

the impact of *healthy* relationships



FEBRUARY 2022

On a regular basis, we all enter into relationships of varying quality. Some of them are healthy, and some toxic. My question to you is, are your relationships with others based on the grace of Christ that edifies and encourages, or on religion and the law that hurts people and puts them in bondage? This is big; whether or not we let God's grace impact our relationships determines our mental outlook, and ultimately the quality of our lives.

Our friendships, marriages, and family relationships are the areas that are taking the biggest hit during these times. Not knowing how to process the bad things that happen can damage the relationship because we don't know how to respond. For instance, religion tells us not to show emotion or feel sad when a loved one dies. This isn't emotionally healthy, and it can affect both women and men.

Our emotions can get so messed up that we can go off the deep end. To keep that from happening, we need to get back to the basics so that we can shore up a foundation of understanding in this area. Psalm 113:3 asks, if the foundation is destroyed, what can the righteous do? We're in a foundation crisis that only a solid grounding in the Word of God can fix.

The Bible is a book about two major relationships: the relationship between God and man, and the relationship between man and man. We can't possibly have good relationships with each other without first having a relationship with God and His Word. It all starts with being friends with God; this is what enables us to be good husbands, wives, and friends

to each other. Ignorance in this area can lead us to mistreat each other, which grieves the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ gave us the perfect example of friendship. He went to the cross so that we could have grace-based relationships that aren't painful and actually bless all parties involved. *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). God's not asking us to jump in front of a bus; He's asking us to die to self-centeredness and help others around us by giving of our time, our talents, and our treasures. If we don't learn to lay our lives down for our friends, we'll never learn how to do this for our spouses; that's why so many marriages are ending in divorce.

Godly marriages begin as godly friendships; to have these, it's imperative to be selective about who we hang out with. Our friends profoundly affect how we think; it's not wise to be friends with people who have a bad influence on us. *"One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin..."* (Proverbs 18:24, NIV). We need to choose friends who have a relationship with God, otherwise they'll lead us down the wrong road in life. *"The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray"* (Proverbs 12:26, NIV).

Because of *their* relationship with Christ, the right friends help us grow in *our* relationship with Him. This is how we continue drawing closer to God and allow Him to influence us. Unlike some "fair-weather friends" who disappear when stuff happens in our lives, godly friends are always there when we need them. *"Two*

are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10).

When this kind of friendship is carried over into marriage, it gives God something powerful to work with. He can get involved with the marriage relationship, bless it, and strengthen it. The partnership is beneficial. Proverbs 27:17 says that as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

God made marriage because man never could have succeeded on his own; he needed some serious help, so God made a strong woman to help him out. The best marriages aren't based on the world's standards but on God's standards. His idea of marriage isn't male domination, but equality between both spouses. Following God's guidelines for forming healthy relationships, which all revolve around grace, keeps us out of danger.

Taffi and I love you and pray for you every day. May the blessing of God be on you and your family. Remember, Jesus is Lord, and "...in all of your getting, get understanding."

Love,



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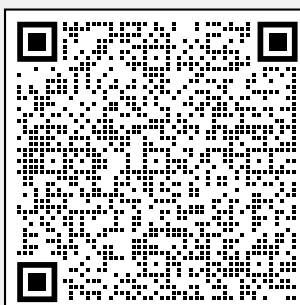
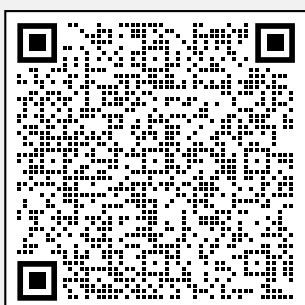
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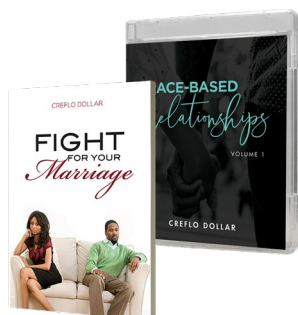
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