

## "Healthy and Loving Relationships"

Healthy, long-term, loving relationships are never "accidental". Someone, or a number of someones, intend for them to be strong, whole, and growing. In such relationships you will find three similar dynamics, three consistent components present that contribute to an atmosphere conducive to fulfilling relationships (and I do mean "conductive to" – you can't make anyone do what they don't want to do). They intend to be REALISTIC – fantasy, pretense, denial and the like are virtually absent. They intend to be RESPECTFUL – there is an ongoing attentiveness that makes for safety, honor, and trust to thrive. They intend to be RESPONSIBLE – responsibilities trump "rights", the interest of others wins out over self-interest.

Let's start with the intent to be realistic. In healthy relationships, people learn to accept one another (Ro 15:7). Acceptance is not condoning, overlooking, or tolerating what is hurtful and destructive. It is refusing the temptation to love the "dream" of the other person more than to simply love the other person. Accepting people learn to look at others "with" love, not just "for" it (Col 3:12-14). Loving acceptance empowers us to keep our legitimate "desires" from hardening into illegitimate "demands". Are you ever drawn into the direction of a demanding person? Have you ever met a happy demanding person? Demands never contribute to intimacy! But there is a real power in godly acceptance – it has the power to touch another's "want to". (Don't you want to please the people who lovingly accept you?) It also creates an atmosphere conducive to change – something demands can never do.

And there is another aspect to the power of loving acceptance, of accepting one another as God in Christ has accepted us. It gives us the courage to live with imperfection. Accepting another's loving style, their patterns of communication, the "touchy" spots from a hurtful past, teach us something necessary to growing up into the likeness of Christ (Who lives within us in spite of our imperfections!). All these differences just might possibly be the sound of God's voice calling us to love... like He loves. His "escorts" into the arena of "walking in love as Christ loved us" (Eph 5:2)... willfully, sacrificially, giving Himself up for us... demonstrating what is well-pleasing to the Lord" (Eph 5:10).

Most of us would agree that good and strong relationships are the gift of God. But we may not so easily agree with the reason why... they are a gift meant to kill all our fantasies! Fantasies of ourselves, of others, of marriage and family – even of what makes for good and strong relationships. They are the "labs" in which we learn the truth that God's human creatures can only be realistically, respectfully, and responsibly loved into being.



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## Praise Reports & Prayer Requests

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## Greetings

A number of you have recently inquired about the continuance of OIC in the days and years to come due to my "ancient" age. I'm choosing to side with Job (12:12), "Wisdom is with the aged and in length of days there is understanding." Possibly, I'm just come into my stride!

Seriously, I have no plans to "retire", no designs on closing down our ministry in the foreseeable future. Changes? Sure! We've cut our conference/travel schedule from 20-25 events a year to 10-12 a year. Any more pastoring? Probably not. Writing? Maybe. Our work with local churches and pastors around the country continues and there is always counseling to do. We're doing "catch up" work on our facility finally (which is 26 years old with original carpet, inside paint, and some appliances!)

One thing never changes - the gospel of a living and eternal oneness in Christ that makes everything different. Those seeds will keep being sown. That message will continue to be proclaimed. These words - "Christ in you, the hope of glory" - will continue to be shared without charge and without cost to all who stand in need of them.

It seems "good to the Holy Spirit and to us" for this change of pace. We appreciate you and all you have done to make the past 36+ years possible. We look forward - God willing - to many more.

On the journey with you, Steve

## Calendar

### AUGUST

12 Alachua Study

### SEPTEMBER

21-27 Missoula, MT (full)


### OCTOBER


23-26 Louisville, KY (502-664-5622)


### NOVEMBER


14-16 Sebring, FL (863-382-1085)

## Praise & Prayer

 For 36+ years of fruitful ministry

 For those who love us realistically and with  
God's acceptance

 To be realistic and accepting in our relationships

 For the courage to live with imperfection