

May 20, 2018

BUILDING SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS - Part 1

“Love”

Proverbs 4:23 (NKJV): “Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.”

The word “heart” is used more than 900 times in the Bible, and, in most cases, it’s *not* referring to the physical organ but the core of who we are.

Jesus: “...whatever is in your heart determines what you say.” (Matthew 12:34 NLT)

The Bible says to “keep” (KJVS) our heart or “guard” (NIV) our heart, because it can be captured by others, putting ourselves in their hands.

C.S. Lewis: “There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully around hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket...it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.”

Whoever has your heart has your life!

The things we do to win a person’s heart are the *same things* we do to keep their heart.

The first key to building successful relationships - love

Love often produces emotions, but the *biblical* understanding of love is different from the emotions produced by love.

A world without emotions would be terrible and boring, for God created us to experience them.

Ways Love Is Often Defined Today:

- Infatuation - being in love with love
- Lust - physical, sexual attraction for another

When love is an emotion, it is invariably centered on what I get out of the relationship.

Jesus: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 NIV)

Love is choosing to accept someone for who they are and sacrificially working for their good.

Many think we have to keep the rules *before* God will love and accept us, but Jesus came telling us that God has offered His love with no strings attached.

Romans 5:8 (ESV): “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

1 John 4:15-16 (ESV): “¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”

“God is love,” and His love *gives* because love has the power to change hearts.

Disciples of Jesus give to others the love first given to us in Jesus Christ, and *as* we give it, we grow even more in it.

2 Thessalonians 1:3 (ESV): “...your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.”

Jesus: “³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35 ESV)

Healthy relationships are built on unconditional love, on what we give and not what we get out of it.

When confronted by God’s love, people often believe it’s too good to be true and either dismiss it *or* they dig into it, to try to understand it.

God continues to love us to awaken within us an awareness that things aren’t the way they should be, but *it can be* different and we *can* change.

Romans 2:4 (ESV): “...God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance...”

If love is sacrificially working for the good of another, then there are times when it will involve discipline or saying no.

While we share God’s love with all, it’s presence or absence in the relationship should help us decide whether or not we want to go deeper.

The good news is that God's love has the power to change people and capture their heart.

1 Thessalonians 3:12 (ESV): "...may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you"

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (ESV): "⁴Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never ends...."

Want to go deeper? - Check out "Building Successful Relationships" by Michael and Laura Fletcher on RightNow Media (www.gateway-community.org/find-it/).

Get the *Life Journal* Bible Reading Plan at gateway-community.org/Find-it

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