



Growing As Disciples (Section Introduction)

Having taken hold of our freedom in Christ, we now need to concentrate on growing to maturity. In this section we will learn how to stand firm, how to relate to other people and how to stay on the path of becoming more like Jesus.

SESSION 11: Relating To Others

Objective: To understand our roles and responsibilities in relationships so that we can grow together in Christ.

Focus Truth:

As disciples of Christ we must assume responsibility for our own character and seek to meet the needs of others, rather than the other way round.

Focus verses: *'Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:37-40)*

- * How do we love others as much as we love ourselves?
- * How do we love the unlovable?
- * If left to ourselves we never could. But God never asks the impossible.
- * Having taken hold of our freedom in Christ we are free to relate to others as God intended.
- * "Just as knowing who we are in Christ is the foundation for our Christian life and growth in maturity, it also forms the basis for the way we relate to other people."

Grace Is Undeserved Favour

We love because... He first loved us (1 John 4:19)

We give freely because... He gave freely to us (Matthew 18:8)

We are merciful because... He has been merciful to us (Luke 6:36)

We forgive because... He forgave us (Ephesians 4:32)

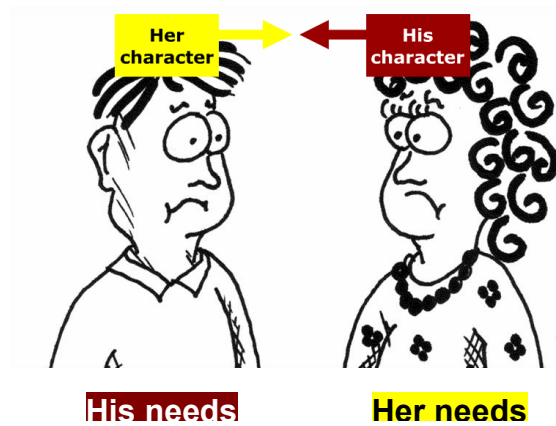
We cannot do this unless we understand what God's grace means for us.

- * Grace is giving people what they don't deserve - undeserved favour.
- cannot be earned
 - * Salvation is a **free** gift - we owe God nothing for it.
- But** when we receive His grace we discover that we want to give it away to others (see *Acts 20:35*).

Notes _____

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

e.g. In an argument:



What are our responsibilities?

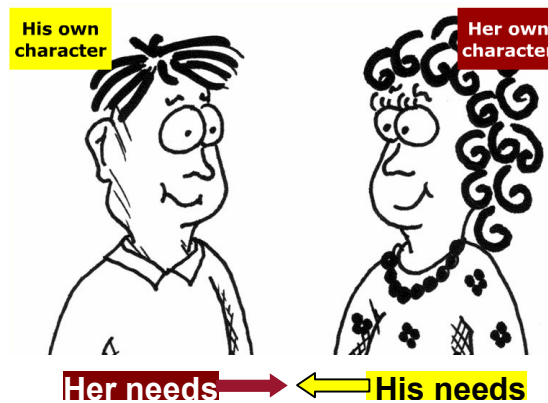
"Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand." (Romans 14:4)

- * Someone's character is not to be our concern - their own concern & responsibility before God
- * We are not to judge

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:" (Philippians 2:3-5)

We are responsible for two things: our own character and meeting the needs of others.

If everyone assumed their responsibility:



Notes _____

Why do we fail to live it out?

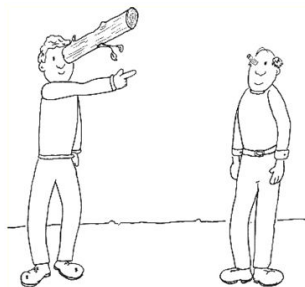
See: *Isaiah 6:1-5* If, like Isaiah, we had such a manifestation of God's presence, whose sin would we be immediately be aware of? Our own!

See *Luke 5:1-4* Peter's response to the miracle (and the presence of Jesus!) was "*I am a sinful man.*"

Being Aware Of Our Own Sins

When we see God for who He is, we don't become aware of the sins of others, but of our own sin

When we are lukewarm in our relationship with God, we have a tendency to overlook our own sin, and see the sin of others.



Notes _____

Rights And Responsibilities

* In every relationship we have both rights & responsibilities

* Where should we put the emphasis? We must focus on our own responsibilities.

* Satan will tempt us to focus on our rights rather than our responsibilities

e.g. Do husbands have a right to expect their wives to be submissive...or a responsibility to love them?

Do parents have a right to expect their children to be obedient... or a responsibility to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord?

Do church members have the right to criticize others... or a responsibility to submit to those in authority and relate to others with the same love and acceptance we have received from Christ? i.e. behave as God's children.

Emphasising rights above responsibilities sows the seed of destruction in any relationship.

Notes _____

WHAT ABOUT WHEN OTHERS DO WRONG?

* All find it difficult to own up to sin

* What's the hardest to say? I'm sorry; I did it; Forgive me?

When Others Do Wrong

It is not our responsibility to try to be the conscience of another person

It is the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin

Playing the role of the Holy Spirit in another person's life will misdirect their struggle with God onto ourselves

- Ministry of reconciliation (*2 Corinthians 5:18*)

- Love covers a multitude of sin (*1 Peter 4:8*)

Notes _____

DISCIPLINE YES, JUDGEMENT NO

What should I do when someone keeps sinning?

How do these verses go together?

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1-2)

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently." (Galatians 6:1)

Discipline Versus Judgement

Judgement is related to character

Discipline is related to behaviour you have observed

See *Matthew 18:15-17* The purpose of the process is not condemnation but restoration

We are often tempted to judge character rather than draw attention to sinful behaviour
e.g. 'You told a lie.' or 'You're a liar.'

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." (Ephesians 4:92-30)

Notes _____

DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT ARE NOT THE SAME

Discipline Versus Punishment

Punishment looks backward to the past

Discipline looks forward to the future

See *Hebrews 12:5-11*: a proof of love
designed to bring a "harvest of righteousness"

Notes _____

WHEN WE ARE ATTACKED

When Our Character Is Attacked

Should we be defensive? (See 1 Peter 2:23) If you are wrong, you don't have a defence
If you are right, you don't need one

'Nobody tears down another person from a position of strength. Those who are critical of others are either hurting or immature. If you can learn not to be defensive when someone exposes your character defects or attacks your performance you may have an opportunity to turn the situation around and minister to that person.'

Notes _____

AUTHORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

From which end of this list (top or bottom) did God first come to you?

Authority
Accountability
Affirmation
Acceptance

Romans 5:6 "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 8:16 "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

**Acceptance
Affirmation**

Beware of a distorted image of God!

"When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." (Matthew 7:28b-29)

Jesus' authority didn't come from position but character.

(See also Paul's example: 1Thessalonians 2:5-8 (NASB))

Notes _____

SHOULD WE EXPRESS OUR NEEDS?

"Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful." (Titus 3:14 NASB)

Expressing Needs

It's important to express our needs

But be careful to state them as a need not a judgement

'I' not 'You'

* Every one of us needs to be loved, accepted and affirmed

Notes _____

One Of Life's Little Secrets

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Acts 20:35

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap.

For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Luke 6:38



* Illustration: Baker & Farmer

'The way we relate to each other as Christians is critical to completing the commission that Jesus gave us, to "go into all the world and make disciples.'

Notes _____

A poem that expresses how we can be the person God created us to be in spite of others and the sad philosophies of this fallen world:

*People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centred.
Love them anyway.*

*If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.
Do good anyway.*

*If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies.
Succeed anyway.*

*The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.
Do good anyway.*

*Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.
Be honest and frank anyway.*

*The biggest people with the biggest ideas can be shot down
by the smallest people with the smallest minds.
Think big anyway.*

*People favour underdogs but follow only top dogs.
Fight for the underdog anyway.*

*What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.
Build anyway.*

*People really need help, but may attack you if you help them.
Help people anyway.*

*Give the world the best you've got and you'll get kicked in the teeth.
Give the world the best you've got anyway.*

In The Coming Week

Read Luke 6:27-41. This session may have convicted you of the need to relate differently to your family, friends and neighbours. You might want to seek the forgiveness of others. If you sense the Lord's conviction, then go to that person or persons and ask their forgiveness, stating clearly that what you have done is wrong. (Don't do this by letter or email - it might be misunderstood or used against you.)

Big Question (to consider before the next session)

What are your goals for the rest of your life? How can you know if they are consistent with God's will?