

40 Days *WITH* the  
**HOLY SPIRIT**

**Daily**  
**Devotional**

Fruit of the Spirit

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

***Galatians 5:22-23***



# Introduction

Welcome to 40 Days with the Holy Spirit. In this Daily Devotional, we will focus our attention on the **Fruit of the Holy Spirit** from *Galatians 5:22-23*.

The fruit of the Spirit is essentially nine visible virtues that Paul lists in *Galatians 5* that should be evidenced in a person who is walking with Jesus.

When we follow Christ, believing in Him and His saving work on the cross by grace through faith, we are united to Christ and we are given the Holy Spirit. Paul points out in *Galatians 5* is that those who have been filled with the Holy Spirit and are living their lives now according to Christ, not according to sin, will look significantly different than those who do not.

A life filled with the Spirit of God will produce fruit that is sweet and will draw people to God, not fruit that is sour and will turn people away.

The first day of weeks 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 starts with an outline sermon I have prepared for you for further study. Days 2 - 6 of those weeks are reflections and self study exercises, including a concluding thought or action step and a memory verse.

Week 6 is a collection of more outline sermons for further study.

My hope is that the next forty days will be very rewarding and enriching as you love, learn, and live God's Word!

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Groom". The signature is written in black ink and has a horizontal line underneath it.

Pastor Mike Groom

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*Galatians 5:22-23 (niv) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness [integrity], faithfulness, 23: gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

### 1. WHAT IS LOVE?

There is a popular misconception about love that is so evident in our society today. That love is just a **'strong feeling'** or an **'uncontrollable emotion.'**

*Romans 12:9-10 (niv) Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves.*

**(nlt)** *Don't just pretend that you love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of the good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honouring each other.*

**The Greeks had a clear concept of the four different kinds of love.**

#### **EROS - Sensual Love.**

'Eros' love describes the deep, passionate, sensual love that God only permits between husband and wife. Erotic pleasure within marriage is a gift of God.

*Matthew 5:27-30 (niv) You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell"*

*Proverbs 6:32-33 (tlb) But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul. 33: Wounds and constant disgrace are his lot.*

#### **STORGE - Family Love.**

'Storge' was the word used by the Greeks to describe family affection. It expressed in particular the fondness of parents for their children and of children for their parents.

*Romans 12:10 (kjv) Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another.*

#### **PHILIA - Friendly Love.**

'Philia' represents the love of deep friendship. It has the sense of an earnest attachment to someone or something.

*'Philia,'* itself occurs only once in the New Testament in **James 4:4** (niv) *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend [philia] of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

*'Philia,'* is a stronger word than *'storge.'* Hence, in the church, we may have *'storge,'* for every member, but *'philia'* for only a few.

Where *'eros'* is sin outside of marriage, then *'philia,'* becomes the proper expression of love – between friends.

Love is not a thing of which to be ashamed. Only when love becomes lust, does it become a sinful thing.

## **AGAPE - Godly Love.**

*'Agape'* love is not an emotion in the heart, but out of an act of the will over a mere emotion.

*'Agape'* love is a reflection of the character of God Himself - ***'unconditional love!'***

**John 13:34** (nlt) *So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love [agape] each other. Just as I have loved [agaped] you, you should love [agape] each other.*

In summary, for our spouse we should be generous in ***'eros'***; for our family including the church, we should have warm ***'storge'***; for special friends, ***'philia'***, but to everyone the Lord commands us to express His grace, which is ***'agape'***.

True, genuine Christian love **is controllable and is a matter of our will and not our emotion or feelings.** Agape love is shown by our conduct and actions.

**1 John 3:18** (niv) *Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

**John 3:16** (niv) *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son....*

## **2. HOW HEALTHY ARE OUR RELATIONSHIPS?**

**Ephesians 4:2** (niv) *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

### **Love is PATIENT.**

Patience in relationships can be defined as; *"I make allowances for the faults of another person."*

Remember how God has been patient with us...

**Colossians 3:13** (tlb) *Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.*

Decide to wear love...

*Colossians 3:14 (nlt) And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love. Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony.*

God lovingly draws us in. He patiently waits for us to respond to His love.

## **Love is KIND.**

It's all about care. The word kind basically means to 'care.' If I'm going to be kind to another person, I have to have a gentle and tender heart towards them.

*Ephesians 4:32 (nkjv) And be kind to one another, **tenderhearted, forgiving** one another, even as God in Christ **forgave** you.*

How do we develop a tender heart? Through forgiveness! Forgiveness has to be a vital part of any relationship we have with another human being.

## **Love does not ENVY.**

Love does not boast and it's not proud. *(1 Corinthians 13)*

Envy, boasting, and pride arise from insecurity. Security is what makes relationships really workable.

Jesus built security into our relationship with Him through His demonstration of love for us. Love is really alive when it is giving.

*Romans 5:8 (niv) But God **demonstrates** His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

## **3. LOVE REALLY TRIES TO LIVE ABOVE SELFISNESS.**

### **True Love endeavours to pursue self-less-ness.**

It's a sacrificial giving type of love that builds real trust, commitment and acceptance in life.

*Luke 6:36-38 (tlb) "Try to show as much compassion as your Father does. 37: "Never criticize or condemn-or it will all come back on you. Go easy on others; then they will do the same for you. 38: **For if you give, you will get!** Your gift will return to you in full and overflowing measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use to give-large or small-will be used to measure what is given back to you."*

The context is the totality of love. God blesses us when we take the initiative to give first.

### **Love is about right actions.**

Love always protects, always trust, hopes, always perseveres, and love never fails! You see, our actions tremendously impact our feelings!



**Luke 7:36-50** *One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to come to his home for a meal, so Jesus accepted the invitation and sat down to eat. 37: A certain immoral woman heard he was there and brought a beautiful jar filled with expensive perfume. 38: Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them. 39: When the Pharisee who was the host saw what was happening and who the woman was, he said to himself, "This proves that Jesus is no prophet. If God had really sent him, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!" 40: Then Jesus spoke up and answered his thoughts. "Simon," he said to the Pharisee, "I have something to say to you." "All right, Teacher," Simon replied, "go ahead." 41: Then Jesus told him this story: "A man loaned money to two people - five hundred pieces of silver to one and fifty pieces to the other. 42: But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?" 43: Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt." "That's right," Jesus said. 44: Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45: You didn't give me a kiss of greeting, but she has kissed my feet again and again from the time I first came in. 46: You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. 47: I tell you, her sins - and they are many - have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love." 48: Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven." 49: The men at the table said among themselves, "Who does this man think he is, going around forgiving sins?" 50: And Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*

## Thoughts

In his book *'Too Busy to Pray'* Bill Hybels writes: "To many people live in the fast lane, determined to make it on their own, where prayer (communicating with God) can be an interruption."

Where does the still, small voice of God fit into our hectic lives? Do we become too busy to pause and to communicate with our Lord?

God calls every believer first to Himself. One of the greatest dangers facing us today is our tendency to be so involved in various activities that we lose that "simple and pure devotion to Christ" **2 Corinthians 11:3**.

God wants us to be filled with passion and love for His Son, Jesus Christ. This story of Jesus and the sinful woman illustrates the kind of simple devotion that God desires.

# Self Study

**1. In what ways does the woman demonstrate lavish devotion to Jesus?  
(36-38)**

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**2. Why do you think her actions offend Simon the Pharisee? (39)**

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**3. What point does Jesus make for Simon in the parable of the two debtors? (40-43)**

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**4. Why does Jesus compare Simon's hospitality with that of the woman?  
(44-46)**

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**5. According to Jesus, what does it indicate when a person has little love for Him? (47)**

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**6. What further blessings does the sinful woman receive from Jesus as a result of her faith? (48-50)**

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**Think Spot:** *What obstacles in my life are hindering me from a single-minded devotion to Jesus?*

**Memory Verse:** *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. **Ephesians 4:32***

**John 13:1-17** *It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. 2: The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. 3: Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4: so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5: After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6: He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7: Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8: "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." 9: "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" 10: Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." 11: For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. 12: When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13: "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14: Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15: I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16: I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17: Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

## Thoughts

There is a difference between choosing to be a servant and choosing to serve. When we choose to serve, we are still very much in charge. We decide whom we will serve, when we will serve, and to what extent will we serve.

Servants, on the other hand, have surrendered their right to choose who and when they will serve. They take on the perspective of a slave. They no longer possess the rights of free men and women. They are completely available and vulnerable! In *John 13*, Jesus shows us what it means to be a loving servant.

## Self Study

1. **Imagine yourself reclining at the table with Jesus. What might you have seen, heard, and felt as Jesus rose to wash your feet?**

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**2. Foot washing in Jewish eyes was something even Jewish slaves were not required to do. This was a task reserved for Gentile slaves, wives, and children. What, then, did Jesus' action demonstrate?**

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**3. What point does Jesus powerfully drive home in? (12-17)**

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**Think Spot:** *How can I serve someone today or this week?*

**Memory Verse:** *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another. **Romans 12:10***

*Luke 10:25-37* On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26: "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 27: He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" 28: "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." 29: But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30: In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31: A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32: So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33: But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34: He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. 35: The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' 36: "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" 37: The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

## Thoughts

On March 13, 1964, Kitty Genovese, age twenty-eight, was returning home to her apartment in New York when she was stabbed by a man on her stairwell. She screamed for help. Thirty-eight respectable, law-abiding citizens heard the cry but did nothing. The man ran off. He returned a second time, stabbing her again. There was an additional scream for help. The killer returned a third and final time to silence the screams once and for all. None of the thirty-eight people wanted to get involved. By the time a few witnesses worked up the courage to make anonymous phone calls to the police, Genovese had died.

Sadly, society has so many issues and the decline in human behavior and attitude is all too evident. Which can cause the temptation to retreat into ourselves and withdrawal from society. Jesus, in this famous parable, speaks to this struggle.

## Self Study

1. Why do you think the expert in the law wanted to “justify” himself? (29)

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**2. What are some of our reasons we sometimes pass by those in need? (31-32) Are there times when it might be legitimate? Explain.**

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**3. Why do you think Jesus picked a Samaritan, someone the Jews hated, as the example of someone loving his neighbour? What ethnic religious group might Jesus have chosen today?**

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**Think Spot:** *What does it mean for me to “go and do likewise”?*

**Memory Verse:** *He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" **Luke 10:27***

**Matthew 18:21-35** Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22: Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. 23: "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24: As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25: Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. 26: "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27: The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. 28: "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. 29: "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' 30: "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31: When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. 32: "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33: Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34: In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. 35: "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

## Thoughts

"I forgive, but I won't forget!" "No, I won't tell him how much I'm hurt. He didn't even think about thanking me."

"I'm very hurt after what she said about me. I know she's sorry, but I'll never go back to that group again."

**Hebrews 12:15** See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Bitterness or unforgiveness is like a root hidden beneath the ground. If it is not pulled out, it will eventually grow and bring forth bad fruit.

This root is formed from a variety of causes: broken relationships, parental neglect, unfulfilled expectations, feelings of betrayal, and so on. An unwillingness to forgive and deal with bitter roots has enormous consequences – spiritually, emotionally, and even physically.

For this reason, Jesus strongly addresses this life-and-death issue for us in this passage of Scripture in **Matthew 18**.



# Self Study

1. What does Peter's question reveal about his view of forgiveness? (21)  
What is so amazing about Jesus' reply? (22)

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2. Consider the three actions the master takes toward his servant. (27)  
How do they illustrate the way God has dealt with us?

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3. Why do you think the servant failed to forgive after having been forgiven so much?

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4. In what ways are we [and others] tortured when we choose not to release others from the debt they owe us? (34)

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**Think Spot:** *How can a deep understanding of God's love for me radically affect my attitude to the person who has mistreated me?*

**Memory Verse:** *See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. **Hebrews 12:15***

**James 3:1-12** *Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 2: We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. 3: When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4: Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5: Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6: The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7: All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, 8: but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9: With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. 10: Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. 11: Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12: My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.*

## Thoughts

Many people have lost their effectiveness and damaged relationships with the tongue. In the workplace, classroom, home, and even in the Church, complaining and fault-finding are the way of life for many, sadly.

The Bible describes Satan as the ultimate Accuser, standing before the Father day and night to point out our faults.

**Revelations 12:10** *Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.*

As a result, both the world and the Church are filled with people crying out for words of affirmation and love. **James 3** explores the powerful effect of our tongues and challenges us to put our faith into action by loving one another with our words.

## Self Study

### 1. What damage can be caused by the tongue? (1-12)

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**2. How should the tongue have a positive impact? (9-12)**

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**3. What are some constructive ways you can use your tongue to bless those in your church or fellowship?**

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**Think Spot:** *Have people been hurt or damaged as a result of my words?*

**Memory Verse:** *Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.*  
*Psalms 12:19*

*1 Corinthians 13:1-13* If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2: If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3: If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. 4: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5: It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6: Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7: It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8: Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9: For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10: but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 11: When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12: Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 13: And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

## Thoughts

*Matthew 24:12* Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.

Jesus predicted that in the last days, because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.

Today, an increase of the “cold love” can be easily found in our society.

Yet the Bible teaches that God is love (*1 John 4:16*) and that Christians are to be known by their love for one another (*John 13:34-35*).

For this reason, *1 Corinthians 13* is such a timely message for us today. Written to a church filled with disunity and pride, this chapter is a beautiful portrait of Christian love. It defines love, explains where it fits in God’s agenda for His Church, and explores its future in eternity.

## Self Study

1. Why are the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in verses 1-3 worthless without love? Why is love superior? (8-13)

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2. The world understands a conditional love with strings attached, such as: *“I love you if ...”* What are the seven characteristics that love is *not*? (4-7)

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3. What are the eight qualities of what love is?

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**Think Spot:** *Do I love with strings attached?*

**Memory Verse:** *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5: It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5*

The best of relationships goes through ups and downs. Every relationship has its difficult times. What we need in our relationships is just not happiness but joy!

## **1. HAPPINESS VERSUS JOY.**

### **Happiness is EXTERNAL.**

Happiness comes from the word "*hap*" which means "*luck*". Happiness basically depends on the right happening or the right circumstances.

### **Joy is INTERNAL.**

Real abiding joy is based on Jesus Christ and the positive confidence that we have from knowing Him, irrespective of our circumstances.

### **The key to lasting joy is PERSPECTIVE.**

Perspective is about what I choose to focus on!

## **2. RELATIONAL KILLJOYS VERSUS RELATIONAL ANTIDOTES.**

### **Selfishness versus Giving.**

*James 4:1-2 (gnb) Where do all the fights and quarrels among you come from? They come from your desires... which are constantly fighting with your bodies... you strongly desire things but you cannot get them, so you quarrel and fight.*

If we want to restore real joy back into our relationships, we need to consider the other person more than being self-consumed with ourselves and our desires!

*Philippians 2:3-4 (nlt) Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. 4: Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.*

**Selfishness undermines relationships but giving is the antidote to selfishness!** The Bible says that God is love and God is a Giver.

*John 3:16 (niv) For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

We can give without loving, but we cannot love without giving!

*Acts 20:35 (niv) In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus Himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

*2 Peter 1:7 (tlb) Learn to put aside your own desires so that you will become patient and godly. This will make possible the next step, which is for you to **enjoy** other people and to like them, and finally you will grow to love them deeply.*

It does not come natural to us to put aside our own desires. Joy comes from making other people happy. God designed it this way. Selfishness is the first 'Joy killer.' But the antidote to this killjoy is 'Giving'.

## **Resentment versus FORGIVENESS.**

We need to focus healing and restoration. How we handle our hurts will make the difference to whether we have joy or whether we have resentment in our life.

*Hebrews 12:15 (niv) See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that **no bitter root grows up** to cause trouble and defile many.*

**Resentment eats up emotional energy.** The problem is that it is human nature to hold onto our hurt. It's dumb to hold onto hurts. This always hurts us more.

**The wonderful healing antidote to resentment is forgiveness.**

*Colossians 3:13 (tlb) Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.*

Forgive, just as Jesus has forgiven us of all our sins and doesn't hold us to account for all the things, we have done wrong.

*Romans 5:3-4 (ph) We can be **full of joy** here and now, even in our trials and troubles. These very things will give us **patient endurance**; this in turn will **develop a mature character**...*

It's always easier to handle a hurt when we know that God can use it for good in our life. Where He can build character, if I choose to respond in the right way.

We must learn to have joy even in the middle of problems, while we're working on them. It's having the confidence of knowing and trusting God regardless of the circumstances.

Be joyful even in tough times. That's where joy is learned - in tough times.

## **Faith versus FEAR.**

Fear causes us to build walls of isolation instead of bridges. (*1 John 4:16-18*)

Fearful people find it hard to give love and to receive love because they are saying, "*I am afraid I will be hurt again.*"

We need to focus on His limitless power rather than on the limiting nature of the problem we are going through. (*Matthew 8:25-26*) By doing this it will cause us to have a real abiding joy that will transform us in our circumstances.

*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (nlt) Always be joyful. 17: Keep on praying. 18: No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 4:4-8 (nlt) Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again - rejoice! 5: Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. 6: Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7: If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. 8: And now, dear brothers and sisters, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*

**These are commands and are addressed to our will, to choose right conduct.**

*Psalms 62:8 (nlt) Trust in God at all times; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge.*

**God can repair the unrepairable. He can control the uncontrollable.** If we let Him into our life, focus on His power rather than our problem, we will have joy. If we focus on our problem, we're going to be miserable.

**He can rebuild trust where there's only been fear.**

*Psalms 56:3 (nlt) ...when I am afraid, I will trust in You.*

*Philippians 4:4 (tlb) Always be joyful in the Lord, again I say, rejoice.*

### **3. WE CAN REJOICE IN THE MIDST OF DIFFICULTIES.**

- Because God is with me.

*Isaiah 43:2 (gnb) When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burned; the hard trials that come will not hurt you. For I am the Lord your God!*

- Because God has a plan for me.

*Psalms 50:14 (tlb) (God) I want you to trust Me in your times of trouble, so I can rescue you and you can give Me glory.*

- Because God will help me.

*Psalms 43:5 (tlb) Why be so gloomy and discouraged? Trust in God! Then I shall praise Him for His wondrous help; He will make me smile again.*

In summary,

- Deal with selfishness through giving.
- Deal with resentment and find forgiveness.
- Let faith overcome our fears.



*James 1:2-12 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3: because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4: Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5: If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 6: But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7: That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8: he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. 9: The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. 10: But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. 11: For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. 12: Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

## Thoughts

“SAVED ALONE” was the message that Horatio Spafford received from his wife after the ship sank that was taking her and their four children to England in November 1873.

After reuniting with his grieving wife at sea, the boat came near the area where his children had drowned. It is speculated that at that time he wrote the words that vividly described his own grief and faith:

*When sorrows like sea billows roll,  
Whatever my lot,  
Thou hath taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

Sorrow is a natural response to trials. But in *James 1:2-12* we discover why even in the darkest times of our lives we can say with convincing clarity, “*It is well with my soul!*”

## Self Study

1. **It seems strange that we should** “*consider it pure joy ... whenever [we] face trials of many kinds.*” **Why are we to be joyful? (James 1:1-12)**

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2. How are perseverance and maturity developed in us by enduring trials? (3-4)

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3. Under pressure, how does the faithful Christian (5-6) contrast with the person described in? (6-8)

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**Think Spot:** *What is my attitude towards trials?*

**Memory Verse:** *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. **James 1:2-3***

*2 Corinthians 12:1-10 I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. 2: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know - God knows. 3: And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows 4: was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. 5: I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. 6: Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say. 7: To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8: Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9: But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10: That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

## Thoughts

It had been a long time since I had felt this weak and helpless. In tears I shared my distress with my husband, Andy. I was struggling in a couple of relationships.

Everything I did seemed to hurt the people I was trying to love. Besides that, I felt I was not growing spiritually. Though my goal for the year was to grow as a person of prayer, my prayer life was at an all-time low. I felt like a miserable failure.

When I was finished, Andy said gently, “*You could be in no better place before God. He is much freer to work in us when we are at the end of ourselves.*”

In *2 Corinthians 12*, Paul struggles with a painful weakness but discovers how it can become a source of strength and joy.

## Self Study

1. Paul feels forced to “*boast*” to defend himself against his opponents. How would you summarize his boasting? (1-6)

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2. In spite of his supernatural experiences, Paul wanted people to judge him on his character, not his experiences (6). Why do people's actions and words reveal more about them than their "credentials"?

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3. Why did God refuse to remove Paul's thorn in spite of his repeated prayers? (8-9)

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**Think Spot:** *Do I rejoice in my weaknesses?*

**Memory Verse:** *That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:10*

**Psalm 119:9-16** *How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. 10: I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. 11: I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. 12: Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees. 13: With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. 14: I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. 15: I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. 16: I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.*

**Psalm 119:105-112** *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. 106: I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. 107: I have suffered much; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your word. 108: Accept, O LORD, the willing praise of my mouth, and teach me your laws. 109: Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law. 110: The wicked have set a snare for me, but I have not strayed from your precepts. 111: Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. 112: My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.*

## Thoughts

In her book; *The joy of Discovery*, Oletta Wald writes: “While a student at the former Biblical Seminary in New York, I was taught how to explore the truths of the Bible in a methodical and systematic way ... I found that it was like working a combination lock. When I followed the steps, the Word opened up to me. I felt free. I realized that I was no longer dependent on others to gain insights into Scripture. I had become a discoverer. In a new way, Bible study had become more meaningful and personal. Most of all it was deeply satisfying to know how to discover the truths in God's Word. I had experienced the joy of discovery in Bible study!”

Centuries earlier the psalmist wrote of his own feelings about Scripture. It brought him such joy that he wrote 176 verses describing his response to it. We will look at just a few of those verses in this study as we consider what it means to have joy in God's Word.

## Self Study

1. In *Psalm 119:9-16*, how is the psalmist's passion for God's Word evident in these verses?

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2. What are the functions of the Word of God according to this passage?

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3. In *Psalm 119:105-112*, what difficulties has the psalmist encountered in following God's Word? In spite of his suffering, how does the psalmist feel about Scripture?

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**Think Spot:** *Can I say that God's Word is the "joy of my heart"?*

**Memory Verse:** *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*  
*Psalm 119:11*

**Philippians 1:3-26** *I thank my God every time I remember you. 4: In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5: because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6: being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. 7: It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. 8: God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9: And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10: so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, 11: filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God. 12: Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. 13: As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14: Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. 15: It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16: The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17: The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18: But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19: for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. 20: I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21: For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22: If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23: I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24: but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25: Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26: so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.*

## Thoughts

Debby was captured by guerrilla forces. She was a young missionary nurse, pregnant with her third child. Though her captors were a threat to her life and that of her unborn child, she prayed for them.

Even as she feared death, she experienced joy because she saw the gospel at work in the very people who had imprisoned her. In the midst of those awful circumstances, her first concern was that Christ be praised. Debby is a vital testimony of what it means to rejoice in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We see this same joy in Paul as he desires for the gospel to advance, even at great personal cost.

# Self Study

1. In *Philippians 1:3-26*, according to these verses, what reasons might Paul have to feel discouraged or depressed?

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2. In spite of his personal circumstances, what reasons does Paul give for being joyful?

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3. As God completes his good work in the Philippians and in us, what kind of people does Paul pray we will become? (9-11)

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**Think Spot:** *When have I felt joy in the midst of difficult circumstances?*

**Memory Verse:** *For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. **Philippians 2:21***



**Hebrews 12:1-13** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2: Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3: Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. 4: In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5: And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6: because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7: Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8: If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9: Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10: Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11: No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12: Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13: "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.*

## Thoughts

A George Macdonald short story describes a little girl who was very sad when she read **Hebrews 12:6** "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." She was from a well-to-do family and had suffered very little in life. Since she assumed, she had not been disciplined by God, she concluded that He must not love her.

It is, of course, not necessary to draw such a conclusion if God doesn't discipline us at certain times. Yet when God does discipline us, the author of Hebrews gives us several reasons to rejoice.

## Self Study

1. In **Hebrews 12:1-13** the writer of Hebrews compares the Christian life to a race (1-3). What principles for running does he recommend?

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2. What is encouraging about the fact that the Lord disciplines us? (5-11)

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3. The results of discipline are “*a harvest of righteousness and peace*” (11).  
What might this look like in a person’s life in concrete, practical ways?

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**Think Spot:** *Do I rejoice when God disciplines me?*

**Memory Verse:** *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. **Hebrews 12:11***

*Matthew 11:28-30* “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29: Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30: For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

## Thoughts

In his hymn, “*I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*,” Horatius Bonar describes Jesus’ invitation to the weary and burdened:

*I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Come unto me and rest:  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down Thy head upon my breast.  
I came to Jesus as I was, weary, and worn, and sad.  
I found in Him a resting-place, and He has made me glad.*

There is a part of us that yearns for the rest that Jesus gives. Our lives are full of activity - activity that all too often seems empty and worthless. Quiet and solitude can be so distant.

In the midst of our frenzied pace, Jesus continues to gently give the invitation: “*Come to Me and rest.*”

## Self Study

- 1. In *Matthew 11:28-30* Jesus invites all who are weary and burdened (28). What types of weariness might he have in mind?**

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- 2. What is a yoke (29), what does it do, and what does it mean to take Christ’s yoke upon us?**

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### 3. What does it mean to find “*rest for your soul*”?

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**Think Spot:** *Is there anything I need to do in order to experience this rest?*

**Memory Verse:** *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **Matthew 11:28***

*Proverbs 28:8 (tlb) Fools start fights everywhere; wise men try to keep the peace.*

## 1. TWO MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT PEACE.

### Peace is not avoiding a problem.

Peace is not running from a problem, ignoring an issue, or pretending that it doesn't exist. If we don't deal with an issue, eventually it will bring the relationship down.

### Peacemaking is not comforting another person for the sake of peace.

God doesn't expect us to be a doormat. That's not peacemaking. Jesus never backed off from a legitimate issue. Peace at any price is not legitimate peace.

## 2. HOW TO BE A PEACEMAKER (P.E.A.C.E)

So how do we be a peacemaker? There are five steps.

### P: PLAN a peace conference

Take the initiative and don't wait for the other person to make the first move.

*Matthew 5:24 (gnb) If you remember that your brother has something against you, go at once to make peace.*

The longer we wait to resolve a relationship problem, the bigger it gets. Schedule a time to sit down, face to face, a peace conference and talk it through.

### E: EMPHATHISE with their feelings

*1 Peter 3:8 (tlb) Be full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds.*

He's saying we need to be sympathetic and empathetic. To listen. So why listen first? Listening shows we care. People don't care how much I know, until they know how much I care.

The Bible says to "*weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice.*"

*Romans 15:2 (tlb) We must bear the burden of being considerate of the doubts and fears of others.*

*Philippians 2:4 (nlt) Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.*

Where there is conflict in a relationship, it's usually because we're not being considerate of people's doubts, fears and interests.

*Philippians 2:4b (nlt) ...but be **interested in others**, too, and what they are doing.*

The word "*consider*" in Greek is the word "**Scopos**" where we get the word scope. Like the scope on a rifle, telescope, microscope. Scopos literally means "*to focus on*" or to pay attention to.

**Hurt people hurt people.** One of the real values of conflict is that when we resolve it, it always creates greater understanding.

The very thing that we think is often going to separate us, will actually bring us closer if attended to in the right manner.

## **A: ATTACK the problem - not the person!**

We need to speak the truth compassionately. *Bold reproof (truthfulness) leads to peace. Proverbs 10:10 (tlb)*

Facing the facts is how we have peace in a relationship. *...when we lie to each other we are hurting ourselves. Ephesians 4:25 (tlb)*

*Ephesians 4:15 (gnb) By speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we grow up in every way to Christ.*

It is the truth that sets us free. When we're purposeful about making the relationship work, we've got to be honest. But do it in a spirit of love. We need to say it in a way that we value the relationship.

**We've got to stop fixing the blame in order to start fixing the problem.**

*Ephesians 4:29 (gnb) Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed.*

We need to say whatever we've got to say in a positive way. Be realistic, but optimistic. If we say something offensively it will be received defensively.

## **7 rules for fighting fair in a relationship:**

1. Never **COMPARE**
2. Never **CONDEMN**
3. Never **COMMAND**
4. Never **CHALLENGE**
5. Never **CONDESCEND**
6. Never **CONTRADICT**
7. Never **CONFUSE**

Doing these seven things, we'll learn to attack the problem rather than the person.

## **C: COOPERTATE as much as possible.**

Look for areas where we can compromise. Try to find areas of common ground. Where can we be flexible? Compromise is essential in every relationship.

*Romans 12:8 (gnb) Do everything possible, on your part, to live at peace with all men.*

*James 3:17 (tlb) ...Wisdom ... is peace-loving and courteous. It **allows discussion** and is **willing to yield to others**; it is full of mercy and good deeds. It is wholehearted and straightforward and sincere.*

Wisdom is willing to yield to others. Wisdom allows discussion. People can learn to get along if they're both willing to be unselfish. But it requires compromise.

There are basically five major areas of conflict: money, sex, kids, in-laws (outlaws?), and schedule (or time).

*James 3:18 (tlb) Peacemakers will **plant** seeds of **peace** and reap a harvest of goodness.*

**In a relationship, whatever we sow we're going to reap.** *The man of peace has a wonderful future ahead of him... a happy ending. Psalm 37:37 (tlb)*

## **E: EMPHASISE reconciliation not resolution.**

**"Reconciliation"** means to re-establish the relationship. **"Resolution"** means to resolve every issue.

We can disagree without being disagreeable. Opposites usually attract. Once they're married the opposites attack.

*2 Corinthians 5:18 (niv) God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the **ministry of reconciliation**.*

Reconciliation is a synonym for being a peacemaker. God is a peacemaker. He has made peace with us through Jesus Christ. Now He has given to us the ministry of being a peacemaker.

Where do we get that strength and that power that gives us the peace? By meeting the Prince of Peace - Jesus Christ! And asking God to put His Spirit of Peace into our heart.

*Colossians 3:15 (tlb) Let the **peace of heart that comes from Christ** be always present in your hearts.*

*2 Peter 1:2 (tlb) Do you want more and more of God's kindness and **peace**? Then **learn to know Him better and better**.*

Jesus Christ can take the broken pieces of your life and replace them with His unbroken peace. When we make peace with God His peace comes into our life. Then we can begin to have peace with other people, that we never thought possible.

**Philippians 4:4-9** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5: Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7: And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8: Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things. 9: Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

## Thoughts

Garrison Keillor, author of *Lake Wobegon Days*, writes that his greatest fear as a child was of getting his tongue stuck on a frozen pump handle. The older boys told him that if he touched his tongue to a pump handle, the only way to get him loose would be to rip his tongue right out of his mouth or else put a tent over him until spring.

We all suffer from fears and anxieties of various sorts. Yet if we fail to deal with our anxieties, they can cripple and immobilize us. In *Philippians 4*, Paul gives us a prescription for inner peace.

## Self Study

**1. Why is prayer (6) our first and best defense against anxiety?**

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**2. Why is it important to be thankful in the midst of our requests?**

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**3. Anxious people can become obsessed with negative thinking. How can focusing on the good things in verse 8 free us from the grip of anxiety?**



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**4. According to verse 9, what is our third defense against anxiety?**

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**Think Spot:** *What does it mean to “Rejoice in the Lord always” (v. 4)?*

**Memory Verse:** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*  
***Philippians 4:6***

## Day 17 Why we Should Not Worry

*Matthew 6:25-34* "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26: Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27: Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28: "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29: Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30: If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31: So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32: For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33: But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34: Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

### Thoughts

"Don't worry. Be happy." These words of a popular song are fun to sing, but they provide no real help to the worrier. Telling an anxious person not to worry is like telling a cold, hungry person to be warmed and filled.

Why shouldn't we worry when we face the daily pressure of providing food and clothing for ourselves and our families? In *Matthew 6:25-34* Jesus does more than simply telling us not to worry. He tells us *why* we shouldn't worry.

### Self Study

1. What, specifically, does Jesus tell us not to worry about?  
(25, 28, 31-32)

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2. In what sense is life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? (25)

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**3. According to Jesus, how can we be confident that the Father will feed us and clothe us? (26-30)**

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**4. In contrast to pagan pursuits, what does it mean to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness?” (33)**

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**Think Spot:** *In what ways have I seen God provide for my basic needs?*

**Memory Verse:** *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. **Matthew 6:33***

*Psalm 46:1-11 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

*2: Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3: though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah 4: There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. 5: God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. 6: Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. 7: The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah. 8: Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. 9: He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. 10: "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." 11: The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah*

## Thoughts

The eye of a hurricane is a remarkable place. Fierce, destructive winds spiral around it at terrifying speeds. Torrential rains encircle it, bringing floods and pounding waves. But within the eye itself, everything is calm and peaceful – a quiet refuge in the midst of the storm.

*Psalm 46* describes such a place, a spiritual haven from the destructive forces that sometimes surround us.

## Self Study

**1. In *Psalm 46*, what portrait of God emerges from verse 1?**

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**2. How does the scene described in verses 4-5 contrast with the previous scene? (2-3)**

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**3. How is it reassuring to know that God is our fortress (7; 11) and warrior? (6-10)**

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**4. In our active, take-charge culture, the command to “*be still*” (10) seems completely out of place. What does it mean to *be still* before God, and how can this bring about a more exalted view of God?**

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**Think Spot:** *What active role does God take in the battles I face in life?*

**Memory Verse:** *“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” Psalm 46:10*

**Psalm 91:1-16** *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. 2: I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." 3: Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. 4: He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. 5: You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, 6: nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. 7: A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. 8: You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. 9: If you make the Most High your dwelling even the LORD, who is my refugee 10: then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. 11: For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; 12: they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. 13: You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. 14: "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. 15: He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. 16: With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."*

## Thoughts

In 1956 Jim Elliot and four other missionaries were killed by the Auca Indians. Later, his widow, Elizabeth, wrote about the events leading up to Jim's death in a book entitled *Shadow of the Almighty*.

The title was taken from *Psalm 91* which, ironically, promises God's protection for those who trust in him.

The sweeping promises of the psalm force us to wrestle with a nagging question: How can we feel safe in God's care in a world where bad things happen to good people?

## Self Study

1. In *Psalm 91* what images does the psalmist use to describe God's protective care?

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**2. What types of danger are mentioned in the Psalm? What modern-day counterparts might we face?**

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**3. In verses 14-16 the psalmist becomes silent and God speaks. Read these verses to yourself, substituting your name for pronouns *he* and *him*. How does it make you feel to have the Lord speak to you in this way?**

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**Think Spot:** *What does it mean to me that the Most High is my dwelling and refuge?*

**Memory Verse:** *I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Psalm 91:2*

**Romans 12:17-21** Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18: If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19: Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20: On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21: Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## Thoughts

One day a man dumped a large load of garbage into the creek behind the house of a friend of mine. As my friend was cleaning up the soggy mess, he noticed an envelope with the man's name and address on it. He promptly loaded up the garbage and drove to the man's house.

Just as the man was coming out his front door, my friend dumped the entire pile of garbage into his front yard. The man stood there dumbfounded as my friend drove away laughing.

Was my friend right or wrong in his action? **Romans 12:17-21** gives us guidelines for responding to those who mistreat us.

## Self Study

1. In **Romans 12:17-21**, why are we often tempted to repay evil for evil? Give some examples of ways people and countries do this.

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2. God commands us to live at peace with everyone – with two qualifications: “If it is possible” and “as far as it depends on you” (18). Why are these qualifications important?

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**3. In addition to giving food and water to our enemy, what are some other ways we might overcome evil with good? (21)**

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**Think Spot:** *How would I respond if someone dumped a load of garbage in my yard?*

**Memory Verse:** *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. **Romans 12:18***

*Ephesians 2:11-22* Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) 12: remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13: But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. 14: For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15: by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16: and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17: He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18: For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19: Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20: built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21: In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22: And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

## Thoughts

In the adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Huck visits Tom's Aunt Sally. She immediately begins probing him about why he arrived so late:

*"We been expecting you a couple of days and more. What kep' you? - boat get aground?" "Yes'm ... but it warn't the grounding - that didn't keep us back but a little. We blowed out a cylinder head." "Good gracious! Anybody hurt?" "No'm. Killed a nigg\*&."*

Racial prejudice has always plagued humanity. But our hostility runs deeper than race. National pride, ethnic superiority, class distinctions, religious bigotry - each one drives a wedge between us and our neighbour. In *Ephesians 2*, Paul explains how Christ has demolished the barriers that divide us.

## Self Study

1. In *Ephesians 2:11-22*, the Jews called the Gentiles "uncircumcised" (11) and even referred to them as "dogs" (*Matthew. 15:26*). What is wrong with such labels?

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**2. In what ways were the Gentiles truly separated from the Jews? (12)  
Is there any comparison today between non-Christians and Christians?**

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**3. What did Christ do to end hostility and separation between Jews and Gentiles? (13-18)**

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**4. What do we now have in common with everyone who is “in Christ” - even with those whom we formerly despised? (14-22)**

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**Think Spot:** *Is prejudice still a problem for me? Is the fruit of peace working to overcome this?*

**Memory Verse:** *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace.... **Ephesians 2:13-14a***

*Proverbs 14:29 (niv) A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly.*

The Greek word for patience is "macro thumos". "Macro" means "long, or slow", "thumos" means "heat or energy or anger or wrath" - slow to get angry.

## **SEVEN KEYS OF HOW TO MANAGE ANGER**

### **1. RESOLVE to manage it.**

*Proverbs 16:32 (tlb) It is better to be slow-tempered than famous; it is better to have self-control than to control an army.*

### **2. REALISE the cost.**

*Proverbs 29:22 (tlb) A hot-tempered man starts fights and gets into all kinds of trouble.*

*Proverbs 15:18 (gnb) Hot tempers cause arguments*

*Proverbs 14:29 (tlb) ...anger causes mistakes*

*Proverbs 14:17 (gnb) People with hot tempers do foolish things*

*Proverbs 11:29 (tlb) The fool who provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing worthwhile left.*

### **3. REFLECT before reacting.**

*Ephesians 4:26 (niv) In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.*

*Proverbs 29:11 (neb) A stupid man gives free reign to his anger; A wise man waits and lets it grow cool.*

*Proverbs 19:11 (niv) A man's wisdom gives him patience.*

### **4. RELEASE my anger appropriately.**

*Ephesians 4:26 (gnb) If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin.*

*Proverbs 29:11 (niv) A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.*

### **5. RE-PROGRAM my mind.**

*Romans 12:2 (niv) ...be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

## 6. RELATE to people who are patient.

*Proverbs 22:24-25 (niv) Do not **make friends** with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared.*

## 7. RELY on Christ's help.

*Romans 15:5 (niv) May **God who gives patience, steadiness, and encouragement help you** to live in complete harmony with each other -- each with the **attitude of Christ** toward the other.*

*Proverbs 14:29* A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly.

*Proverbs 15:18* A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.

*Proverbs 16:32* Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.

*Proverbs 19:11* A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

*Proverbs 25:15* Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.

### Thoughts

"Stop it!"

"No!"

"You are going to break Dad's computer!"

"It's my turn!"

The game of computer monopoly comes to an abrupt halt. My youngest son stomps out of the study and runs upstairs to his room. My two older sons walk away, exasperated. So much for a quiet Sunday afternoon.

With a little more patience, the game could have gone on. But the boys were tired, and it was a hot afternoon. Patience on such days is not in great supply.

For most of us, more is at stake during frustrating times than a children's game. Yet it is in the trying times, when we seem least inclined to be patient, that we need it the most. We can be encouraged to grow in patience if we look at its benefits in the book of Proverbs.

### Self Study

1. In *Proverbs 14:29, 15:18, 16:32, 19:11* and *25:15*. How would you summarize the qualities of a patient person?

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**2. In *Proverbs 15:18* and *25:15*, how does patience or impatience affect our relationships with others?**

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**3. In *Proverbs 16:32* and *25:15*, what is the difference between patience and passiveness, and patience and powerlessness?**

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**Think Spot:** *How do I rate on the patience scale from 1 to 10?*

**Memory Verse:** *A man's wisdom gives Him patience; it is to His glory to overlook an offence. **Proverbs 19:11***

*James 5:7-12 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8: You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9: Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! 10: Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11: As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. 12: Above all, my brothers, do not swear - not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.*

## Thoughts

The pastor vented, *"I am not seeing much fruit in my ministry just now. At least not to my satisfaction. Why aren't there more converts? Why aren't there more people in Bible studies? And why aren't there more growing Christians?" "Sometimes I think I'm in the wrong profession. Maybe I ought to give up and get a "real" job. Then I remind myself that I minister not for results, but because I am called."*

Perhaps you have similar frustrations about some aspect of your Christian experience. Things haven't turned out the way you thought they would and at times you wonder whether it would be easier just to give up and go with the flow of the world around you.

The Christian life has been described as *"a long obedience in the same direction."* We must keep on believing day in and day out for years. Yet we can only keep going if we develop an important part of patience – perseverance.

## Self Study

**1. In James 5:7-12 what three examples of perseverance does James give?**

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**2. What can the farmer teach us about the value of patience? (7)**

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**3. The prophets (10) are an example of patience in suffering, especially since few ever saw results from their ministry. How do you think they could keep going when God's people rejected their message?**

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**4. Another reason to be patient is because of the Lord's compassion and mercy (11). How can these aspects of the Lord's character give you strength to keep going?**

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**Think Spot:** *Why is perseverance important for me to have?*

**Memory Verse:** *We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance. **Romans 5:3***

**James 1:19-27** *My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20: for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. 21: Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. 22: Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23: Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24: and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25: But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does. 26: If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. 27: Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

## Thoughts

Occasionally a driver would swerve around me, casting looks of impatient disgust and a few choice words. And, I must admit I also have overtaken people who have been driving slowly out of frustration. Living the Christian life can be slow going as well. In fact, the Christian life *should* be slow going. Our initial responses are not always godly ones, and we need to carefully consider our actions and seek the Lord's guidance.

## Self Study

- 1. In *James 1:19-27* the three sections in these verses are very closely connected but don't necessarily appear to be at first glance. To help you get an overview of the passage, give a brief title to each part (19-21, 22-25, 26-27).**

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- 2. In verse 19, being slow to speak and slow to anger are an important part of a righteous life. How do you think "quick listening" can slow us down and help us to live righteously?**

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3. “Slow” action doesn’t mean no action. What is the proper approach to God’s Word according to *verses 22-25?*

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**Think Spot:** *Do I need to slow down in order to listen to God?*

**Memory Verse:** *My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. **James 1:19***

**Matthew 18:15-35** *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16: But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ 17: If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. 18: “I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19: “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20: For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” 21: Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” 22: Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. 23: “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24: As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25: Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. 26: “The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ 27: The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. 28: “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. 29: “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ 30: “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31: When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. 32: “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33: Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ 34: In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. 35: “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”*

## Thoughts

A quiet disagreement developed between my husband and I, and it grew. I was never sure what it was about. I approached him about it once, but he said everything was fine, no problems, so I let it go. But it festered under the surface, occasionally breaking into subtle power struggles.

I should have approached him again, but I moved before I got around to it. I was glad to let it go – until I got a letter from a mutual friend. He called me to account, saying that the division between my husband and I was not pleasing to God. He still sensed, even over the thousands of miles, an underlying hostility on both sides. He was right.

So, I write a letter to Brad, and he wrote back. “Yes,” he said, “I am angry.” At that point we began the slow and painful process of reconciliation.

In *Matthew 18*, Jesus tells us that good relationships require work, a special kind of determination, patience and mercy.

## Self Study

1. In *Matthew 18:15-20* when a Christian sins against us, Jesus tells us to “go and show him his fault” (15). Why not just avoid the person who offended us?

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2. How does the presence of Jesus among his people (18-19) relate to the process of reconciliation?

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3. Read *verses 21-35*. How does the parable of the king and his servant illustrate God’s patience and mercy toward us?

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**Think Spot:** *What steps do I need to take to extend heart forgiveness to someone who has offended me?*

**Memory Verse:** *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.” Matthew 18:15*

*Psalm 40:1-5 I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. 2: He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. 3: He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD. 4: Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods. 5: Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.*

## Thoughts

I dislike waiting. Waiting in lines, waiting for a long-expected email, waiting for important information - they all bother me. Yet such things are merely an inconvenience. In his book *Waiting*, Ben Patterson calls us to look more deeply at the issue of waiting:

*“There is another, more acute kind of waiting – the waiting of a childless couple for a child; the waiting of a single person for marriage or whatever is next; the waiting of the chronically ill for health or death; the waiting of the emotionally scarred for peace; the waiting of men and women in dead-end careers for a breakthrough; the waiting of unhappy marriages for relief or redemption or escape; the waiting of students to get on with life; the waiting of the lonely to belong.*

*“For Christians in these kinds of waitings, the question is ‘How long, O Lord?’”*

## Self Study

- 1. In *Psalm 40:1-5* David waited patiently for the Lord’s help (1). What is the difference between waiting patiently and waiting impatiently?**

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- 2. God delivered David from the slimy pit and put his feet on a rock (2). What “rocks” has God provided in response to your prayers?**

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**3. When we tell others about God's help (3), their faith and ours is strengthened. How does David's account of God's deliverance strengthen your faith?**

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**Think Spot:** *Do I find it difficult to wait? If so, why?*

**Memory Verse:** *I waited patiently for the LORD; He turned to me and heard my cry.*  
***Psalm 40:1***

**Romans 8:18-27** *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19: The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20: For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21: that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22: We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23: Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24: For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25: But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. 26: In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27: And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.*

## Thoughts

*“In two months we hope to ...” “In a year we hope that ...” Hope for the future. Without it, we give up. With it, we keep going.*

Hope for a vacation can keep us going when pressures at work become a heavy burden. If we can't see any break in the job, we may conclude it is better just to quit. Hope for a cure can provide strength to face an otherwise intolerable level of pain. Pain that seems endless crushes any desire to go on living.

We all need hope. But hope for next year or even ten years ahead is not enough. We need a far greater hope for the future. The Apostle Paul writes of such a hope in the concluding portion of *Romans 8*.

## Self Study

- 1. In *Romans 8:18-27* why do you think Paul places such emphasis on the physical world being restored (18-21) before talking about the future benefits of our salvation? (22-25)**
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- 2. What do the “family” words Paul uses, like *sons of God* (v.19), *children of God* (21), *childbirth* (22), and *adoption as sons* (23) convey about our present and future as Christians?**



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**3. Hope is central to the Christian faith (23-25). From these verses, how would you define Christian hope?**

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**Think Spot:** *What am I hoping for?*

**Memory Verse:** *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. **Romans 8:18***

If we want to know what kindness is then we just need to look at Jesus as He is . the kindness of God.

*Titus 3:4 (gnb) But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour was revealed, He saved us. It was not because of any good deeds that we ourselves had done, but because of His own mercy that He saved us, through the Holy Spirit, who gives us new birth and new life by washing us. God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that by His grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for.*

*John 13:15 (tev) I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you.*

## HOW THEN IS JESUS KIND TO ME?

### Jesus understands my WEAKNESSES.

Understanding and kindness go together.

*Hebrews 4:15-16 (cev) Jesus understands every weakness of ours, because He was tempted in every way that we are. But He did not sin! So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved kindness, and we will find help.*

When Jesus came to earth the Bible says, He was tempted at every point the same way we are. Therefore, He understands our weaknesses and is kind to us.

So, what does this have to say about how we should be kind to other people?

*Galatians 6:1-2 (tlb) If someone is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help him back onto the right path, remembering that the next time it might be one of you who is in the wrong. Share each other's troubles and problems.*

We can be kind to others by being gentle with them and not judgmental.

**Why?** Because God is gentle and kind with us.

### Jesus tells me the TRUTH.

*John 8:32 (niv) You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.*

Jesus loves us just the way we are, but He loves us too much to remain this way.

Growth comes as the result of feedback.

*Ephesians 4:15 (tlb) Instead, we will lovingly follow the truth at all times - speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly...*

*Proverbs 24:26 (gnb) An **honest** answer is the sign of a true friendship.*

We need to hear the truth even when it's painful.

*Psalms 141:5 (gnb) A good man will **rebuke me in kindness**.*

What's the difference between critical rebuke and a kind rebuke? The difference is motive.

## **Jesus FORGIVES my sin.**

Jesus came to earth so we would know what God is really like.

*Romans 3:23-24 (tlb) All of us have sinned...yet now **God declares us 'not guilty'** of offending Him if we trust in Jesus Christ, who **in His kindness** freely takes away all our sins.*

*Ephesians 1:4 (tlb) Through **what Christ would do for us**, God decided to make us holy in His eyes, **without a single fault**, we stand before Him covered with His love.*

We stand before God without fault, covered with His love. **Why?**  
Because of His kindness.

What does this have to say about how I'm supposed to treat other people?

*Ephesians 4:32 (tlb) Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another** just as God has forgiven you because you belong to Christ.*

People who understand how much they've been forgiven find it easy to forgive others.

## **Jesus AFFIRMS my worth.**

Deep inside all of us we have the desire to feel worthwhile and significant.

There is a formula for frustration: It's trying to please everybody!

How do I know that I matter to God?

*Psalms 139:16-17 (tlb) You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life... How precious it is, Lord, to realize that **You are thinking about me constantly!***

God thinks about us constantly and this shows us how much we matter to Him!

*Romans 5:8 (tlb) God showed His great love for us **by sending Christ to die for us...***

*1 Peter 1:18-19 ...you were **redeemed** from the empty way of life ... with the precious blood of Christ.*

God thought we were worth dying for.

*Isaiah 49:16 (niv) I have **engraved** you in the palms of My hands.*

If we build our self-worth on the fact that God made us, thinks about us constantly, loves us unconditionally, forgives us, sent His own Son to die for us, it doesn't matter what anybody else says about us, they can't take away our relationship with Jesus.

This relationship is the foundation for really feeling good about ourselves.

**What does this say about us being kind to other people?**

**We are to affirm the worth of others.**

*Romans 15:7 (niv) Accept one another then just as Christ has accepted you. In order to bring praise to God.*

*1 Peter 2:17 (tlb) Show respect for everyone.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:11 (niv) Encourage one another and build each other up.*

**How well do we affirm those whom we are in a relationship with?**

*Hebrews 10:24 (tlb) In response to all God has done for us, let us **outdo each other in being helpful and kind to each other...***

God says in light of what He's done for us let us outdo each other in showing kindness and love. God has placed all kinds of opportunities before us to give love in action.

Christianity is not about just me feeling good and making my life easy, but it is radically 'other-centered.'

*Psalm 103 Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. 2: Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits 3: who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, 4: who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, 5: who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. 6: The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. 7: He made known His ways to Moses, His deeds to the people of Israel: 8: The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. 9: He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever; 10: He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. 11: For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; 12: as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. 13: As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him; 14: for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust. 15: As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; 16: the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. 17: But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear Him, and His righteousness with their children's children 18: with those who keep His covenant and remember to obey His precepts. 19: The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all. 20: Praise the LORD, you His angels, you mighty ones who do His bidding, who obey His word. 21: Praise the LORD, all His heavenly hosts, you His servants who do His will. 22: Praise the LORD, all His works everywhere in His dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul.*

## Thoughts

There are a lot of parallels between being children in a physical sense and being a child of God. One of the most blatant similarities is gratefulness - or the lack thereof. Children are often self-centred and at times are hardly aware of the kindness that is extended to them by their parents.

As God's children, our awareness and appreciation of His kindness should be as natural as breathing fresh air. Yet that is not always the case. We need eyes to see and hearts that believe that God's kindness extends to us. As you look closely at God's goodness in *Psalm 103*, ask Him to open your eyes to all that is there.

## Self Study

1. How does God's loving-kindness meet our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs? (1-5)

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**2. How are God's kindness and love demonstrated in his treatment of the oppressed and those who sin? (6-7, 8-12)**

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**3. How does God respond to our frailty and mortality? (13-19)**

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**Think Spot:** *Is my picture of God the same as that presented in this Psalm?*

**Memory Verse:** *Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.*  
*Psalm 103:2*

**Matthew 10:40-42** “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives the one who sent me. 41: Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. 42: And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”

**Mark 9:33-37** They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” 34: But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. 35: Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.” 36: He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37: “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

## Thoughts

According to Greek mythology, the god Jupiter decided to find out how hospitable the people of Phrygia were. He and his companion, Mercury, dressed as poor wayfarers and wandered from door to door, asking for food and a place to rest. At every house they were treated rudely and doors were slammed in their faces.

At last they came to the poorest hovel and were greeted by a kindly-faced old man named Philemon and his wife, Baucis. The couple welcomed them warmly and invited them in. They gave them seats by the fire and hurried to make them a meal. Although the couple had only diluted wine to offer, they eagerly refilled their guests' cups as soon as they were empty.

Because of the couple's generous hospitality, Jupiter rewarded them richly. Their container of wine never ran dry, and their home was transformed into a temple, over which they were appointed as priests and guardians.

Although the story is a myth, the principle it teaches is quite Biblical. We should never underestimate the worth of our guests or the value of any act of kindness.

## Self Study

1. What various types of people does Christ view as his representatives?  
(*Matthew 10:40-42*)

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**2. How does it help you to know that by showing kindness to the least of Christ's followers, you are showing kindness to Christ himself?**

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**3. How does Jesus stand the world's concept of greatness on its head?**  
*(Mark 9:35)*

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**Think Spot:** *How would I respond if someone came to my home, asking for food, shelter or clothing?*

**Memory Verse:** *Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." Mark 9:35*



**Ruth 2** Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz. 2: And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." 3: So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech. 4: Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The LORD be with you!" "The LORD bless you!" they called back. 5: Boaz asked the foreman of his harvesters, "Whose young woman is that?" 6: The foreman replied, "She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with Naomi." 7: She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter." 8: So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. 9: Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled." 10: At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" 11: Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. 12: May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." 13: "May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls." 14: At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar." When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. 15: As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, "Even if she gathers among the sheaves, don't embarrass her. 16: Rather, pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her." 17: So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. 18: She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough. 19: Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!" Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz," she said. 20: "The LORD bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers." 21: Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "He even said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.'" 22: Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else's field you might be harmed." 23: So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

# Thoughts

The events in the book of Ruth are set in the time of the judges. That period spanned the first two or three centuries after Israel entered Canaan under Joshua's leadership. Because of a famine in Bethlehem, a man named Elimelech, his wife, Naomi, and their two sons migrated to the country of Moab. In the ten years that they lived there, the two sons married Moabite women, and then the two sons and their father died. Left alone and destitute, Naomi heard that the Lord had provided food in Judah. Naomi's daughter-in-law, Ruth, was willing to leave her family, homeland, and all that was comfortable to her because of her love and loyalty to Naomi. Together they travelled to Bethlehem.

Our study begins in chapter 2 where Ruth, though a foreigner in a strange land, is shown great kindness.

## Self Study

**1. Ruth's commitment to Naomi was so great that she left all to go with her. How does Ruth continue to demonstrate her loyalty? (Ruth 2)**

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**2. What do we learn about Boaz? (4-16)**

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**3. Why does Boaz respond to Ruth in such a kind way? (10-12)**

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**Think Spot:** *Am I so concerned about receiving kindness, that I forget to show kindness?*

**Memory Verse:** *But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy... Titus 3:4*

**Galatians 6:1-10** *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2: Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3: If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4: Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, 5: for each one should carry his own load. 6: Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. 7: Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8: The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9: Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10: Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

## Thoughts

In Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, the hero is about to walk along a heavy but rotting beam over a brooding, murky creek. "Starting over, stepping gingerly. . . he felt he would never reach the other side: always he would be balanced here, suspended between land and in the dark and alone. Then feeling the board shake as Idabel started across, he remembered that he had someone to be together with. And he could go on."

Having someone with us during hard times can make the difference between going on and giving up. In *Galatians 6* Paul urges us to fulfill the law of Christ by carrying each other's burdens.

## Self Study

1. **Think of your closest friend. In what ways has he or she made life's burdens easier to bear?**

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2. **Paul urges us to "carry each other's burdens" (2). What types of burdens often press down or even crush people around you?**

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**3. In what specific ways might you make their burden lighter?**

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**Think Spot:** *How am I going to sow some kindness today?*

**Memory Verse:** *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2*

*Proverbs 14:21* He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy.

*Proverbs 14:31* He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

*Proverbs 19:17* He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.

## Thoughts

Hudson Taylor, famous missionary to China and founder of the China Inland Mission, was called to a home to pray for a sick woman. He was called because, unlike other religious leaders of the day, he did not charge the family to pray for her.

The woman was very poor. When Taylor saw her poverty, he clutched the coin in his pocket. It was the only money he had. He wished that there were two so he could give one to her. After all, he could not give her his only coin! What would he do to survive? He had only two meals left at home for himself. He knelt to pray for the woman but found that he could not pray. God was asking him to give up his precious coin. He tried again to pray. How could he walk away with nothing to live on? Again, he could not pray. Finally, he gave her the coin. He was released by God and felt great freedom and blessing as he prayed.

Hudson Taylor's experience provides one example of what it means to reach out to the poor and needy – something God asks from us even when we are poor and needy ourselves.

## Self Study

### 1. What acts of kindness might we show to those in need?

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### 2. In what ways are the poor oppressed in our society? (14:31)

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**3. In what sense are we loaning to the Lord when we are kind to the poor? (19:17)**

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**Think Spot:** *Do I view the needy as my neighbours?*

**Memory Verse:** *He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD and he will reward him for what he has done. **Proverbs 1:17***

*2 Samuel 9:1-13* David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" 2: Now there was a servant of Saul's household named Ziba. They called him to appear before David, and the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" "Your servant," he replied. 3: The king asked, "Is there no one still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?" Ziba answered the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet." 4: "Where is he?" the king asked. Ziba answered, "He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar." 5: So King David had him brought from Lo Debar, from the house of Makir son of Ammiel. 6: When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, "Mephibosheth!" "Your servant," he replied. 7: "Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table." 8: Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?" 9: Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. 10: You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops, so that your master's grandson may be provided for. And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table." (Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.) 11: Then Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons. 12: Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica, and all the members of Ziba's household were servants of Mephibosheth. 13: And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king's table, and he was crippled in both feet.

## Thoughts

Because of David's deep love for Jonathan, David went out of his way to show kindness to Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth.

## Self Study

**1. What steps did David go through to find Mephibosheth? (1-5)**

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**2. What motivated David to find him and show kindness to him?**

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**3. Why would Mephibosheth be an unlikely candidate to receive kindness from David?**

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**Think Spot:** *In what ways am I like Mephibosheth?*

**Memory Verse:** *I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you. **John 13:15** (tev)*



**Integrity means;**

- The state of being complete and united.
- The adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character and honesty.

**1. INTEGRITY WILL NOT ALLOW OUR LIPS TO VIOLATE OUR HEARTS**

Integrity is not what we do, so much as who we are.

*Psalm 25:21 (niv) May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you.*

*Proverbs 20:7 (niv) The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.*

When integrity is the referee, we will be consistent; our beliefs will be mirrored by our conduct.

Integrity allows us to pre-determine what we will be regardless of circumstances, people involved, or places of our testing.

**2. INTEGRITY IS REFUSING TO COMPROMISE HEART CONVICTIONS UNDER PRESSURE**

In *2 Samuel 11:6-17* note the story of Uriah the Hittite. He was an officer in King David's army. A conscientious soldier who refused R & R even at the King's command. Even when he was drunk, he refused to compromise his heart's convictions. It ultimately cost him his life.

In *Daniel 3* Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship the image of the King and are cast into the fiery furnace.

In *Daniel 6* Daniel refuses to stop praying to God and is thrown to the lions.

In *Acts: 4:20* Peter and John before the Sanhedrin.

**Contrast to;**

*Hebrews 12:16 (niv) See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.*

*Proverbs 6:26 (niv) For the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life.*

A lack of integrity or morality places us in an entirely different camp where the only rewards handed out are shame and disgrace.

The more credible we are, the more confidence people place in us. The less credible we are, the less confidence they have in us.

### 3. BECOMING A PERSON OF INTEGRITY

Becoming a person of integrity is;

**COMMITTING to honesty, reliability and confidentiality.**

Integrity begins with a specific, conscious decision.

**DECIDING ahead of time that you don't have a price.**

Make a decision that you won't sell your integrity: not for power, position, revenge, pride or money.

**MAJOR in the minor things.**

If we consistently do what's right in the little things, we're less likely to wander off course morally or ethically.

**CONFESS sins. regularly**

Admit when you're wrong. Admit it to the people you're in relationship with.

*James 5:16 (niv) Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other."*

*I John 1:9 (niv) If we confess our sins to Him, He can be depended on to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong."*

If we want to be forgiving, we must be forgiven. We must find in Jesus the forgiveness that we all need.

### 4. MEASURING OUR INTEGRITY

- How well do I treat people from whom I can gain nothing?
- Am I transparent with others?
- Am I the same person when I'm in the spotlight as I am when I'm alone?
- Do I quickly admit wrongdoing without being pressured to do so?
- Do I put other people ahead of my personal agenda?
- Do I have an unchanging standard for moral decisions, or do circumstances determine my choices?
- Do I make difficult decisions, even when they have a personal cost attached to them?
- When I have something to say about people, do I talk to them, or about them?
- Am I accountable to at least one other person for what I think, say and do?
- Do I wear a mask based on the person/s I am with?

It takes more than hope to make a marriage last. It takes commitment to remain faithful.

Establishing guardrails in our marriage, will keep us safe from potential danger and shame.

*1 Corinthians 6:18-20 (nlt) Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. <sup>19</sup> Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, <sup>20</sup> for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.*

Every desire that we feed will require a guardrail. This is particularly true when it comes to our desire for sexual intimacy.

## 5 WAYS TO AFFAIR-PROOF YOUR MARRIAGE

*Hebrews 13:4 (tev) Marriage is to be honoured by all, husbands and wives must be faithful to each other. God will judge those who are immoral and those who commit adultery.*

**Adultery:** Having a sexual relationship with another when you are married.

**Fornication:** Having a sexual relationship with another when you're not married.

### 1. COMMIT to God's Standards

God has placed boundaries around sex to ensure marital pleasure and not betrayal.

*Psalms 119:9 (niv) How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your Word.*

*Exodus 20:14 (niv) You shall not commit adultery.*

*Proverbs 5:15 (gnb) Be faithful to your own wife and give your love to her alone.*

*Proverbs 22:14a (gnb) Adultery is a trap ...*

### 2. UNDERSTAND the Consequences

*Proverbs 6:32 (niv) The one who commits adultery is an utter fool for he destroys his own soul.*

If we cross God's boundaries regarding sex, shame, guilt and brokenness will result.

*Proverbs 6:26 (niv) Adultery will cost a man all that he has.*

### 3. MAINTAINING a Healthy Marriage

*1 Corinthians 3:7 (gnb) A man should fulfil his duty as a husband and a woman should fulfil her duty as a wife, and each should satisfy the other's needs.*

A key area of conflict in a marriage can be in the sexual area.

*1 Corinthians 7:5 (ph) Do not cheat each other of normal sexual intercourse ... or you will expose yourselves to the obvious temptation of Satan.*

**Introduce 'safeguards' into your marriage.**

*Malachi 2:15b Guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with your wife ...*

**Never find comfort** from the opposite sex when you are having difficulty in your marriage.

**Never flirt.** Flirting is an expression of interest and it is out of bounds once married.

Recognise and keep clear of the situations that stimulate or tempt us.

### 4. MANAGE Your Minds

People don't just fall into immorality. There is a process that leads to immorality:

**Entertaining sinful thoughts**

*James 1:14-15 (tlb) Temptation is the pull of a person's own evil thoughts and wishes. These evil thoughts lead to evil actions, and afterwards to death.*

*2 Timothy 2:22 (ph) Turn your back on lustful desires and give your positive attention to goodness, integrity, love, and peace.*

**Emotional attachment (Warning! Warning! Warning!)**

*SOS 8:6a Close your heart to every love but mine...*

**Physical involvement:** No explanation needed – just don't go there!

**Never justify adultery or fornication:** We can talk ourselves into anything.

*Jeremiah 17:9 (niv) The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?*

### 5. MINIMIZE Opportunities

*1 Corinthians 10:12 (tlb) So be careful! If you are thinking, 'Oh, I would never behave like that,' let this be a warning to you. For you too may fall into sin.*

# **PATHWAY BACK TO RESTORATION**

## **Acknowledge your sin**

David did this when he committed adultery.

*Psalms 51:1-4 (niv) Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. <sup>2</sup> Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. <sup>3</sup> For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. <sup>4</sup> Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.*

## **End the wrong relationship immediately**

Take action immediately. Don't delay.

## **Ask Jesus to forgive you.**

*1 John 1:9 But if we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins, because we can trust God to do what is right. He will cleanse us from all the wrongs we have done.*

## **Forgive Yourself.**

*Romans 8:1 (niv) Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,*

## **Consider making the following two commitments**

1. Commit your life to Jesus Christ and His standards for living.
2. Commit to not have sex outside of marriage.

*Ephesians 4:2-3 (nlt) Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. 3: Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace.*

## 1. JESUS WAS KNOWN FOR HIS GENTLENESS.

*2 Corinthians 10:1 (nlt) Now I, Paul, plead with you. I plead with the gentleness and kindness that Christ Himself would use, even though some of you say I am bold in my letters but timid in person.*

Note also *John 8:3-11 (nlt)*

## 2. HOW DO WE BECOME A GENTLE PERSON?

**Seek first to UNDERSTAND the other person.**

*Galatians 6:1 (nlt) Dear brothers and sisters, if another is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.*

**Win the PERSON, not the ARGUMENT.**

*Proverbs 15:1 (nlt) A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger.*

**Consider the VALUE of the other person.**

*James 3:17-18 (msg) Real wisdom, God's wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honour.*

**Learn from how God deals GENTLY with us.**

*Titus 3:1-5 (nlt) Remind your people to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. 2: They must not speak evil of anyone, and they must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone. 3: Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled by others and became slaves to many wicked desires and evil pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy. We hated others, and they hated us. 4: But then God our Saviour showed us his kindness and love. 5: He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit.*

Gentleness is the power of our potential under God's control.

**There are five things that are characteristic of gentle people.**

## **P - PERSONALITY**

Gentle people have their personalities under God's control.

## **O - OUTLOOK**

*Philippians 2:4-5 (tlb) Don't just think about your own affairs, but **be interested in others too**, and in what they are doing. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ.*

How we see other people will determine two things: our attitudes toward them and our actions toward them. Our actions are largely influenced by our attitudes.

## **W - WORDS**

*James 6:6-8 (tlb) The tongue is a flame of fire. it is full of wickedness and poisons every part of the body. The tongue is set on fire by hell itself and can turn our whole lives into a blazing flame of destruction and disaster. But **no human being can tame the tongue**. It is always ready to pour out its deadly poison.*

God controls our words by taming our hearts.

*Luke 6:45 (tlb) Whatever is in the heart overflows into the speech.*

*Ephesians 4:29 (pet) **Watch the way you talk**. Let nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Say only what helps, each **word a gift**.*

Is each word that we say helpful to other people?

## **E - EXPECTATIONS**

When someone disappoints us, are we gentle or are we judgmental?

*Proverbs 15:4 (nlt) **Gentle words bring life and health**, a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.*

*Ephesians 4:2-3 (nlt) Be **humble and gentle**. Be **patient** with each other, **making allowance** for each other's faults because of your love. 3: Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace.*

## **R - RESPONSE**

Gentle people are proactive not reactive. A proactive person is able to control their response. Their response is a function of their decision, **not** their conditions.

Reactive people are driven by feelings and circumstances, conditions and their environments.

*Proverbs 16:32 He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who **rules his own spirit**, than he who captures a city.*

*Proverbs 25:28 (tlb) A man without self-control is as defenseless as a city with broken down walls.*

When we don't have self-control in our life, we're vulnerable to all kinds of problems.

Uncontrolled **anger**: *Proverbs 29:11*

Uncontrolled **lust**: *Proverbs. 6:26*

Uncontrolled **spending**: *Proverbs 21:20*

Uncontrolled **drinking**: *Proverbs 23:29-35*

Uncontrolled **ambition**: *Proverbs. 23:4*

**The greatest destroyer of relationships is an uncontrolled tongue.**

*James 3:5-6 (tlb) The tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do! A great forest can be set on fire by one tiny spark. ...The tongue can turn our whole lives into a blazing flame of destruction and disaster.*

*Proverbs 13:3 (tlb) Self-control means controlling the tongue!*

**There are four keys to managing your mouth;**

## **1. THINK before you speak.**

*Proverbs 16:23 (gnb) Intelligent people think before they speak. What they say is then more persuasive.*

*Proverbs 18:20 (gnb) You will have to live with the consequences of everything you say.*

A closed mouth gathers no foot. We've got to learn to think before you speak.

**T:** Is it **Truthful**?

**H:** Is it **Helpful**?

**I:** Is it **Inspirational**?

**N:** Is it **Necessary**?

**K:** Is it **Kind**?

*Proverbs 20:25 (niv) It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later consider his vows.*

## **2. ALWAYS speak the truth.**

The Bible says we shouldn't hide the truth. *Someone who holds back the truth causes trouble. Proverbs 10:10 (gnb)*

Dishonesty destroys relationships because mistrust, fear and bitterness can result which then brings about a superficial relationship.



*Proverbs 24:26 (gnb) An honest answer is the **sign** of a true friendship.*

*Proverbs 28:23 (tlb) In the end, people **appreciate frankness** more than flattery.*

### **3. Speak the truth in LOVE.**

*Proverbs 12:18 (gnb) Thoughtless words can **wound** as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can **heal**.*

*Proverbs 12:18 (tlb) Some people like to make cutting remarks, but **the words of the wise soothe and heal**.*

*Proverbs 15:4 (tlb) **Gentle words** cause life and health.*

*Proverbs 12:25 (tlb) A word of **encouragement** does wonders!*

Anyone can be negative. But it takes character to be positive in a negative world.

### **4. ASK Jesus for help EVERYDAY.**

*Psalms 141:3 (niv) Set a **guard over my mouth**, Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips.*

*(TLB) "Help me, Lord to keep my mouth shut!"*

Jesus said in *Matthew 15:18 (niv)* **What comes out of the mouth comes from the heart.**

The condition of our hearts influences the words that come out of our mouth. They can be either uplifting or tearing down?

So, what's the remedy. Allowing Jesus to soften and to penetrate our hearts. Jesus Christ is the heart transplant expert.

*Ezekiel 18:31 (niv) Rid yourself of all the offenses you've committed. **Get a new heart and a new spirit.***

Real self-control, as God says, is not self in control but self under control.

*James 1:26 (tlb) Anyone who says he is a Christian but **doesn't control** his sharp tongue is just fooling himself, and his religion **isn't worth much**.*

The only way we can control our tongue is by letting Jesus Christ control our heart in on a daily basis. This is a good start!

*Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (niv)* “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work;<sup>10</sup> if one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up.”

Loneliness causes much heartache and despair in our society. No one wants to be lonely! **Everybody needs a friend.** The Bible says, “Two are better than one...”

**Real friendships are not accidental - they are intentional!** We must take the initiative to reach out to others. “A man who has friends must himself be friendly.”  
*Proverbs 18:24 (nkjv)*

The book of Proverbs identifies six characteristics of a true friend and if we can apply these into our lives, we too will develop lasting friendships.

## 1. Friends are COMMITTED.

*Proverbs 18:24 (tlb)* “There are ‘friends’ who pretend to be friends, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

*(GNB)* “...but some friends are more loyal than brothers.”

Friendships last when they're built on **mutual commitment** and that takes effort! How many people know that we are committed to them?

## 2. Friends are CONSIDERATE.

*Proverbs 17:9 (tlb)* “Love forgets mistakes, nagging about them parts the best of friends.”

**Good friends are aware of our weaknesses and help in spite of them.**

To show consideration towards others means to show an **attitude of acceptance**. To develop long lasting friendships, there must be commitment and consideration given to one another.

## 3. Friends keep CONFIDENTIALITY.

To be confidential means to be trustworthy.

*Proverbs 11:13 (niv)* “A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.”

*Proverbs 16:28b (niv)* “...Gossip separates close friends.”

**The quickest way to kill a friendship is to betray confidence.**

However, if the information is of an illegal nature or where it may result in someone self-harming, then reporting this to the appropriate people or authorities is necessary.

## 4. Friends are CANDID.

*Proverbs 27:5-6a (niv)* “Better is open rebuke, than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted...”

*Hebrews 10:24 (esv)* “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.”

We all have blind spots and we need someone who cares about us to say, “You’re blowing it!” A genuine friend is someone who can level with us and say, “You’re making a big mistake!”

*Proverbs 24:26 (gnb)* “An honest answer is the sign of a true friendship.”

Always compliment your friends in public and only correct them in private through a loving attitude. If you want to lose a friend quickly, just start correcting and judging them publicly.

We cannot bring correction to our friends until we have earned the right to correct them. That right comes when we have **mutual transparency**. Trust is **not** automatically given!

*Proverbs 27:9 (nlt)* “The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense.”

*Proverbs 11:14 (nkjv)* “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”

## 5. Friends are CONSTRUCTIVE.

*Proverbs 27:17 (niv)* “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

Genuine friends encourage, motivate and guide each other onto grow.

*Proverbs 12:26 (niv)* “A righteous man chooses his companions carefully.”

Some people are just plain negative and full of criticism.

*I Corinthians 15:33 (niv)* “Don’t be misled, bad company corrupt good character.”

We become like the people we spend most of our time with!

## 6. Friends are CONSISTENT.

A true friend is in our corner and can be trusted. They are dependable.

*Proverbs 17:17a (msg)* “Friends love through all kinds of weather...”

David had Jonathan. Jesus had the disciples. Paul had Barnabus. Even the Lone Ranger had Tonto. We need friends because: “two are (always) stronger than one”