

LESSON 9: THE BELIEVER'S PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

“A NEW WAY TO TREAT THOSE THAT ARE AROUND US”
Why is it so important that we as believers relate correctly with others?

When we were saved, God gave us the responsibility of being His ambassadors with the purpose of serving as a blessing for those that are around us, regardless of which spiritual family they belong to. That's why one of the most serious errors that we can commit is to isolate ourselves from the world around us. Few things hinder the cause of Christ as much as a believer that does not relate with *his world* in an appropriate way. To function correctly in our role as Ambassadors, it's important that we be responsible in all areas of our lives: work, school, family, community, friendships, etc.

It would be a mistake to think that, when we are performing this function, we will not face conflict and opposition. You should expect hostility from the lost people around you. On top of that, don't be surprised if the problems even come from other believers. The reality is, the more time we spend with people, the higher the risk that there will be conflict. Often, this difficulty will be caused by life's daily situations and the immature and selfish tendencies that we all have when we face them.

The purpose of this lesson is to challenge you to maintain good relationships with everyone around you, following the precise instructions that God has left in His Word for those of us who are ambassadors in this world.

I. How should I relate to other believers?

- A. God desires that our new family, our brothers and sisters in Christ, have a special role in our everyday life. **Galatians 6:10** says: *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”*
 1. Among believers, Christ is the basis for biblical fellowship. Even doctrine itself, which is very important, and achieving exact doctrinal agreement, are not as essential as individual fellowship with our Lord.
 - a. You should learn to have fellowship with Him before being able to have fellowship with other believers. Believing that one can have communion with God without having communion with brothers and sisters in Christ is false. **1 John 1:3-7**

- b. As a matter of fact, one of the most important evidences of our conversion is to look at our attitude towards other believers. **1 John 3:14**
 - 2. We should mutually love each other and demonstrate it in a concrete manner. **1 John 3:17-19**
- B. One of our responsibilities is to be friendly to our brothers and sisters in Christ. **1 Peter 3:8**
 - 1. For this, it is necessary that we take the initiative and create the opportunity to establish these friendships. **Proverbs 18:24** says, “A man [that hath] friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend [that] sticketh closer than a brother.”
 - 2. As friends, we should mutually support each other whenever we go through problems. **Galatians 6:2** challenges us as believers: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”
- C. We as believers shouldn’t try to survive alone. You need your brothers and sisters in Christ and they need you.
 - 1. We should hold each other up in prayer. Try to make **Ephesians 6:18** describe your relationship towards other believers: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”
 - 2. We should serve one another out of love. **Galatians 5:13-14**
 - 3. We should mutually watch out for each other’s spiritual health, speaking immediately with those that are distancing themselves from God. **Hebrews 3:12-13**
 - 4. We should help each other out in our ministries. Apollos and the apostle Paul give us a great example of this in **1 Corinthians 3:5-9**.
 - 5. **Romans 12:13** teaches us that we should also practice hospitality, giving what we have so that the material needs of everyone are covered: “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”
 - 6. And above all, everything that we do should have the goal of helping our brother or sister in Christ to grow spiritually. Always remember **1 Thessalonians 5:11**: “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

II. How should I relate with those who still don’t know Christ?

- A. With those that don't know Christ, *regardless of our connection to them*, we should treat them with only one purpose in mind: to be light so that they can be converted to Jesus. **Philippians 2:15** should be our goal: *"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;"*
 - 1. Give a good testimony. To be light for the world, people should see our good deeds. **Matthew 5:14-16**
 - 2. Don't isolate yourself. Do whatever is necessary to use your influence and win others, without compromising your testimony. **1 Corinthians 9:19-22**
 - 3. Speak to them about Christ every time it is possible.
- B. Never unequally yoke yourself with an unbeliever. God commands us to not establish an intimate relationship with those that don't know Christ. The intensity of some relationships (like marriage) can make you compromise your convictions. **2 Corinthians 6:14-18**

III. How can I resolve the conflicts that arise as I relate with others?

- A. Seek peace with everyone, as much as it is possible.
 - 1. This is the principle that should govern our personal relationships. **Romans 12:18-21**
 - 2. The "as much as it is possible" of Christianity requires an attitude of meekness that goes against the logic of the world. **Matthew 5:38-47**
- B. As far as the conflicts with believers are concerned:
 - 1. As **Galatians 6:1** says, with a spirit of meekness, we should try to make the restoration of the offender the main objective of the conflict resolution: *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."*
 - 2. If someone feels offended with you, it's your duty to seek them out and strive for reconciliation. **Matthew 5:23-24** is an eternal principle: *"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."*
 - 3. But, If a brother or sister in Christ sins against you:

- a. Be prudent (discreet and wise). Don't speak with anybody about the problem. **Proverbs 26:20** *"Where no wood is, [there] the fire goeth out: so where [there is] no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."*
 - b. Gossip is not only sinful but also diabolic and destructive. Control your tongue! **James 3:6** warns us: *"And the tongue [is] a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."*
 - c. What you should do is speak to him, with all the politeness and friendliness possible, and in private, to rebuke him. If he responds to the rebuke, the problem should go no further from there. **Matthew 18:15**
 - d. If the problem is not resolved, seek out two or three spiritual people, preferably leaders of the church, so that between everyone restoration of the brother or sister in Christ can be attempted. **Matthew 18:16**
 - e. If after that, the problem is still not resolved, let the church intervene. **Matthew 18:17**
4. Before you get to the embarrassing point where, even after the mediation of the church, your problem with the other believer is unresolved, "suffer the wrong".
 - a. Never go before an unbeliever to fix your problems. Likewise, completely throw out the possibility of resorting to a secular court to continue the fight. **1 Corinthians 6:1-7**
 - b. As you suffer the wrong, forgive the one who offended you. **Colossians 3:13** says: *"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also [do] ye."*
 - c. Be patient with your brother or sister in Christ; remember that he or she, just like you, is growing in the Lord. Try to act as **Ephesians 4:2** says: *"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;"*
- C. On the other hand, when you resolve conflicts with those that don't know Christ, remember that the main purpose when you are dealing with them is to seek their conversion.
 1. Be conscious that, because you're a believer, you will receive opposition from the world. **John 15:19** is clear when it states: *"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are*

not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

- a. As you encounter opposition, remember that our true adversary is Satan and not the people. **Ephesians 6:12** says: *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places].”*
 - b. In some cases, your conversion will even make those that are closer and dearer to you oppose you. **Matthew 10:34-38**
 - c. Some conflicts are not easy to resolve. Often you should simply be faithful to God and let Him take charge. Believe the promise of **Proverbs 16:7**: *“When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”*
2. Surely expect insults, taunts, and criticism from those who don’t want to change their uncontrolled conduct. **1 Peter 4:3-4**
 - a. Respond politely. Remember that your purpose is that the person be converted. **Proverbs 15:1** is true in every case: *“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”*
 - b. Try to end every conflict leaving the doors open to be able to continue ministering in the future to those involved. **2 Timothy 2:23-26**

SOME POPULAR BELIEFS

1. Having fellowship consists of social activities.
2. We should only associate with Christians that believe exactly the same way as we do.
3. In a church, there will never be problems between believers.
4. The one that offends should always be the one that takes the initiative to resolve the conflict.

From what we have studied in this lesson, we should understand the reason these teachings are completely false.

Write in your own words the spiritual principle from this lesson that has made the greatest impact on you.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

1. If you still are not part of one of the small groups of your church, make the decision to become part of one of them. Ask your discipler to show you what to do.
2. Put in your own words the steps that you should take to resolve a conflict with another person. Tell your discipler with whom you should take the steps (if it is your case), and decide to do it. Your discipler will ask you how things have gone before you start the next lesson.

HOW MUCH HAVE WE LEARNED?

- 1 To have friendships with other believers, it's important that we take the initiative. **T F**
- 2 Never, under any circumstance, should we go to unbelievers to deal with our problems with other believers. **T F**
- 3 If a brother or sister in Christ offends you, you should tell the pastor or one of the leaders as soon as you can. **T F**
- 4 To avoid an unequal yoke, we should cut off all of our friendships with our lost friends. **T F**
- 5 Sometimes, it's necessary to bear the offense and suffer the wrong. **T F**
- 6 As we try to fix a problem with someone else, we should strive to keep the doors open so that we can minister to them in the future. **T F**

Before beginning lesson 10, memorize

Romans 12:18

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."
