

Fil-Am Community Church

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13 Nov 2011

## **Making Your Relationships Work**

Key verse: 1 Cor. 13:1

Good morning! Today, we're in the last of our series on "Living for Jesus". Today, I'm going to talk about "Making Your Relationships Work" because you can't really live for Jesus if your relationships are not going well. Some of us have a hard time dealing with people or some people have a hard time dealing with us and we don't even know it.

This morning, I want us to learn from Jesus. Because He is the expert in relationships. He shows us how to handle relationships. This is important because if we're going to live for him, honor him, and glorify him in our lives, the main place is going to be in our relationships. And people who watch us will also honor Jesus depending on how we handle our relationships.

1 Corinthians 13 shows us the importance of relationships and love for all of us. 1 Corinthians 13:1 *"I may speak in different languages of people or even angels but if I do not have love I'm only a noisy bell or a crashing cymbal."* It's just noise. If I don't have love, everything else I do is just noise.

I'm going to give you three simple principles that Jesus shows us through His life about relationships. These are things that you already know but need to be reminded of.

My wife loves it when I'm going to do a message on relationships, because I'm so nice to her during the week as I'm getting ready for the message.

## **1. PAY THE PRICE TO VALUE OTHERS.**

One time Jesus had a teacher of the law come to Him and ask Him a very important question. In Mark 12:28, the teacher asked, "Of all the commandments which is the most important?". And Jesus said without hesitation, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might, and with all your strength.*" That's the most important one. And then Jesus added quickly, "*the second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself.*" (Mark 12:31-31)

Now, it's easy to say I love my wife or I love my neighbor but to actually love them is a hard thing to do. Jesus showed us how in the way he related to people. And the one thing we can learn from Jesus is that there's a price to pay when it comes to loving people.

Pay the price. It's one thing to know that other people are valuable. It's another thing to pay the price. To pay the price of our time, our energy, our resources, our planning.

We all live with the Frustration Gap. That's the gap between what I want to be -- what I say my values are -- and what I really do. We say, "I want to spend time with my kids." And then week end after week end goes by and we just don't find the time. Something more important comes along, we don't get the time that we want. We say "My mate is the most important person in my life" but we just can't find time to even go on a date together.

And that's the frustration gap. If you're experiencing that, you're not alone. Jesus teaches us some things about how to handle that frustration gap in our relationship with God and in our relationship with others.

Since Jesus said this was the most important thing, we're going to spend a few minutes on it this morning. How do I break through this frustration gap in loving others and in loving God.

Jesus said, "If you want to learn to value God more -- value your relationship with Him -- here's how you do it." And He gave us a list. You love God with **all** your heart. You love Him with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength. What's the most important thing that you and I can do with our lives tomorrow, this next week? Jesus said, The most important thing that you or I can do with our lives is love God. And He said do it with 100% of yourself.

Those of you who are math majors have probably started to think this through. I have more people than God to love in my life. I need to love my family, some friends... I've got a lot of people to love. And if you start to figure it out percentage wise you might think this is the way you should do it: I should love my wife/husband 20%, I should love my kids 20%, 5% for this friend and 10% for my parents -- and sort of divvy it out like that. And then, maybe God (since He's the Big Guy) gets 40%. He gets a bigger cut than everybody else.

Why does Jesus say, Love God with your all? Because God is not a drain on our love. He's the source of love. When I love God with 100%, I get 100% of His love back. So, He gives me the resources to love everybody else in my life.

Let me give you practical ideas about doing this. How do I love God with all my heart, soul, and strength?

1. Tell God about my feelings.

Talk to God about your feelings. Tell Him what's really on your heart. Sometimes you and I feel like God is totally dismantling our lives. We go to talk to Him in prayer, "God, what are you doing, God. God, I have a holy indignation toward you now, God." Why not just say what you're feeling? "God, I'm mad at what's happening now! I can't believe what You're allowing me to go through." And then listen.

King David was great at this. If you don't think it's ok to tell God how you're feeling, read the book of Psalms. He told God he was mad all the time. But by the end of the Psalm, his heart was always better. Why?

Because he talked to God about his feelings. So, at the start of his complaining, he says, "Why, God?" But afterwards, that changes to "Why not, God?"

Tell God about your feelings. Then

2. Talk to God about His greatness. That's one way to love God with all our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul, all of our strength.

All of us tend to exaggerate our problems and minimize God's greatness.

Exaggerating our problems is something called worry. Worry is exaggerating our problems. When we do that we also minimize God's greatness, his ability to handle our problems. We need, instead, to exaggerate God's greatness so that we

minimize our problems. When we exaggerate God's greatness, that's something called praise. When you praise God, giving a testimony or just singing praises to him, you're exaggerating his greatness.

Those are just two practical things you can do to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Now, Jesus also taught us how to value our relationships with others. He said it very simply. *"The second command is this. Love your neighbor as yourself."*

Easier said than done, right? You see, we're all pretty interested in ourselves. We like to look at ourselves in the department stores when we go past the mirrors. I always catch my wife doing that. And she catches me too. We all do this. We're interested in us.

Jesus says, "That interest that you have in yourself, have the same interest in other people. God made them just as much as He made you. God has a plan for their life just as great as He has a plan for your life. Love others as you love yourself.

Love your neighbor. There's a lot of things behind what a neighbor is. It's anybody that's in need, it's anybody that we come in contact with. But real practical: We all have neighbors. Love them. It's easier sometimes to love somebody on the other side of the globe than somebody next door.

Now, some practical ideas about how to love your neighbor: Invite them to come and join us for our anniversary celebration, either on the 18<sup>th</sup> or the 20<sup>th</sup> or both. Probably many of you have a neighbor you wish you'd invited them.

This is the greatest opportunity. Invite them to come. You don't know what a difference you can make in somebody else's life.

If we're going to have relationships that work, we're going to have to pay the price to value others. We have to, as it says in Philippians 2:3 "*Be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves.*" So, the price to pay is put others' interests before our own.

Jesus teaches us the second thing.

## **2. SEEK THE STRENGTH TO LOVE OTHERS.**

Aren't there times for all of us when loving somebody else -- a daughter, son, husband, wife, friend, somebody at work -- when loving somebody else as much as we can just isn't enough? Jesus says, seek a new kind of strength to love other people.

We saw the greatest commandment and the second commandment. Jesus said, I want to give you a new commandment. John 13:34 "*I'm giving you a new commandment. Love each other just as much as I love you.*"

I look at that and wonder, what's so new about it? Love your neighbor, love each other. What's so new about this new commandment?

The quality of love is what is new. The greatest commandment says Love with your all -- your heart and mind and soul and strength. The second commandment says Love as you love yourself. But this new commandment, Jesus says, Let's take

it to a new level: Love as I love you. The only way I'm going to be able to love in that kind of way is drawing upon the strength that Jesus has given us to love.

Do you want to improve your ability to love? I do. How do we do that? We need at least four things.

**A. We need a better example to improve our love.**

We all tend to follow the example that we grew up with. We tend to parent like we were parented.

We tend to have the same kind of relationship in marriage as we saw growing up. We tend to relate to other believers like we see other people relate to other believers. We tend to do that. The problem is, what if we had a bad example? The truth is we all had imperfect examples. We need a better example. And he could be a better example, or the best example, than Jesus?

Look at the way he treated people. Look at His example and draw upon His strength. 1 John 4:19 says this, *"We love because he first loved us."*

**B. I also need a stronger foundation to love.**

None of us can give what we haven't received. That doesn't make sense. How can I give something that I haven't gotten yet?

I can't give somebody forgiveness unless I've received forgiveness. I can't give somebody else unconditional love or grace unless I've received it.

Jesus Christ provides for us a foundation where I can always find forgiveness. I can always find grace. I can always find unconditional love. When I build my love on that foundation, it'll never crumble.

Human love will let you down sooner or later. Even the best relationships that you have aren't perfect. But in Jesus Christ I can find a perfect relationship, a perfect foundation that I can build a stronger ability to love on that won't crumble.

### **C. I also need a higher purpose.**

Jesus said, *"All people will know that you are my followers if you love each other."*  
(John 13:35 CEV)

Love has to have a purpose that's higher than itself. Jesus says if we love each other we're putting the focus not on us, but on him. People will take notice. They will see who Jesus really is. They will know that Jesus wants to love them too. So, here's the purpose Jesus said: Your love can show the world what My love is like. That's a great purpose. And we have the ability to do that.

### **D. I also need a greater power.**

Caution: Don't try to love like this on your own power. Don't try to take up this challenge and do it on your own energy and strength. The whole reason Jesus gave us this new commandment was to help us to realize, I have to draw upon His strength. I've got to ask for His help to love other people like this, to seek to love like Jesus does.



We see in the life of Jesus the third thing, the third challenge to love.

### **3. WATCH THE WAY YOU TREAT OTHERS.**

This is the toughest for me. It's one thing to value others with the utmost value. It's another thing to love others with a great love but it's a tough thing to be nice to people in everyday life. That's why Jesus gave us something called the Golden Rule. It's all about how we treat others. Luke 6:31 (CEV) says "*Treat others just as you want to be treated.*" That's a simple rule.

But some jokers twist it and say, "He who has the gold rules." And if you're a parent you realize that there's a possible loophole in the Golden Rule. You say to your children, Treat others the way you want to be treated and your children come back to you with "But I want to be wrestled to the ground and have my face stuck in an ant hill. I like that! So if I want it then they must want it." And that's the loophole. What do you do?

You come back by saying, "Ryan, did you realize that jut a few verses later beside the Golden Rule to help you understand what the Golden Rule means there is a Platinum Rule there in the book of Luke?" Platinum rule in Luke 6:36 "*Have pity on others, just as your Father has pity on you*". See what they say about that.

That puts it in perspective. That tells me what the Golden Rule really means. That I find in God's love the way to treat others. This is the tough part. It's one thing to say, "I love you." It's another thing to treat them nice. It's one thing to say, "I love you with all my heart."

It's another thing to decide who's going to get that last bowl of ice cream. This is where the rubber meets the road when it comes to love. So, treat others in a brand new kind of way.

The Bible is very clear about how to treat people and about how not to treat people. I can talk all I want about a commitment to great relationships, but if my talk doesn't change the way I treat others it's worth nothing. The Bible says, "Here's how to not treat people in relationships." Philippians 2 "*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.*" Circle "selfish ambition" and "vain conceit". These are two attitudes that are guaranteed to destroy relationships.

Selfish ambition -- What will I get? Any time we run a relationship on "What will I get out of this?" it's going to be destroyed. It's not going to work. It's like somebody who says, "I'm going to have a baby so that the baby can meet all my needs for love and comfort. What happens when they wake up at 2 a.m. in the morning? And 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. and 5 a.m.? And your needs aren't being met because you have to give love?"

Vain conceit -- How will I look? Sometimes we wear relationships like a flashy gold bracelet -- it's who we're with, trying to make ourselves feel better. That kind of love doesn't work.

The Bible also tells us what does work in relationships. 1 Corinthians 13:5 says "*Love does not keep a record of wrongs.*" I have a secret about your husband/wife/kids/best friends/parents: They make mistakes – sometimes on purpose! Maybe the real secret part of it is this: They are just like you. We're all

sinners. We all need God's forgiveness. Because of that, if relationships are going to work, forgiveness is one of the key ways we need to treat other people.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor who was imprisoned in a German concentration camp during World War II. While in this concentration camp he wrote to a young couple preparing for marriage.

"Live together in forgiveness for without it no human relationship, least of all a marriage, can survive. Don't insist on your rights. Don't find fault with each other. Accept each other as you are. And forgive each other every day from the bottom of your hearts." That's a recipe for great relationships. That's how God loves me. Jesus Christ forgives me every day from the bottom of His heart. That's what the cross is all about. That cross gives me the power to forgive others. I couldn't forgive anybody without that power. But I can see in that cross to begin to do this in my relationships. Treat others the way that Jesus treated me.

Who do you need to forgive? For something that happened yesterday or twenty years ago? When it comes to this kind of love Jesus is the perfect example. He showed us the way. But it's more than that. He didn't just show us how to love. He loved us in this kind of way. He loved us with this kind of love.

1 John 4:10 (CEV) *" Real love isn't our love for God, but his love for us. God sent his Son to be the sacrifice by which our sins are forgiven."*

If you want to see real love, look at the cross of Jesus Christ. That's real love. We all want to better our relationships. Don't try to better your human relationships without a relationship with Jesus Christ. That's where it starts. Start by beginning

a relationship with Him. You don't have to wait until Christmas or some other magical time to do this. You can start a relationship with Jesus Christ right now. Some of you, that's where you are right now. If your relationships are going to get better you need His strength and power. Why not start today? It's a simple thing. You just talk to Him in prayer and tell Him, "I want to start a relationship with You, Jesus Christ."

Let me give you an opportunity to do that right now.

Prayer:

Jesus Christ, This is it. Today I'm starting a relationship with You. I ask You To forgive me for the wrong things I've done. Thank You that You've told me that I'm forgiven so I can start to feel closer to You. I want You to start to show me how to live. Direct my life. Guide me. I have a lot to learn. Would You teach me?

Some of you have already started that relationship with Jesus Christ and today you just need to look to God in your heart and ask Him for the strength to love others. You might even tell Him, "I'm tired of trying to do it on my own strength, God. Would You give me a new strength to love the people around me this next week." To love somebody that's tough to love. To love in a relationship that you're really struggling with. Ask Him for that strength.

Jesus, we thank You that you love us. We thank You that You love us so clearly we don't have to guess at it. You went to a cross and You gave everything for us. Lord, we pray that we would find in Your love and the relationship we have with You the ability to see the relationships in our life improve and begin to grow. None of us our perfect, Lord, we're all going to struggle. But we can also all grow.

Help us to grow in our relationship the rest of our lives. As we get closer to You, help us get closer to others. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.