

RELATIONSHIPS: RESTORED & REVEALED

There is a message which needs to be proclaimed. This message is critical because so many people are confused, anguished, and emotionally pained. Many are suffering needlessly, are deceived, and will find no relief now or in the future until they hear and act on the truth of this message. The message is this: “There are relationships which must be honored and nurtured.” If this is not done, peace and understanding will not be found. We will spend a short time considering these necessary relationships and explaining why they are so important.

RELATIONSHIPS RESTORED- The Cross Of Salvation

The starting point of all relationships in life begins with a right standing before God. Without a commitment to God, all other relationships have no basis or real purpose. A right relationship with God allows for all other relationships to be healthy. There is no other way.

It must be understood that mankind has lost his relationship with God and that it must be restored. This is not done collectively- as a group, but individually-

one person at a time. How did we lose our relationship with God? The Bible records that God originally made man and woman to have a harmonious and perfect relationship with Him. In Genesis 3 we are told what happened to ruin this relationship and how separation occurred. The first man and the first woman (Adam and Eve) committed sin. They broke God's perfect law which resulted in physical and spiritual separation from God. Not only did the first man and woman lose their relationship with God, but their happy and holy relationship as husband and wife was also ruined. Sin had come into the world and the consequences are still with us today.

The question might be asked, "How did the disobedience of Adam and Eve cause 'me' to be condemned?" The answer to this reasonable question is "We all sin in Adam."¹ This means that we are all of the same nature as Adam and, if given the same charge and position as Adam, we would each disobey as well. If any one of us were commanded to not eat the fruit of a certain tree from a lush garden, as Adam was commanded,² we would all succumb and eat. It might be a week, it might be a month, it might be a year, it might be many years, but every one of us would just have to taste that forbidden fruit. We would certainly have sinned in this way if given the opportunity; we

are to love others. This is a complete summary of living a life that pleases God and proves salvation.

evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (see Matthew 12:38-40; Luke 11:29-30)

It should be noted that Scripture records “...among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist;” (Luke 7:28) and “John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true.” (John 10:41)

Pointing to some seemingly supernatural manifestation or ability or sign is not dependable evidence of salvation or true faith, (see Matthew 7:21-23) A far better indication that Christ has wrought salvation is in relationship love being worked out and exhibited, (see I Corinthians 13)

Jesus taught: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You should love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40) First, we are to love God with all of our being! Second, we

do now sin in other ways open to us.

There is only one way to reclaim the lost relationship with God. Over and over again we are told to repent. John, the forerunner to Jesus, declared plainly, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2) Jesus himself spoke clearly when He said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15) Peter, who spoke to a crowd of thousands after Jesus’ departure from this world, said boldly, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38)

God has made a way for us to be forgiven for our disobedience. First, we must recognize that we are sinful and need forgiveness. We are guilty. Second, we must understand that we can do nothing in and of ourselves to earn forgiveness. In fact, we must even repent of our works (referred to as “dead works”³ in the Bible) in order to be made right before God. Third, God makes it plain that no one is righteous by outward ritual or practice. Regular church attendance, receiving communion, or bland confession of sins to another person does not satisfy God. This is mentioned repeatedly throughout the Old Testament⁴ and is referred to as a “form of godliness”⁵ in the New Testament. How then are we to have a right relationship

with God?

There is only one way- belief and confession of Jesus as Lord and Saviour.⁶ Jesus, in obedience to the Father, has done what was necessary for us to be able to reclaim our relationship to the Father. Jesus has done a truly astonishing thing for us! Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all record the event of Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus died on the cross to receive the punishment for our sins.

Interestingly, none of the gospel writers describe the actual physical torment which Jesus endured as he hung naked, nailed to the rough wooden cross. The gruesome details of the physical pain involved in Jesus' crucifixion are not found in the Bible. Information about the awful suffering endured by a crucified man is drawn from other historic sources. Why is this!? Certainly Jesus suffered terribly to pay the price for our sins as many have explained.

Few words are recorded as being spoken by Jesus from the cross, but both Matthew and Mark write that Jesus said, "Eli, Eli, lama sabach tham'?" that is, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) Jesus spoke these words in a loud voice, in his native language, in the midst of great physical suffering, from the cross. What

EXPLANATION

The purpose of this booklet is two-fold. The first is to briefly present the gospel in terms of relationship love. The gospel is about Jesus Christ and what He has done for His people through His death (as a "perfect" sacrifice), His burial, and His bodily resurrection. We have the account of His life and work recorded in Scripture for us to read, (see especially I Corinthians 15:1-4)

The second purpose is to develop from Scripture the truth that a person who professes to be a Christian must live this out through his/her earthly relationships. Relationship love gives credence to an individual having been truly changed in Christ. Conversely, one who dishonors relationships discredits himself as a believer.

Many point to mystical or emotional or miraculous experiences as proof of their Christianity. "Experiences" may or may not be true; they are hard to prove or disprove. An experience may be counterfeited or even demonic in origin, (see 2 Thessalonians 1:9-11) Also, a need to see constant miracles and healings and signs shows great spiritual weakness or outright unbelief. In response to the request, "Teacher we want to see a sign from you," Jesus responded sharply, "An

25. Malachi 3:13
26. 2 Corinthians 6:14-15
27. Malachi 2:15
28. Malachi 2:16
29. Exodus 20:12
30. Matthew 15:3-9; Mark 7:8-13
31. 2 Corinthians 12:14
32. Psalm 127
33. Proverbs 17:6
34. 1 Timothy 3:2,12
35. 1 Timothy 3:4,12
36. Titus 1:6
37. John 19:28-30
38. Romans 1:26-27
39. John 8:11
40. John 4
41. Matthew 5:23-24
42. 1 Peter 3:7
43. Luke 19:8
44. Luke 19:9
45. Mark 5:1-19; Luke 8:36-39
46. Acts 17:3

*All quotations cited in the text are from the New King James Version of the Bible.

was even more grievous to Jesus than the physical torture He experienced was His separation from the Father. When Jesus took on our sins and received our punishment, He temporarily lost His relationship with the Father! The Father could not look upon or abide this Sin. Jesus Christ the Son, for the first time ever, lost His perfect relationship with the Father in order that we might have our relationship restored with the Father! Oh, what love! Oh, what sacrifice!

RELATIONSHIPS REVEALED - The Church Of Believers

Those who have come to the Father through the completed work of Jesus Christ are children of God. It follows that the spiritual children of the heavenly Father are brothers and sisters in Christ. When a person becomes a Christian, this means that he or she has a personal relationship with God. It also means that new relationships are provided since the new believer has come into a spiritual family. The Bible strikingly expresses this relationship among believers. Christians “once were not a people but are now the people of God.” (1 Peter 2:10) How wonderful!

People have been brought together who once had nothing in common to unite them. Now as “adopted”

sons and daughters⁷ who have been gathered together⁸ into one family of like-minded worshippers,⁹ God has established a people who are to enjoy earthly and eternal relationships.¹⁰

As Christians, who now have a relationship with God, there are many things we are commanded to do for one another. We are commanded, in no uncertain terms, to love our brothers and sisters in Christ.¹¹ We are to bear one another's burdens¹²; we are told to pray for one another and confess our sins to one another¹³; we are told to greet one another in love¹⁴; we are to teach one another and sing together¹⁵; we are to be like-minded¹⁶; we must forgive one another¹⁷; we are to speak kindly to one another.¹⁸ We are to warn brothers "who are unruly, comfort the faint-hearted, uphold the weak, be patient..."¹⁹ Plainly, we are instructed: "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another..." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

In the book of I John, Christians are commanded to love one another. In fact, our love for other believers is a test as to whether we truly love God. **If you say you love God, then you must love your brothers**

REFERENCES*

1. Romans 5:12
2. Genesis 2:16-17
3. Hebrews 6:1, 9:14
4. Psalm 40:61; Isaiah 1:10-13
5. 2 Timothy 3:5
6. Romans 10:8-13
7. Ephesians 1:5
8. John 11:52
9. John 4:23-24 10. Titus 3:7; Romans 8:17 11. I John 2: 3-11
12. Galatians 6:2
13. James 5:16 14. I Peter 5:14
15. Colossians 3:16
16. Philippians 2:2
17. Colossians 3:13
18. Colossians 4:6
19. I Thessalonians 5:14
20. I John 4, I John 3:14
21. Matt. 22:35-39, Mark 12:28-34
22. Mark 10: 5-12
23. Matthew 5:32
24. I Corinthians 7:1-16

re-establish severed relationships as a proof of the compassion of Christ in his life. Paul told the most educated of his day that God “now commands all men everywhere to repent.”^{4*} It is important to understand that we must get both our relationship with God and with our fellow man right.

Relationships are important. The most important relationship is with God. Do you have a relationship with God the Father through Jesus the Son? If so, is transforming faith in Christ evidenced by love for your Christian brothers and sisters, by love for your husband or wife and children, by love for others with whom you have involvement? The Bible indicates this is a true test of whether one is a believer or pretender.

and sisters in Christ. You must! This is a proof of real conversion and salvation.²⁰

The New Testament epistles (letters) are full of verses which express our obligations toward other Christian brothers and sisters. A number of these have been cited above as representative of how we are to interact with one another. The wording of Scripture indicates that we are to develop deep and lasting relationships with fellow believers. It is impossible to be obedient to God and effectively pray for, exhort, bear with, love, comfort, stir up, and be forgiving of people about whom we know little. Our lives as believers must be intertwined and close bonds developed. To satisfy the Christ ordained “law of love”²¹ we cannot walk a solitary path. We are all members of one body.

RELATIONSHIPS RECLAIMED- The Covenant Of Marriage

In order to have healthy relationships with others, we must first have a relationship with God through Christ. Once our heavenly, eternal relationships are made right, we can then enjoy meaningful and purposeful earthly relationships. This is especially true in marriage. We are living at a time when abortion, homosexuality, divorce, and illegitimate births are

epidemic. This is nothing but sin and selfishness.

Jesus spoke strongly in favor of marriage and against divorce.²² He did make an exception for “sexual immorality”²³ as an allowance for divorce. This was an allowance for divorce due to adultery, not a command to divorce! Paul speaks strongly of the Christian’s obligation to honor his marriage vows, even when married to an unbeliever.²⁴ He does make an allowance for cases of abandonment. Also, much concern is expressed over the children of such a union.

We must understand God’s purposes for instituting marriage in order to have a foundation for honoring such a commitment. The prophet Malachi states that the prayers of the people of God are not heard by Him even with “weeping and crying” because marriage covenants have been broken.²⁵ Also, Paul warns against “being unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”²⁶ Christians are often not effective and are not strong because they divorce as readily as the world and marry unbelievers against the Bible’s clear instruction. They taint and compromise themselves, thus harming themselves spiritually.

Malachi also gives a purpose for marriage by declaring that the Lord “seeks godly offspring.”²⁷ God would have His people bear children and raise them

have a right relationship with God. Jesus told the woman caught in adultery to “go and sin no more.”³⁹ Jesus addressed a woman’s sin of going from one husband to another (five in all) and, because of her testimony, others believed in Jesus unto salvation.⁴⁰

In another place, Jesus told the multitudes to not even worship God but immediately leave the church and first be reconciled to your brother if you “remember that your brother has something against you.”⁴¹ We are also reminded that discord between a Christian husband and wife will hinder prayer to God.⁴² It will hurt your prayer life and your relationship to God!

The dishonest tax collector, Zacchaeus, volunteered to repay all those whom he had defrauded (cheated) fourfold⁴³ in order to make restitution and heal relationships. Jesus said to Zacchaeus, “Today salvation has come to this house. . . ,”⁴⁴ **Zacchaeus gave clear testimony of a changed life in Christ by voluntarily righting relationships he’d dishonored.** The demon possessed man of the Gardarenes, who lived naked among the tombs, had the evil spirits exorcised by Jesus. When this tormented man returned to sanity he begged Jesus to let him come along with Him. Jesus would not allow this but told the restored man to return to his house and friends.⁴⁵ He was to

mother of children.” (Psalm 113:9) “A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows is God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families.” (Psalm 68:5-6a)

Are you lonely because your husband has died? God will be your husband. Are you distraught or in need because of abandonment or divorce? God will be father or mother to your children. Are you an orphan? God will be your parents. Are you disturbed because you have no meaningful relationship with your own family? God will give you brothers and sisters in Christ.

All of this is available through Jesus Christ. His finished work on the cross has brought eternal life and -restored and revealed relationships. Jesus’ final, dying words were “It is finished!”³⁷ The way has been prepared for us to regain what was lost and to receive relationships we never had or enjoyed.

Whatever sins you have committed must be forgiven and forgiveness comes by confession of those sins. The confession must be repentant, that is, given with a sincere feeling of regret and sorrow, with a determination to turn away from those sins. You must repent of abortion; you must repent of divorce; you must repent of sexual immorality and deviancy³⁸ to

to follow after Him. God hates divorce!²⁸ If this were not enough to cause Christians to desire healthy marriages and godly children, Malachi closes his oracle, or prophecy, with words that evidence the coming of the Lord. **The blessing of conversion (salvation) will be evidenced in that “He [Jesus] will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers.”** (Malachi 4:6)

Salvation is entering into a relationship with God which opens the door to proper relationships in other areas. A Christian will desire to honor his marriage vows and be a devoted parent. This should be a high priority in living out the faith. A person who becomes a Christian after divorcing should go back and seek to restore that broken relationship in a manner pleasing to God. This may require much faith, prayer, and wise counsel from others- especially if the believer or ex-spouse has re-married. Why are new believers not being taught to do this as their needful responsibility? Why are there so many rebellious children who have poor relationships with their professing Christian parents?

God is serious about familial relationships. The fifth commandment states: “Honor your father and your mother...”²⁹ This is a remarkable law for the pe-

riod of history in which it was given. Children were told to not only honor their father, but also their mother! Jesus emphasized this commandment when He spoke on the responsibility of children to care for their parents in time of need.³⁰ The Old Testament speaks much about children receiving a blessing and a financial inheritance from their parents. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, alludes to the teaching that parents should strive to lay up an inheritance for their children.³¹ There are many passages that indicate children are a blessing and a “reward” to marriage.³²

Not only are there immediate relationships to be enjoyed and nurtured, but even grandchildren are to be especially honored relationships.³³ When Peter closed his God-given sermon in Acts 2, he issued a call to repentance and belief to receive salvation in terms of the family. He said, “For this promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord will call.” (Acts 2:39)

Even the qualifications for church officers is dependent upon a man’s standing in his own home! He must be “the husband of one wife”³⁴ and “one who rules his own house well”³⁵ and “having faithful children.”³⁶

RELATIONSHIPS REPENTED- The Circle Of Wholeness

Again, there is a clear connection between our relationship with God and our relationship to others. Paul taught on relationships by warning against inti-mate fellowship between believers and unbelievers. Paul continued his reasoning by reminding his read-ers that God has made those of us who are believers “a people” to be distinctive and separate from the world. He argues that we are to live as brothers and sisters. All proper relationships flow from our relationship with God through Christ!

We could end here and say that we’ve come full circle in our evaluation of godly relationships, but God says more. **ALL OF GOD’S CHILDREN ARE TO ENJOY ALL THESE RELATIONSHIPS.** God has es-tablished the Family (husband-wife-children) and the Church (brothers-sisters in Christ). You might say, “But what about the woman who can have no children or the widow whose husband has died or the young children who have been abandoned by their father?”

God Himself, in His great love and tenderness, satisfies our missing or lost or broken relationships. “He grants the barren woman a home, like a joyful