

“Healthy and Loving Relationships”

Healthy, loving, long-term relationships are never accidental. Someone intends for them to take pace – they intend to be realistic, respectful and responsible persons willing to love others into being. Last month we looked at realistic “lovers”, this month let’s look at respectful “lovers”.

Respectful “lovers” treat others with attentiveness and consideration. They know how to honor and esteem others above themselves (Phil 2:3,4). The intent to love well requires that we pay attention to others. There are three “skills” (skills can be learned by anyone, even if they do not come naturally to you) that respectful “lovers” consistently employ. The first is consistent affirmation, without flattery (Ro 12:10; Eph 4:29). To acknowledge virtue, to express gratitude, to give encouragement are all powerful gifts that make it easier for others to move in our direction, to be honest and real with us. Affirmation draws attention to strength, communicates pleasure, and even safeguards a relationship because such things say, “I notice... I care... I’m here for you.”

Secondly, respectful “lovers” demonstrate patient listening, without defensiveness (Prov 18:13; Ja 1:19). When someone patiently listens to us they communicate safety, worth, esteem – gifts of focused attention that become building blocks for value and trust in any relationship. This simple but powerful skill only takes two behavioral responses to learn (but a lifetime of practice!). To listen well we must first empty our own personal agenda... to correct the other, to defend ourselves, or to avoid the possible conflict... in order to give the other a gift of our undivided attention. Then, we must “pretend” we are a mirror – to reflect back to the other what we are hearing in order to get to the deeper meaning beyond the exchange of information.

Finally, respectful “lovers” know how to receive another’s thoughts and feelings, without attacking them or rejecting their story. (Ga 6:1; Heb 4:15) They contribute a “safe place” for the other to bring their humanity, their “story” about the facts of their circumstances. They make it as easy as possible for others to be honest. When this is missing in a relationship, people hide behind walls or masks. They may even take their “story” to more compassionate ears who do not have their best interests in mind. Movement toward the self-disclosure and intimacy that characterize strong relationships comes to a screeching halt. Most of us are not very aware of the ways we convey disrespect and rejection to others. Things like defensiveness, excuses, quick apologies, attacking weaknesses, disdain, even contempt. What should we replace them with? I Corinthians 13:4-7 might be a good place to start!



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Greetings

Yes, I know, this is coming late to you this month! We've been extra busy in July and August playing "catch up" - trying to "catch up" with all the things needing to be repaired, improved, and replaced over the last 26 years. About 18 months ago we tackled the outside necessities - this year its mostly inside stuff... electrical stuff, plumbing stuff, appliance stuff (although we did do tree-pruning stuff in preparation for hurricane season!)

But that's life, isn't it? At least life in an entropic world - where created stuff, material stuff, man-made stuff is always degrading, deconstructing, dissolving! Although such maintenance can be time consuming (and energy depleting!), it gives us cause to celebrate. We can be grateful we have some "stuff" and the means to repair or replace it when the time comes. But more important, we can forever celebrate our anti-entropic Life graced to us by God in the forever gift of His Son! A gift that is "imperishable and unpollutable and undissolving, reserved in forever for us and protected by the power of God" - anti-entropic Life Himself! (I Pet 1:4-5)

So let's learn to always keep our "stuff" in its proper place. It matters. We're to be good stewards of all of it for the kingdom's sake. We can be grateful for what we have while in this world. But it is nothing compared to the glory awaiting us in our eternal inheritance in Christ our anti-entropic Life!

Calendar

SEPTEMBER

2	Happy 70 th Birthday Steve!
9	Alachua Study
21-28	Missoula, MT (full)
30	Ocala study

OCTOBER


23-26	Louisville, KY Men's Retreat (502-664-5622)
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NOVEMBER

14-16	Sebring, FL Men's Retreat (863-382-1085)
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Praise & Prayer

 For the "stuff" God entrusts to us on earth

 For the respectful and affirming others in our lives

 To be even more invested in treasures in heaven

 To be respectful and affirming of others in our lives