationships and must be dealt with decisively.

Five Self-checks When I Have a Contention:

Check 1: Do I think the worst of others? When I think the worst of people, my mind is generally full of lies about that person: Proverbs 12:20 Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counselors of peace is joy...

- This proverb addresses how we think about other people:
- Your mind has a way of going to imagined irrational extremes.
- When we think about other people's actions and motives, we are limited in what we can know however our mind is always ready to fill in the gaps.
- Our assumptions are generally wrong, but we need to identify them as they really are. If they are wrong assessments of others, then we are believing self-originating lies about other.
- When we assume the best of others, and think toward peaceable outcomes, it brings joy to us and those around us.

Check 2: Do I keep meticulous records of other's wrongs? Foolish people keep meticulous records to demand justice in interpersonal disputes: Proverbs 18:6 A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes... Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease...

Check 3: Am I having issues with someone? If I am not getting along with a person, then there is always pride between us: Proverbs 13:10 Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom...

- **Pride is at the heart of every conflict:**

- **We share in the conflict to some level:**
- **The strong will always reach out to the weaker**

Check 4: Do I talk to much about my interpersonal problems? The more you love to talk, the more likely you are to have trouble when you deal with people: Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof...

Check 5: Do I think that more stuff will improve my relationships? More wealth does not make people happy or develop healthy relationships: Proverbs 15:17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith...

- **Herbs:** poverty or lack of resources
- **Fatter calf:** wealth and material abundance
- It's better to have little with healthy relationships than wealth and broken relationships.
- Living for the American dream, but neglecting the cultivating of healthy interpersonal relationships is going to lead to emptiness and pain later on in life.

Conclusion: God wants me to be a skillful relationship builder. Am I willing to invest my time and energies into making that happen? Am I willing to ask the hard questions where God can change me to become more like Christ? May we all honor the Lord in the way we relate to other people!