The Importance of Relationships

"Then God said, ‘Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life... So God created people in his own image...’” Genesis 1:26-27a

“So it is with Christ’s body. We are all parts of his one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.” Romans 12:5

Scripture says a lot about the importance of relationships. Look at some of the truths taught in the Bible:

- God, from all eternity has been in loving relationship with Himself (all three persons of the Trinity).
- We were created to be God’s image bearers, meaning we are to represent God by revealing His character and nature toward one another and to the world.
- We cannot fulfill the purposes for which we were created without being in right relationship with one another.
- God takes our actions and attitudes toward one another so seriously that He says however we display them toward one another we display them toward Him (Matt. 25:34-40).
- Jesus said we do not love Him if we do not love one another (1 John 4:20-21).

What a wonderful and glorious thing we have been given: the opportunity to display the character, the love, and the person of God as we relate with one another; but what an enormous responsibility that is as well.

The Bible Tells Us to Love

Love is more than feelings, and certainly more than words. Love requires action. If people were to say that they loved someone, and then ignored their needs, or acted in a manner that was hurtful and devastating to them, one could assume that the person professing love does not understand the meaning of the word love.

Words do have (some) power, but it is action that gives them their power. It is with action that we prove that our words are not merely lip service. Through loving humility, kindness, and compassion toward one another we confirm that our love toward God is not merely lip service.

We are one body (Eph. 2:16; Rom. 12:5), of which Christ is the head. As a body we must work together in harmony and unity. We must function with one another to honor God and display Him.

Ephesians 4:1b-4 says, “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called.”

Need for Reconciliation

“You must make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” Colossians 3:13
Jesus said in Matthew 6:14-15, "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins."

- We cannot fully reconcile with God unless we are willing to reconcile with one another.
- Jesus said that all of the law could be summed up in these two commands: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength, and love one another as yourself (Mark 12:30-31).
- Jesus said that we show our love for Him through our obedience to His commands and our love for one another.
- God commands us to make peace and reconcile with one another before we approach Him in worship (Matt. 5:23-24).
- God has already displayed to us compassion, sacrifice, humility, patience, forgiveness, and love, and He expects us to demonstrate these toward one another.

Process of Reconciliation

Warning: Reluctance on the part of either party to humble themselves, to desire reconciliation, to demonstrate brokenness and regret, compassion and kindness, forgiveness and mercy, may indicate a heart that is hardening toward God and rejecting His Word.

True Reconciliation Requires a Few Things:

1. Both parties must have a desire for resolution and restitution. Romans 12:17-18 says, "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible."

2. State clearly and specifically the offense. A helpful exercise is to find the offense in the scriptures, identify the root of the problem, and see what the Lord says about it.

3. The offender must determine not to repeat the offense and as much as it is in their power to reverse the harmful effects.

4. Take a moment to consider the definition of forgiveness and then decide whether it has truly been given. Forgiveness is ceasing to demand punishment or restitution.

5. Trust is to be given and earned. Understandably trust may be a little fragile, and that is why it is important that the offending party have a true willingness to earn and build that trust. The offended party must give a measure of trust so that the offender has the "freedom" to build it.

Further Resources

Relate Message Series
A 10 part sermon series given by lead teaching pastor Greg Harris dealing with relationships. You can purchase the 10 CD set, or listen to it free on our website, www.olive-branch.org. Just go to the Message Resources page then click Ephesians and go to the Relate series.

The Relationship Principles of Jesus
This book by Tom Holladay (teaching pastor at Saddleback Church) is a study of what Jesus modeled and taught about relationships, and will guide you toward healthier and richer relationships.

Stephen Ministry
If you would like to talk with someone, Stephen Ministry is a confidential care ministry.