

The Relationship That Changes All Other Relationships

Primary Text: Matthew 22:37–40 **Supporting Texts:** John 15:9–12; 1 John 4:19–21; Ephesians 5:1–2

Big Idea: *When our relationship with God is right, it changes the way we see, love, forgive, serve, and relate to everyone else.*

Introduction — One Relationship Changes Everything

We live in a world obsessed with relationships.

College football has started, and for some people this is the beginning of the year for them. They talk about the Coaching staff and the Relationship to the player. They are looking of the scouting reports and are anticipating the relationships between the players. They are obsessed with not just the game of football but the relationship that comes with it.

- A gossip might obsess over the everyone else's relationship.
- Musicians might be eagerly awaiting on their favorite band's new album
- Husbands and Wives, you might be straining and clawing to the next night out without the kids!
- Grandparents might be elated to have a sleepover with the Grandkids!
- Like a teenager getting to see their Bow!

We talk about:

- Marriage relationships
- Friendships
- Family relationships
- Work relationships
- Parent-child relationships
- Church relationships
- Dating relationships
- Social relationships

And yet, there is one relationship that often gets overlooked—the relationship that has the power to transform **all the others**.

That relationship is our relationship with **God**.

Jesus said:

Matthew 22:37–40 (NIV) “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Notice the order.

God first. People second.

Jesus didn't say that relationships aren't important.

He said that our relationship with God is the foundation for every other relationship.

Here's the truth:

You cannot consistently have healthy relationships with people when your relationship with God is unhealthy.

The way we relate to God eventually affects the way we relate to everybody else.

1. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD CHANGES HOW WE SEE OURSELVES

Before we can have healthy relationships with other people, we have to understand who we are.

The world tells us our identity comes from:

- Our accomplishments
- Our appearance
- Our possessions
- Our careers
- Our relationships
- Our failures
- Our past
- Other people's opinions

But Scripture tells us something different.

Our identity begins with God.

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

You are not an accident.

You are not worthless.

You are not defined by your worst mistake.

You are not defined by what someone else said about you.

You are God's workmanship.

And when you understand that it changes the way you relate to others.

When I don't know who I am in Christ...

I need other people to validate me.

I become easily offended.

I become jealous.

I become competitive.

I constantly compare myself.

I become controlled by people's opinions.

But when I understand my identity in Christ, I don't have to get my worth from people.

I can love people without needing people to complete me.

That's important in marriage.

That's important in friendships.

That's important in the church.

That's what happens when we expect people to give us what only God can give us.

We expect our spouse to give us complete fulfillment.

We expect our children to make us proud.

We expect our friends to always be there.

We expect the church to meet every emotional need.

We expect people to constantly affirm us.

But people were never designed to take God's place.

Only God can occupy that place.

2. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD CHANGES HOW WE LOVE OTHERS

Jesus didn't separate loving God from loving people.

He connected them.

1 John 4:19 (NIV)

"We love because he first loved us."

That's powerful. We don't love because everyone is lovable. **We love because God loved us first.**

Think about how different our relationships would be if we stopped asking: **"Do they deserve my love?"**

and started asking:

"How has God loved me?"

Because there have been plenty of times when **we didn't deserve God's love.**

Yet He loved us. We failed Him. He loved us. We wandered. He pursued us.

We sinned.

He offered forgiveness.

We turned our backs.

He still called us home.

Romans 5:8 (NIV)

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
God didn't wait until we got everything together.

He loved us while we were still sinners.

And when God's love gets into your heart, it changes how you treat people.

God's love changes our marriages.

Instead of: “**What am I getting out of this?**”

we begin asking:

“**What can I give?**”

God's love changes our friendships.

Instead of: “**Are they meeting my expectations?**”

we begin asking: “**How can I encourage them?**”

God's love changes church relationships.

Instead of: “**What can the church do for me?**”

we begin asking: “**How can God use me to bless somebody else?**”

3. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD CHANGES HOW WE HANDLE OFFENSE

This may be one of the greatest tests of our relationship with God.

It's easy to say we love God. It's much harder when somebody hurts us.

Somebody disappoints us. Somebody talks about us. Somebody betrays us. Somebody lets us down.

And suddenly our Christianity gets tested.

Colossians 3:13 (NIV)

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

Notice those last four words: “**As the Lord forgave you.**”

Our forgiveness of others is connected to our experience of God's forgiveness.

Here's the problem:

We want God to forgive us completely...

while we want to forgive other people conditionally.

We say:

"I'll forgive them, but I'll never forget."

"I'll forgive them when they apologize."

"I'll forgive them when they admit they were wrong."

"I'll forgive them when they make it right."

But Jesus says:

"Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

That doesn't mean there are no consequences.

It doesn't mean we ignore abuse.

It doesn't mean we trust someone who has proven themselves untrustworthy.

It means we refuse to allow bitterness to become the master of our hearts.

Hebrews 12:15 (NIV)

"See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

Bitterness doesn't stay contained.

It spreads.

You get hurt by one person...

and suddenly you begin treating everyone else through the lens of that hurt.

You were betrayed by someone...

and now you don't trust anybody.

You were rejected by someone...

and now you push everybody away.

You were hurt in a previous relationship...

and now you punish the person who didn't hurt you.

But your relationship with God gives you the grace to say:

"What happened to me doesn't have to control who I become."

4. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD CHANGES HOW WE SERVE OTHERS

Jesus said:

Mark 10:45 (NIV)

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus had every right to be served. Yet He chose to serve.

Why?

Because love isn't primarily about what you receive.

Love is about what you give.

And when we are rightly connected to God, we begin looking for opportunities to serve.

That's why Jesus washed feet.

That's why Jesus touched lepers.

That's why Jesus stopped for blind Bartimaeus.

That's why Jesus ate with sinners.

That's why Jesus went to the cross.

Love moves toward people.

Here's a question for the church:

When people encounter us, do they encounter people who are demanding... or people who are serving?

Do they encounter criticism... or grace?

Do they encounter judgment... or compassion?

Do they encounter people who want to be served... or people who want to serve?

Because our relationship with God should change the way people experience us.

5. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD CHANGES HOW WE RESPOND TO DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Jesus took relationships to an entirely different level.

Matthew 5:44 (NIV)

“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

That's impossible in our own strength.

But that's exactly the point. **Christian love isn't natural love.**

It is supernatural love. Anybody can love people who love them.

But Jesus calls us to love people who don't.

Anybody can be kind to people who are kind to them.

But Jesus calls us to demonstrate grace to people who aren't.

Luke 6:32–33 (NIV)

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.”

The Christian life becomes radically different when God's love is operating through us.

THE ORDER MATTERS

Jesus gives us the order:

1. Love God.
2. Love yourself rightly.
3. Love your neighbor.

When that order gets reversed, relationships become unhealthy.

If I put **myself first**, relationships become selfish.

If I put **other people first**, relationships can become people-pleasing.

If I put **God first**, He teaches me how to love myself and others correctly.