

THE POWER OF GODLY RELATIONSHIPS

Mike Fehlauer

Today I want to talk about the power of godly relationships. The Scriptures are very clear about the importance of our relationships, how we relate to each other. There are relationships that are unhealthy or destructive and relationships that empower us to serve and love God. The importance of relationships is talked about all through the Scriptures, especially in the letters of the Apostle Paul. He talks about destructive relationships and how we're to respond to them. Then he talks about positive, healthy relationships and how we're to develop, maintain, and establish them. For us to really make it as Christians, to be strong disciples of Jesus, it's important to nail down and cement in our hearts this whole idea of relationships—the power of healthy, godly relationships.

There was a time when the Holy Spirit made it really clear that Jesus in me, just Jesus in me, was not enough for me as a Christian to make it in this life and finish my course strong; it was going to take Jesus in me and Jesus in other people—their gifts, insight, and the anointing and life of God in them—for us, collectively to make it and finish our course strong. I began to see in the Scriptures that that is how the body of Christ is made up. In 1 Corinthians 12 it talks about the different members of the body, and Paul clearly, emphatically states that one member isn't more important than another. He's basically saying that for the body to function, all the members have to be in their place and understand each other's value. In a sense, they are all dependent on each other. I'm not talking about a dependence that is not being dependent on the Lord, but there's an interdependence that's happening that is really important.

Several scriptures talk about that, and there are commandments to abandon abusive relationships. Many people don't really know how to identify an unhealthy relationship, so let me give you some characteristics. If you're around people who are constantly critical of others, that's an unhealthy relationship. If you're around a person who constantly reminds you of your past, tries to pull you away from the things of God, or tries to get you to compromise the convictions God has laid on your heart to live a godly life for Him, that's an unhealthy relationship. If you're in a friendship with a person who is so insecure that they demand inordinate loyalty from you at the expense of your other relationships, that's an unhealthy relationship. If there's any kind of control or manipulation taking place, that's an unhealthy relationship. If people are trying to get you to embrace things that aren't true, that aren't in the Scriptures, or if they are twisting the Scriptures, that's an unhealthy relationship. We're commanded to abandon those relationships, not even try to rescue those individuals, but to guard our own hearts.

We're encouraged and exhorted to establish and maintain healthy relationships. There are scriptures that really stress the importance of godly relationships. In one, found in 2 Timothy 2:22, Paul told Timothy this: "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Now, here's a little background. Timothy was pastoring a large church in Ephesus, and they were going through some very difficult times. Nero was still in control at this time. Rome had burned down, and Nero had blamed the Christians for it. So, there was a tremendous amount of persecution toward the church and toward Christians. The persecution had intensified after Rome had burnt, Nero had just about lost his mind; he was demon-possessed. In other words, the smell of blood was in the air. They were looking for Christians to persecute and destroy, so a tremendous amount of fear attacked the church. Fear was so great that even Timothy's closest friends and some of the leaders

of the church in Ephesus began to flee for their lives. Many were probably even denying the faith, denying that they knew Jesus, to save their physical lives and not be martyred. The spirit of fear was so great that it began to grip Timothy's heart as well.

Paul tried to encourage Timothy, and one of the things he said was, "Listen, flee youthful lusts. I want you to pursue faith, love, peace, and righteousness." Notice that he also says, "with those who call out to the Lord with a pure heart." Basically what Paul was telling Timothy was, "Son, if you're going to make it through this very difficult time, you're not going to make it alone. You're going to need to find others who are pursuing the same things you are. You're going to have to surround yourself with other men who love God and are pursuing faith, righteousness, and peace, and connect with them, because you aren't going to accomplish this goal—the pursuit of righteousness and faith—on your own; you're going to need to surround yourself with others who can help you do that."

We don't have time to get into all of them, but there are so many scriptures that talk about this dynamic and how important it is. Proverbs 27:17 says, "Iron sharpeneth iron." This means that when you get around somebody who's hungry, full of zeal, and has a heart for God, they provoke you to love, zeal, and a heart for God. Proverbs 18:1 says, "A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgement" (NJKV). In other words, a person who doesn't understand the dynamic of godly relationships isolates himself, lives after his own desires, and eventually begins to live a life of perversity. He's in error but doesn't realize it because he's cut off his connection with anybody that could help him see that there's error or something destructive in his life. "Evil communications corrupt good morals" (1 Corinthians 15:33), or bad relationships corrupt good behavior. These verses are on the negative side, but we see also in the Scriptures that if we give ourselves to people who love God and develop those relationships and friendships, they serve as margins in our lives. They help us live within a place of integrity, maintain character, and make sure our perceptions are lined up with the Scriptures.

The body of Christ is created to work that way; we really do need one another, and we can't afford to be Lone Rangers, so to speak, in our relationship with God. I believe God has placed people in your life that are divine connections. Maybe you've not really pursued those relationships as you should, and I want to encourage you to do that. God has placed people in your life not only to teach, coach, and mentor you, but there are also others He has placed there to be friends, people who can help you navigate through the storms of life, keep your heart pure, and keep Jesus the Lord of your life. I encourage you to go out and develop those relationships.

How do you do that? Proverbs says if you want friends, show yourself friendly. Take a risk, be vulnerable, and begin to invest yourself, your life, and your love in someone else's life. You'll see God begin to develop relationships, and some of those relationships will last the rest of your life. You'll end up being the wealthiest man or woman in the world, because you have the richness and the prosperity of good, godly, healthy friends.

THE POWER OF GODLY RELATIONSHIPS (Outline)

Relationships can either be destructive or empower us to serve and love God. Jesus in you is not enough to make it in this life as a Christian. The Jesus in other people, with their giftings, insight, and anointing of God will help you finish strong.

1 Corinthians 12:12-31: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? ¹⁸But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. ¹⁹And if they were all one member, where were the body? ²⁰But now are they many members, yet but one body. ²¹And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. ²²Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: ²³And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. ²⁴For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: ²⁵That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. ²⁶And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. ²⁸And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? ³⁰Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? ³¹But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.”

For the body of Christ to function, all the members have to be in their places and understand each other's value. They are, in a sense, dependent on each other. Examples of people who are in unhealthy relationships are as follows:

1. People who are constantly critical of others
2. People who remind you of your past or try to pull you away from the things of God

3. Someone who tries to get you to compromise your convictions to live a godly life
4. Someone who is so insecure that they demand inordinate loyalty from you at the expense of other relationships
5. People who control or manipulate

2 Timothy 2:22: “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

To make it in life, you need to connect yourself with others who love God and are pursuing faith, righteousness, and peace.

Proverbs 27:17: “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”

When you get around others who have a heart for God, they provoke you to love and have a heart for God.

Proverbs 18:1: “Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.”

1 Corinthians 15:33: “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”

Not putting an importance on having godly relationships brings destruction in your life. If we give ourselves to people who love God and develop those relationships, it helps us maintain godly character. God has placed people in your life—someone to be a friend to you, to help you navigate through the storms of life and keep Jesus Lord. Begin to take a risk by investing yourself and your love in someone else’s life.

THE POWER OF GODLY RELATIONSHIPS (Teacher's Guide)

1. What does 1 Corinthians 15:33 teach us about relationships?
Bad company corrupts good character.
2. What does 1 Corinthians 12:12 show us about our Christian life?
We all need the other members of the body of Christ.
3. What can we learn about godly relationships from Hebrews 10:24?
Those in godly relationships spur on others to love and to good works.
4. What can we learn from Hebrews 10:25 about relationships?
We need to meet together, fellowship, and encourage one another.
5. Why must we guard our hearts from ungodly relationships?
Proverbs 5:23—Lest we be led astray by folly.
6. We are to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with whom?
2 Timothy 2:22—With them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
7. Who are we to remember and pattern our lives after?
Hebrews 13:7—Your leaders who have spoken the Word of God to you.

THE POWER OF GODLY RELATIONSHIPS (Detailed Teacher's Guide)

NOTE: The following information may be read out loud (a numbered section at a time) with the person(s) being discipled. After each numbered section is read, pause and ask the question(s) that correspond to the paragraph(s), and then discuss them.

¹ I want to talk to you today about the power of relationships—Godly relationships. You know, the scriptures are very clear about the importance of our relationship—show we relate to one another. There are relationships that we can have that are unhealthy or destructive. We can also have relationships that empower us to serve God and to love God.

You know, really, the importance of relationships is addressed all through the Scriptures, especially in the Apostle Paul's writings (his letters). Many times he talked about the importance of relationships. He talked about destructive relationships and how we are to respond to those, and he talked about positive, healthy relationships and how to develop and maintain those.

² I remember a time when the Holy Spirit really made it clear to me that just Jesus in me was not enough for me to make it in this life as a Christian and finish my course strong; it was going to take Jesus in me and the Jesus in other people, with their giftings, insight, and the anointing and life of God in them. Collectively, we can make it and finish our course strong. Then I began to see in the Scriptures that this is how the body of Christ is made to function.

First Corinthians, chapter 12, talks about the different members of the Body. Paul clearly and emphatically states that one member isn't more important than another member. In stating this, he's basically saying that for the Body to function, all the members have to be in their places and understand each other's value.

¹ (a) What does 1 Corinthians 15:33 teach us about relationships?
(b) What can we learn about relationships from 2 Corinthians 7:14-15?
² (a) What does 1 Corinthians 12:12 show us about our Christian lives?
(b) What can we learn about godly relationships from Hebrews 10:24?
(c) What can we learn from Hebrews 10:25?

³ There are many scriptures that command us to abandon abusive relationships. Let me give you an example of what an unhealthy relationship is, because perhaps a lot of people don't really know how to identify one. Here are some characteristics of unhealthy relationship. If you're around people who are constantly critical of others, that's an unhealthy relationship. If you're around someone who is trying to get you to compromise the convictions in your heart to live a godly life, that's an unhealthy relationship. If there is any kind of control or manipulation taking place, that's an unhealthy relationship. If people are trying to get you to embrace things that aren't true, that aren't in the Scriptures, or they're twisting scriptures, that's an unhealthy relationship. We are commanded to abandon those relationships and to not even try to rescue those individuals, but try to guard our own hearts.

⁴ Then we are encouraged and exhorted to establish and maintain healthy relationships. There are many scriptures that talk about the importance of godly relationships. I want to mention one found in II Timothy 2:22. Paul told Timothy this: "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

⁵ If we give ourselves to people who love God and we develop those relationships and those friendships, then they serve as a margin in our lives. They help us live within a place of integrity. They help us maintain character. They help us make sure that our perceptions are still lining up with the scriptures. Really, the body of Christ is created to work that way. We really do need one another, and we really can't afford to be a lone ranger in our relationship with God.

³ Why must we guard our hearts from ungodly relationships? Proverbs 5:23

⁴ We are to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with whom? 2 Timothy 2:22

⁵ Who are we to remember and pattern our lives after? Hebrews 13:7

THE POWER OF GODLY RELATIONSHIPS (Discipleship Questions)

Unity: State or fact of being one, something complete in itself, oneness, harmony, total agreement. A relation of all the parts of a work constituting a harmonious whole and producing a single general effect.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

1. What is every individual believer part of?
2. By one Spirit, what were we all baptized into?
3. Is the body one member or many?
4. How has God set each member in the body (verse 18)?
5. Are the weaker members of the body necessary?
6. Which parts of the Body have the greater honor and modesty?
7. How should we care for the other members of the Body?
8. How should we be with one who suffers?
9. And the one who is honored?
10. "Now you are the _____ of _____, and members _____."
11. Name the eight gifts mentioned in this verse.
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
 - E. _____
 - F. _____
 - G. _____
 - H. _____
12. Can you see how God appoints different gifts in the Body so that it may function as a whole?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:33

13. What wisdom is imparted in this verse about ungodly relationships?

Read Exodus 23:1-2

14. What shall you not circulate?
15. What shall you not put your hand with?
16. If you do put your hand with the wicked, what will that make you?
17. If a crowd is following evil, should you join them?

Read Psalm 1:1

18. You are a "blessed man" if you don't do the following:
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____

Read Proverbs 1:10

19. What are you commanded to do in this verse?

Read Proverbs 4:14-15

20. What are you instructed to do about evil in these verses?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
 - E. _____

What has been your experience with walking with evil? Has it brought you peace and rest, or strife and contentions?

Read Hebrews 10:24-25

21. Since we are not to spur one another on to do evil, what does this verse exhort us to do?
22. What must we not forsake?
23. Can you see how assembling together encourages one another?

Read Proverbs 27:17

24. As iron sharpens iron, what do we do for one another?

25. Read Proverbs 17:17
How does a friend love?

Read Proverbs 18:24

26. What must you be to have friends?

27. Who is your friend who sticks closer than a brother?

Read 2 Timothy 2:22

28. What must you pursue? _____, _____, _____, _____

29. Who are you to pursue those things with?

30. If you are pursuing those things with Godly people, will you have time to commiserate with ungodly people?

Philippians 3:12-17 (The Amplified Bible)

12 "I press on to lay hold of (grasp) and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus (the Messiah) has laid hold of me and made me His own.

13 I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,

14 I press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward.

15 So let those [of us] who are spiritually mature and full-grown have this mind and hold these convictions; and if in any respect you have a different attitude of mind, God will make that clear to you also.

16 Only let us hold true to what we have already attained and walk and order our lives by that.

17 Brethren, together follow my example and observe those who live after the pattern we have set for you."

Read Philippians 3:12-17 (Use AMP version above)

31. How are we to order our lives?

32. Whose example are we to follow and observe?

33. What will be the result of our lives if we order our lives by Christ?

Read Hebrews 13:7

34. Whom are we to remember?

A. _____

B. _____

35. Why are we to consider the outcome of their conduct?

Hebrews 13:7

(AMP) “Remember your leaders and superiors in authority [for it was they] who brought to you the Word of God. Observe attentively and consider their manner of living (the outcome of their well-spent lives) and imitate their faith (their conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things, the Provider and Bestower of external salvation through Christ, and their leaning of the entire human personality on God in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness).”

Your life, to this point, is a reflection of whom you have observed and imitated. If you are not satisfied with the results of your walk, you need to seek the Lord and have Him set the pattern of your life for you. I encourage you to surround yourself with godly men and women who will encourage you and point you toward the cross in all that you do.

THE POWER OF GODLY RELATIONSHIPS
(Discipleship Answer Key)

1. Body of Christ
2. Into the body
3. Many
4. Just as He pleased
5. Yes
6. Those we think less honorable
7. Without schism – Members should have same care for one another
8. Suffer with him
9. Rejoice with him
10. Body of Christ – Individually
11. A. Apostles
B. Prophets
C. Teachers
D. Miracles
E. Gifts of healing
F. Helps
G. Administration
H. Varieties of tongues
12. Yes
13. Evil company corrupts good habits
14. A false report
15. The wicked
16. An unrighteous witness
17. No
18. A. Walk in the counsel of the ungodly
B. Stand in the path of sinners
C. Sit in the seat of the scornful
19. If sinners entice you, do not consent.
20. A. Do not enter the path of the wicked
B. Do not walk in the way of evil
C. Avoid it
D. Turn away
E. Pass on
21. Stir up love and good works
22. Assembling ourselves together
23. Yes
24. Sharpen the countenance of our friends
25. At all times
26. Be friendly ourselves
27. Jesus
28. Righteousness, faith, love, peace
29. Those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart
30. No
31. To what we have already attained
32. Those who live after the pattern set
33. Salvation = abundance and peace
34. A. Those who rule over you
B. Those who have spoken the Word to you
35. If they truly walk the walk or just talk the talk

THE POWER OF GODLY RELATIONSHIPS

By Mike Fehlauer
(Additional Information)

I want to talk to you today about the power of relationships—Godly relationships. You know, the Scriptures are very clear about the importance of our relationships—how we relate to one another. There are relationships that we can have that are unhealthy or destructive. We can also have relationships that empower us to serve God and to love God.

You know, really, the importance of relationships is addressed all through the Scriptures, especially in the Apostle Paul’s writings (his letters). Many times he talked about the importance of relationships. He talked about destructive relationships and how we are to respond to those, and he talked about positive, healthy relationships and how to develop and maintain those.

I remember a time when the Holy Spirit really made it clear to me that just Jesus in me was not enough for me to make it in this life as a Christian and finish my course strong; it was going to take Jesus in me and the Jesus in other people, with their giftings, insight, and the anointing and life of God in them. Collectively, we can make it and finish our course strong. Then I began to see in the Scriptures that this is how the body of Christ is made to function.

First Corinthians, chapter 12, talks about the different members of the Body. Paul clearly and emphatically states that one member isn’t more important than another member. In stating this, he’s basically saying that for the Body to function, all the members have to be in their places and understand each other’s value.

There are many scriptures that command us to abandon abusive relationships. Let me give you an example of what an unhealthy relationship is, because perhaps a lot of people don’t really know how to identify one. Here are some characteristics of unhealthy relationship. If you’re around people who are constantly critical of others, that’s an unhealthy relationship. If you’re around someone who is trying to get you to compromise the convictions in your heart to live a godly life, that’s an unhealthy relationship. If there is any kind of control or manipulation taking place, that’s an unhealthy relationship. If people are trying to get you to embrace things that aren’t true, that aren’t in the scriptures, or they’re twisting scriptures, that’s an unhealthy relationship. We are commanded to abandon those relationships and to not even try to rescue those individuals, but try to guard our own hearts.

Then we are encouraged and exhorted to establish and maintain healthy relationships. There are many scriptures that talk about the importance of godly relationships. I want to mention one found in II Timothy 2:22. Paul told Timothy this: “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

Now, let's give you a little background. Timothy was pastoring a very large church in Ephesus, but they were going through some difficult times. Nero was still in control at this time. Rome had burnt down. Nero blamed the Christians for this. There was already a tremendous amount of persecution toward the church and toward Christian believers. That persecution intensified after Rome burnt down. Nero just about lost his mind; he was demon possessed. In other words, the smell of blood was in the air. He was looking for Christians to persecute and destroy. Therefore, there was a tremendous amount of fear that attacked the church. The fear was so great that even Timothy's closest friends and some of the leaders in the church in Ephesus began to flee for their lives. Many were probably even denying the faith, denying that they knew Jesus, just to save their physical lives and not be martyred.

The spirit of fear was so great that it began to grip Timothy's heart as well. Paul was trying to encourage Timothy, and one of the things he said was, "Flee youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace." Notice what he says next: "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). Basically Paul is telling Timothy that he wasn't going to make it through this difficult time alone. He needed to find others who were pursuing the same things that he was pursuing. He needed to surround himself with other men who loved God and were pursuing faith, righteousness and peace. He needed to connect with them because he could not accomplish this goal (pursuit of faith, righteousness and peace) alone.

There are so many other scriptures that talk about the importance of godly relationships. Proverbs 27:17 says, "Iron sharpeneth iron." In other words, what the writer is saying is that when you get around somebody who is hungry, full of zeal, and has a heart for God, he will provoke you to have zeal, and a heart for God.

Proverbs 18:1 says, "A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgement" (NJKV). In other words, a person who doesn't understand the dynamics of godly relationships isolates himself, and he begins to live after his own desires. He eventually begins to live a life of perversity. He's in error but doesn't realize he's in error, because he has cut off his connection with anybody who could help him see his error or anything destructive in his life. 1 Corinthians 15:33 says, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Bad relationships corrupt good behavior.

Then we see in the Scriptures that if we give ourselves to people who love God and we develop those relationships, then they serve as a margin in our lives. They help us live within a place of integrity. They help us maintain character. They help us make sure that our perceptions are still lining up with the Scriptures. Really, the body of Christ is created to work that way. We really do need one another and can't afford to be a lone ranger in our relationship with God.

I really believe that God has placed certain people in your life for a reason. I believe there are divine connections, and maybe you've not really pursued those relationships as you should. I want to encourage you to do so. There are people whom God has placed in your life--not only to teach you and be a mentor, but there are people whom God has placed in your life to be a friend. These people can help you navigate through the storms of life, keep your heart pure, and keep Jesus the Lord of your life.

I want to encourage you to go out there and develop healthy relationships. How do you do that? Well, Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." Take a risk. Be vulnerable. Begin to invest yourself, your life, and your love in somebody else's life. You'll see God begin to develop relationships. Some of those relationships will last the rest of your life. You'll end up being the wealthiest man, or woman in the world because you have the richness and the prosperity of good, godly, healthy friends.

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