

RELATIONSHIPS

I want to look into relationship a little deeper. There are 11 different types of relationships covering any variety of interaction that people may have with each other. We can slot all 11 into one of 5 categories: the Stranger, Occasional Friends, Benefactors, Takers and Greats. The Lord never changes in His relationship towards us, but we change towards Him. Consider where you fit and where you desire to be...I found it shed light on my own position with the Lord.

You will see in my new book, *WONDROUSLY MADE*, that 11 is the number of both the City of Jerusalem and the body of man. It figures quite prominently in our make-up. It describes the kinds of relationships we have with others. It also includes the kinds of relationship we have with God.

God never changes. He is always longing to spend time with us, to hear us call His name, to hear us whisper our love into His waiting ear, for us to really get to know Him, to be with us. He never changes. He stands at the lattice and waits eagerly for our response to His gentle wooing.

But we change towards Him from minute to minute. I remember when my love for the Lord burst in my heart to the point I thought I could not bear it. I remember when my love for the Lord caused me to weep uncontrollably. But more often, life gets in the way, my needs get in the way, my busyness gets in the way. I change from lover to taker, then bounce around through all the other types of relationships.

It was not until I was shown this list that I realized just how fickle is my love for my God. I would like to blame human nature for this, but there are no excuses. Our nature must become His nature. My love is not consistent because I do not consistently put Him first.

I am not talking about the initial honeymoon season with the Lord when we are captured by our passion for Him. But when the dust of love settles and we move onward from the moments, days, weeks, or months of salvation, we find ourselves trapped in the real relationship we have with the Lord. This can change, and for most of us, must change. Maturity and growth involve getting our attention off ourselves, and onto our Husband.

I challenge you to go through this list. Be honest with yourself. I know it has changed my attitude and awareness towards my relationship with the Lord. Ask yourself what kind of a friend you are to God, your Lord, your Lover, your Husband, your Friend...and what kind of a friend are you to His children who He loves with such passion and single-mindedness.

The first category is that of the STRANGER.

1. The stranger represents an absence of relationship between two people. This is the first relationship most of us have with God after birth. I believe we were all with the Lord before we were born. He knew us. I believe we knew Him as well. Premature babies often tell stories of smelling Jesus, being with angels and knowing the Godhead. But as we grow up, we become more familiar with this world and become strangers with the One who created us and formed us especially for relationship with Him.

We are strangers, not because we do not know each other, but because we have nothing to do with each other. Everyone is born with some knowledge of God to some degree, even if it is just a longing somewhere deep within our heart. That God shaped void that can only be filled by accepting Jesus. He knows us but we avoid Him because we don't understand that He is right there, with us, always. He is standing at our windows calling through the curtain, waiting for us to hear His voice and acknowledge Him. He never changes. He longs for us to let Him love us. But we avoid Him because we choose not to acknowledge Him or we don't know just how easy it is to build a relationship and fill that void.

The second category, the occasional friend, encompasses three friend types. They are the GRENADE, the JERK and the SCHOOL/WORK friend.

1. The first one is the grenade. This type of friend is usually annoying, sometimes grating, but they serve a critical purpose. They make everyone else look better by comparison. This is the Christian who is not there by choice, usually a child or teen, but sometimes an adult, who acts out, creates explosive environments, when forced to be a Christian.

Often, I believe, they have not experienced real love and acceptance, only performance. So they prefer to be where people are more real, even though blatantly sinful. They push and push and push, making others more acceptable in comparison. This is the type of relationship that is uncomfortable to be around because there is absolutely no tolerance for God, His way, His love, His patience. There is no tolerance for His people. They want to be elsewhere, well the spirits in them want to be elsewhere, but just can't leave because there really is no other place to be. They have to make everyone else's life as miserable as they feel.

This is the same way we treat God when we do not want to be there. This is how we treat God's people when we judge them, or don't want to be with them. This is how we treat ourselves when we hate ourselves and hate what we do.

2. Slightly better is the jerk with the heart of gold. Like the grenade, they are generally disruptive, but unlike the grenade they are more genuine in their desire, always apologizing and making amends for being themselves.

This is the relationship we have with God after we decide this is the place we need to be but still don't have any depth of relationship. We believe that we have to be perfect for a demanding God but realize we are far from the goal. We try to live

up to everyone's expectations even though we don't quite know what that means. So we apologize for every indiscretion, imagined or real, wanting to appear perfect.

The Lord wants us to be perfect and He will see to it that we eventually get there. But it is His perfecting, not ours; in His time, not ours. We have an unrealistic expectation for ourselves that He does not share. He wants perfection, but He meets us where we are. We don't know that until we develop enough relationship with Him that He can teach us that. To make up for the lack of relationship we create an impossible goal level of perfection. All in future someday tense, we perform to attain that goal in order to be acceptable by someone we hope to know someday.

3. The final occasional friend is the school or work friend. They are the associates at work or school. We spend the day with them but seldom see them otherwise. This is how our relationship with the Lord begins. We allot Him part of our day and no more. We allot Him part of our life, the part we are willing to sacrifice. We have a relationship within limited parameters, within the parameters of Sunday morning and Wednesday night. We are willing to give up a little of our life to spend time with the One who created us. There is no depth here, only passing gossip and complaints, probably shopping lists. There is little gratitude, little sharing, little real personality in this relationship. It is a surface relationship at the very best. We go to God because we must spend time with Him to get what we want.

As the name suggests, occasional friends are not "BFF's". The Lord cries out to be our best friend forever, but we view Him differently than He views us. We make ourselves unpleasant and unlikeable. We give Him a passing relationship, a wisp of promise, a taste of what could be, and then we snatch it away as soon as something else catches our attention. The Lord calls us His Bride, the love of His life. He paid the ultimate price for our sin which deserved our death, not His, just so we can walk into a deep relationship with Him, but we remain, at best, occasional friends. We put no effort into the relationship, no time, no thought, no passion, no feeling. It remains, like a work friendship, a friendship of convenience while I have to be in the office anyway.

The third category is the benefactors. There are only two types of friends in this category. They are the GIVER and the LOAN friend.

1. The hard to find giver is the type of friend who is always willing to pay the bill and brings presents just because they love to give. This is a two-fold relationship.
 - a. We have now discovered that God is there to supply us with whatever we ask. He supplies all our needs. It is the period of time when we ask for things incessantly because there is so much out there that we now need. It is the new level of

friendship, we are now glad to be Christian and so spend more time with Him...asking for things.

Our prayers are filled with requests but little relationship. It is still quite one-sided, loving God because He is the ultimate giver.

b. The second type of giver is the person who gives to be accepted.

This speaks of our relationship to earn God's love by giving everything we have because that is what we think He wants. No sacrifice is too great. They are the ones who volunteer for everything, offer everything and give every cent they have. They spend so much time giving there is no time for the One they think they are giving to/for. They give until it hurts and there is nothing left to give. Never taking a moment to ask, "What should I do here? What is Your will?"

Giving is a co-operative response. God's request and our obedience. Giving in disobedience can actually do harm if the ground is not prepared by Holy Spirit. It is the same as a make-work program; keeping one so busy they cannot build a relationship because the foundation has crumbled.

There is nothing you can do to make God love you more. There is nothing you can do to make God love you less. His love does not depend on what you do or what you give. Love is who He is, what He is.

2. The next benefactor is the loan friend. This friendship speaks of how we treat God's people. Our perception of what others have sometimes causes us to compare by questioning why they have more, why God is not giving enough to us. We look at what we have and find it lacking, while we look at others and see God's mighty provision and gifting. This type of friend runs after everyone else's gift, blessing, anointing or mantle; they want what they deem to be better. This type of person feels cheated by God, not blessed. So they hang around and take from those they feel are blessed. They ask constantly for an impartation of any and every gift, blessing, anointing or mantle. They seek every impartation offered because they do not feel sufficient. They do not feel blessed, but only aware of lack. They spend all their time chasing conferences leaving no time for the Lord. He is the giver of gifts...He is the One to ask for blessing, anointing, mantles and gifts.

This is the relationship we have with God's people when we feel we are not getting enough from the Lord.

There is only one type of friend in the user category, the fourth category. That is the TAKER friend. This is a slight twist on the loan friend because we do this to God and His people.

1. The taker friend is the one who will take everything you have and more; your things, your money, your time. They never pay for anything, expect others to do everything for them. This is because they are owed by God and His children. They are disillusioned friends. This person didn't get what they wanted in spite of faithful prayer. Everyone else around them seems to be blessed. Bitterness enters because things are harder for them. Everyone else obviously has favor. So in reaction, they take God's time, they take everything they can from His people, and everything they can as a Christian without actually giving anything back. They go to all the churches, never really committing, they don't tithe or participate, just take what is offered.

They use their Christian connections for business instead of relationships. They use their relationships for business instead of sharing. They use the perks of Christian society without spending time with the focus of Christianity, Jesus. Their time, their love, their passion is not for the Kingdom...instead they give to the pursuit of survival and financial gain, while happy to take all the perks and benefits offered.

I knew one lady who attended a church only until the people stopped giving. Then she went to another church. She went to every meeting and fellowship event because there was food. Although she could work, she lived on welfare. She asked for help from everyone in the church. She was even given a car. She asked for ministry repeatedly without improvement or effort. And when the church had nothing more to give because there were others in need, she moved to another church. She attracted others of like purpose or spirit who now do the rounds together.

The final and fifth category is the Greats: the BEST FRIEND, MAN'S BEST FRIEND, the SIGNIFICANT OTHER and A. SCHNOB. This comes when you rededicate yourself to a new relationship with the Lord. This is when we decide to really be a friend to the Lord because He is a real friend. We begin to realize that He is always there waiting... for a word, a thought in His direction, that glint of excitement in our eye when we see Him.

1. The best friend is the first in this group. They know you better than you know yourself. You can easily spend the whole day with this friend. This friend loves to spend time with the Lord and talk to the Lord about His people, their concerns, their cares, their woes. They are the people who listen for His voice and who long to hear Him and know Him. Every moment is a deepening experience of knowing Him more and more intimately. The relationship has moved from a "gimme", bitter relationship to one of sharing

interests and giving back. Every aspect of their daily life is shared. Smelling the roses, driving to work, dealing with difficulties and successes...all of life. It is truly a symbiotic friendship, a life-style instead of a challenge. We still maintain control of the time spent together. It is enjoyable being their friend, but we decide when its time to go have some space. Although it has become a close relationship, it is still not a full-time relationship.

They love God passionately, with all their heart, but they still could not live full time with God. They have full intentions to spend their life with God, their best friend, but they cannot live with Him completely, 24-7. I have a best friend that I love dearly and I would do anything for her, but I could not live with her because we disagree on two critical points...food and tv... she drives me crazy. She is never as hungry as I am and does not like "good" tv shows. Compromise and tolerance wear thin after a couple of weeks.
* note from editor: some food and TV is nasty.

2. Next is man's best friend; commonly referring to the pet that loves you unconditionally in exchange for the smallest bit of attention and fresh water every now and then. This may sound rude, but this is how we sometimes treat the Lord; He is more like a pet than our Creator, Lover and Best Friend.

He's an important part of our life, but the relationship is one-sided. They spend time together, do things together, but the relationship is still lop-sided. The owner is still in complete control regarding how the relationship progresses and the fruits of the friendship. They love each other, they spend time feeding and watering the relationship, but it is still one-sided. The master is still in complete control. The master can send Him away to sleep in His own bed or even outside in the yard. He comes when called, He is always there when invited, and He wags His tail in gratitude for the slightest sign of affection. This may not be how they consciously want to think of the "Master"(Lord), but this is how they treat Him. He's there when "you" hurt; He's there when "you" want unconditional love; but He gets sent to another room when "you" have something better to do. Perhaps He would like to watch Lost with you, or the game. Selah.

3. Third is the significant other. The significant other is known by many names, but most frequently called husband or wife. They are the ones that share every aspect of their lives...the relationship we were created for...they eat together, work together, walk together, do things together, sleep together, are

together 24/7. There is not one thing that they do that does not involve the Lord. They are conscious of His presence during every conversation, aware He is sitting there. He is a significant part with significant input. His opinion is paramount in their lives and they would not consider doing anything without asking Him for guidance according to His will. It is total intimacy and togetherness. They spend so much time together and are so close to one another that they begin to look alike – or in this case, they begin to look like Him, act like Him, be like Him.

This is the ultimate relationship, the ultimate goal. There is no arguing because there is no self left, there is only unity and honor; one mind, one passion, one purpose, one way. In every situation, each one prefers the other, it is the relationship that is spoken of in the book of Revelation. Revelation 22:17 reads, “The spirit and the bride say, “Come!”

4. The final type of friend in the Greats is A. Schnob. Handsome, witty, charming, bloodlines, position...what more could you want in a friend? But this friend has come to the place of forsaking those they loved for the attention they now receive. They begin to enjoy being center stage, the power and fame relationships. They become the epitome of clique lovers for the elite position it offers. They become the one who loves sitting at the head of the table seeking to dethrone the very God they appear to worship.

As usual, I find myself lacking in so many ways. I want to be the significant other. I am not there yet. There are still too many things that trap me. Too many things that steal the time I could be enjoying with my Lord.

Father God, Lord Jesus, Holy Spirit, forgive me for not being who you desire me to be, who I am supposed to be. Forgive me for not spending time with You. Forgive me for only thinking about it when it has been so long I really miss You.

Forgive me for not choosing You, but choosing to be busy with something else, for not choosing You right now. Forgive me for always having an excuse or thinking that I have something better, or more important to do. What can there be in the entire universe that is better than spending time with the Creator of that universe? The very thought that the God who created everything would spend time with me...wants to spend time with me...longs to spend time with me...it is simply mind boggling. Forgive me, Lord, for throwing You away as if Your attention and love was a casual thing.

Forgive me for not loving You as You love me. I ask for a revelation of that love so that the passions in my heart burn like smoldering embers and blazing fires. I ask for a revelation of Your love for me and a download of that love so I can love You with the same abandon and acceptance. Life is not worth living without You. Take away those things that get between us. Let me shout from the mountain tops that You, the Lord God Almighty are my Significant Other. There should be no one before You. You alone are my love and my joy. Give to me that revelation that will start my heart pumping for You and not just for

survival or life. I pray, Lord, that our love for each other become equal and great so I will never turn away again. In Jesus' precious and most holy name, amen.

God bless you all
Jessica and Susan