

# Relationships



# Discussion Aids



*John 13:34-35 “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”*

Christ himself reveals to us the type of love we should have for one another in our relationships. He models the opportunities we have to encourage and strengthen each other through the relationships God places in our life. These discussion aids are intended to build conversation around common, core issues for relationships. They are designed to be used in a small group setting as a way to seek truth, provide understanding and encourage use as we strive to be Christ-like in our relationships. We have a great opportunity to learn from each other as we share our experiences, struggles, and victories in order to create God-honoring relationships.

This Bible study discussion aid is best intended for small groups which meet regularly. Assuming you are meeting as a group, when you come together, begin with prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to penetrate hearts with His Word. The individual lessons have been designed to be used singly or in combination with others. Each lesson begins with at least one verse from Scripture. This verse or subsequent verses could be used as a possible memory verse from session to session. It is suggested each member of the group complete the lessons individually and come to the group prepared to discuss the lesson. Be confident that time in God’s Word and in the fellowship of God’s people has great potential to build up, convict and encourage your heart.

*Romans 12:5 “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another”*

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# Communication

*Proverbs 29:20* “Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.”

*Ephesians 4:29* “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.”

*James 1:19-20* “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

1. State in your own words what *Proverbs 29:20* means to you.
2. Based on the communication concepts found in both *Proverbs 29:20* and *Ephesians 4:29*, identify and discuss one or more examples from scripture where either healthy or unhealthy communication was used.
3. Recall specific examples where the use of words by others had a significant impact on your relationships (both positive and negative).
4. Words are an important part of communication. However, there are also other factors to consider when seeking to communicate effectively, as revealed in *James 1:19-20*. Contrast what it means to be “*swift to hear*” versus poor listening. Feel free to share specific examples to illustrate this point.

5. Describe what it is like for you when you are in a conversation where you feel the other individual is not interested or paying attention to what you are saying. On the other hand, share what your experience is like when someone is actively listening to you.
  
6. Generate a list of things (i.e. stressors, emotional states, timing) which personally make it difficult to speak or hear kind words. Discuss this list together.

## Challenge

Some individuals are gifted to speak well whereas others have the talent of listening well. For the next week, conduct an experiment- if you are a gifted listener, seek to intentionally utilize your tongue to edify (*Ephesians 4:29*); if you are a talented listener seek to be “*swift to hear*” (*James 1:19-20*). Make note of how others respond to you.

# Boundaries

*Deuteronomy 30:19* “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:”

*Galatians 1:10* “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”

*1 John 1:9* “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

*Revelations 3:20* “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

1. State in your own words what *Deuteronomy 30:19* means to you. What does it say about the choices we have been given?
2. Within relationships, we can make choices on how others behavior will influence us as well as how we will behave towards others. With each choice we make there are certain consequences. Explain how this truth has been manifested in your own life.
3. Together read *Galatians 1:10*. In what ways might seeking to “please men” interfere with your relationship to Christ? How can you personally protect against saying “yes” to men and “no” to God?

4. Boundaries help us keep the good in and remove the bad from our lives. Read *1 John 1:9* and illustrate how this verse can be applied in this context.
  
5. The previous question conveys the principle of the power we have through Christ to remove the bad from our lives. Examine *Revelations 3:20* and together consider specific ways you can let good into your life.

## Challenge

Healthy boundaries allow you to be a good steward of your body, mind and time. Boundaries say “no” to taking over someone else’s responsibilities and “yes” to developing relationships and growing in Christ-likeness. Analyze three key relationships in your life (other than your spouse). What positive (edifying) and negative (detrimental) elements exist in these relationships? Are there areas where you need stronger boundaries? How can you build accountability to make those needed changes?

# Relationships within the Church Body

*1 Corinthians 12:18* “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”

*1 Corinthians 12:26* “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”

*Ephesians 4:16* “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

1. According to *1 Corinthians 12:18*, God appoints or places people within the body in a way that pleases Him. Describe in your own words what this means to you.
2. Read *Romans 12:5* together. Paul reminds us there are things we share in common (i.e., *we are all members of one another, of Christ*) and things that differentiate us (i.e., *many members*). Illustrate how both commonality and uniqueness among the body is true.
3. Describe the benefits for relationships within the body when both commonality and uniqueness are appreciated. Conversely, identify the negative implications of holding only one of these principles as true (i.e., commonality or uniqueness).

4. Read *1 Corinthians 12:26* together. As with our human body, so it is with the church body. When one area suffers, other areas are affected. This truth necessitates openness and awareness about how others in the body “*suffer*” or “*rejoice*”. List three barriers that make it challenging to share with others in the body.
  
5. Based on the barriers identified directly above, generate some ideas to help overcome such barriers.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Explain and illustrate the purpose of the “...*effectual working in the measure of every part...*” of the body (*Eph.4:16*).

## Challenge

The metaphor Paul uses to describe the church is a body. This truth reveals the interrelationship we have with one another. We are both influenced by and influence others. Engage the ideas generated in question 5 above to share your “suffering” or “rejoicing” with another member as well as learn from others.

# Relationships with the Opposite Sex

*Mark 12:30-31* “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”

*Romans 13:14* “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

*1 Corinthians 6:19-20* “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

1. Read *Mark 12:30-31* together. In verse 31, notice the completeness of love God desires from us; Jesus references that each part of us (i.e., heart, soul, mind, strength or ability) should be wholly in love with Him. State in your own words what this means to you. Feel free to share examples of what this practically looks like.
2. The two great commandments Jesus shared in *Mark 12:30-31* begins with a love toward God and moves into a love for others. Discuss what may be different when we seek to “love” our neighbor before truly loving God.

3. When we become believers, we are transformed from the ownership of self and Satan to the ownership of God. In this, we are called to glorify God in what we have influence over (i.e, thoughts, feelings, behaviors). How might you seek to glorify God in body and spirit as it relates to interactions with those of opposite sex?
4. When emotions are intense and boundaries are ambiguous, the potential for inappropriate thoughts, feelings, or engaging in inappropriate behaviors with those of opposite sex is high. Consider someone of the same sex you can communicate openly with to provide accountability to keep your “*temple*” in honor and glory to God. Assess possible barriers to openly sharing with this individual.
5. Describe what it means to “*make not provision for the flesh*” (*Romans 13:14*) when it comes to interacting with those of opposite sex.

## Challenge

Reflect on the following self-examination questions and consider how the answers may influence how you relate to the opposite sex: For Girls – If you were a Christian guy who was struggling to stay sexually pure in your thoughts and actions, what kinds of things might be tempting to you? For Guys – If you were a Christian girl who was struggling to find her emotional security, self-worth, and identity in her relationship with Christ, what kinds of things might be tempting to you?

# Relationships with Unbelievers

*Romans 13:9-10* “For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

*2 Corinthians 6:14* “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”

*James 2:9*, “But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.”

1. In response to a lawyer’s question, “*who is my neighbor?*” (*Luke 10:29*) Jesus responds with the parable of the Good Samaritan. Read the account together in *Luke 10:29-37*. In the end, how does the lawyer respond?
2. Based upon the parable of the Good Samaritan, indicate what criteria Jesus desires for us to use in defining our “neighbor?” How does *James 2:9* factor into your response?
3. Notice in *Romans 13:9-10* Paul elaborates how the command to love fulfills all the other “thou shalt not” commands. Illustrate what it means to “love thy neighbour as thyself” by applying principles found in *Luke 10:29-37* to your life today.

4. Read *2 Corinthians 6:14* together. What does it mean to be “*unequally yoked together with unbelievers*”?
  
5. Generate a list of red flags or signs a person might notice if they are *unequally yoked* with an unbeliever.
  
6. Explain how becoming *unequally yoked* with an unbelieving neighbor may actually prevent you from loving them as yourself.

## Challenge

Think of a “neighbor” you currently have in your life. Consider practical ways you can love them as yourself without becoming unequally yoked. Communicate specific boundaries or red flags with a close friend to help keep you accountable. Next seek to intentionally engage practical ways to show love to your neighbor.

# Conflict Resolution

*Proverbs 14:29* “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.”

*Hebrews 12:15* “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”

*James 1:19-20* “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

1. State in your own words what *Proverbs 14:29* means to you.
2. Recall specific examples in scripture and your personal life where individuals were “*hasty of spirit*” (i.e. breath or speech). In these examples, what was the outcome?
3. What is needed in order for you to be a better listener when discussing a problem with your coworker, friend, or family member?
4. Neglecting to share feelings of anger/frustration can lead to bitterness (*Hebrews 12:15*). Describe ways you can, with biblical principles (i.e. *James 1:19-20*), share feelings of anger/frustration with others.

5. How were anger and other emotions handled in your family as you grew up? How has that influenced the way you interact and share emotions with others in your life?
  
6. On a scale of 1-10, rate your ability to resolve conflict and work through differences with others. [1=terrible, 10=excellent] Think of someone in your life who does handle conflict well and works through differences in a Godly manner. What traits do they exhibit? Identify someone in your life that can help you grow in your ability to handle conflict.
  
7. Think through examples in scripture of where Christ dealt with conflict. What are lessons which can be learned from His example? What are 1-2 things you need to do differently in order to handle conflict more like Christ?

## *Challenge*

How do you approach conflict? Do you tend to avoid conflict? If so, how might you approach a current conflict firmly and directly with respect? On the other hand, do you tend to be argumentative or conflictual? If so, how might you approach a current conflict in a more Christ-like manner?

# Forgiveness

*Isaiah 43:25* “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.”

*Mark 11:25* “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

*Colossians 3:12-14* “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.”

1. Recall your childhood years-how was forgiveness handled? How frequent or infrequent did you see forgiveness being displayed? When was the first time you remember someone offending you? How did you handle this?
2. Analyze your heart when people offend you. Do your behaviors tend to help or hurt forgiveness? Why? Is there a common pattern in your life regarding forgiveness?
3. State in your own words what *Isaiah 43:25* means to you. What does it personally mean to know God's forgiveness is available? What charge does this give you regarding forgiveness?

4. Reflect on both *Mark 11:25* and *Colossians 3:12-14*. Contrast the two motivations for forgiveness as referenced in these scriptures.
  
5. Based on the discussion from the above questions, illustrate how these biblical principles could be modeled in your relationships. Identify when forgiveness is easier or more difficult for you.
  
6. Describe some common barriers associated with the inability to forgive. Circle which ones are most relevant to you.

## Challenge

An unwillingness to forgive can lead to Satan gaining a foothold in our heart and begin to poison our life. Consider talking with a close friend or mentor about a specific incident or incidents you are having trouble forgiving. How can others help you stay accountable to move through hurt and toward forgiveness?

# Personality Differences

*Romans 12:6-8* “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”

*Romans 15:6*, “That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

*1 Peter 4:10-11*, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

1. Our strengths do not make God love us more and our weaknesses do not make God love us less. An awareness of these areas can help us more effectively relate to others. What do you see as strengths of your personality style? What are your weaknesses in this area?
2. State in your own words what *Romans 12:6-8* means to you. In particular, describe how we are to use our gifts or the personality style God has given us?
3. Reflect on *1 Peter 4:10-11*. Regardless of our “gift”, what does Peter ultimately say we are stewards of?

4. God designed each of us to be different. Satan desires to utilize these differences to separate us. Read *Romans 15:6* and describe how God unites us in the midst of personality differences. Consider some practical examples in your life.
  
5. Based on the discussions from the above questions, illustrate how knowing and understanding someone's spiritual gifts or personality can strengthen your relationship and live out lives in a way which glorifies God.

## Challenge

Go to [www.counseling.org/personality](http://www.counseling.org/personality) and take one of the recommended personality tests. Consider sitting down with a close friend and reviewing the results. Identify specific aspects of your personality which may affect or perhaps strengthen your relationships. What areas may be challenging?

# Seeking Key Relationships

*Proverbs 15:22* “Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.”

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

*Acts 18:24-27* “And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:”

1. Read *Acts 9:10-19*. List specific ways God utilized Ananias to disciple Paul.
2. Reflecting again on *Acts 9:10-19*, describe what kind of barriers may have been present for Ananias as he considered the discipleship of Paul. How did Ananias handle such barriers?
3. *Acts 18:24-27* outlines an account of a “Jew named Apollos”. Read this account together and consider the qualities present in Apollos.

4. Illustrate how the principle found in *Proverbs 15:22* was used in the account read above (*Acts 18:24-27*) to further the Lords work in Apollos.
  
5. The accounts above emphasize the importance of having key relationships in our lives to deepen our relationship with Christ. In context of *Proverbs 27:17*, summarize the qualities or characteristics that are helpful to have in key relationships.

## Challenge

Identify the following people in your life. If one or more of those roles are not filled, please consider praying and seeking a relationship that would fill this gap. How often do you get together with each relationship? What attributes mentioned above are present in these relationships?

Mentor-

Accountability Partner-

Mentee-

# Supporting One Another Through Life Stressors

*Isaiah 26:3* “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”

*2 Corinthians 1:3-4* “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

*Colossians 3:12-14* “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.”

1. State in your own words what *Isaiah 26:3* means to you. In particular, discuss how and why we are kept in perfect peace.
2. Applying *Isaiah 26:3*, how do we help each other keep our mind “stayed” on Christ during transitions?
3. *Colossians 3:12-14* reminds us of several things to “put on” as followers of Christ. Explain how these attributes create an environment whereby brothers and sisters in Christ can be drawn closer together even in the midst of transitions. Consider what type of relationship is possible if we “put on” these things.

4. Reflect on some of the major transitions you have had in your life. What have you learned about yourself during those transitions?
  
5. Compare how you and your close friends and family manage stress similarly / differently.
  
6. Review *2 Corinthians 1:3-4*. Evaluate how you can use some of the experiences you have been through to potentially encourage others during stressful periods in their lives.

## *Challenge*

Consider possible transitions that may be coming up for you and/or a close friend. Identify three ways you can support, encourage, and comfort you as you go through these transitions. Examine how “seeking key relationships” helps during life’s stressors.

# Viewing Others with Grace & Truth

*John 1:17* “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

*John 17:17* “Sanctify them through thy truth: Thy word is truth.”

*Ephesians 4:15* “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”

1. State in your own words what *John 1:17* means to you. Give examples of how Christ exemplified both grace and truth through His life.
2. Share an example of when someone loved you with grace and an example of when someone loved you with truth. Which is more difficult to receive? Explain.
3. Of the two extremes, which do you tend to lean toward, grace or truth? How can you balance yourself in this area?

4. *John 17:17* states that the Word is our standard for all truth. How do you personally use the Word to direct and guide your thinking and shape your view of God? Give an example of where you have had to conform your thinking of God to the truth of the scriptures.
  
5. When working with others, how can you use the Word to identify where their image of God might not be based on truth? Give examples of where you have had this opportunity.
  
6. Thinking through *Ephesians 4:15* and recent conversations you have had with others, evaluate how well you have done at sharing the truth in love. Where do you need to improve? How will you do so?

## Challenge

Identify a relationship in your life where the individual does not have an accurate view of God based upon the truth of the Bible. Think through how you will share the “the truth in love” with this person. Purpose to do so soon.

# Serving Others Through Our Relationships

*Mark 10:44-45* “And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

*John 15:8* “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”

*Galatians 6:2* “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

1. Analyze what it means to be a servant. What imagery comes to mind when you think of servant hood?
2. Identify ways Christ served others throughout His ministry. How did this service help further His ministry?
3. *Galatians 6:2* encourages us to bear each other’s “burdens” (literally, boulders). When is it appropriate to give this type of help? When is it not appropriate? Give an example from your life where you have helped someone in this manner appropriately.

4. How does having a relationship with someone increase the ability to serve them? Give examples of ways which this can be so. What are critical aspects of healthy relationships focused on serving others?
  
5. We are all called to serve in different areas and different callings. Consider your relationships and your community. Where do you sense the Lord leading you to serve? Who and how?
  
6. Are there areas of your life where you need to say “no” in order to be more focused to help in the areas where God has uniquely equipped you? Give an example from your life where you have had to “prune” your life so that you can be more effective in service.

## Challenge

*John 15:8* challenges us to glorify God through bearing much fruit. Identify three areas in your life where you can bear “*much fruit*.” Explain why these areas emerge to you. Develop a plan to increase your service in these areas.





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