

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden... In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

MATTHEW 5:14-16 ESV

BEACONLIGHT

THE RELATIONSHIP ISSUE



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| GODLY Relationships | What Does It Look Like?

By BEVERLY CORPUS

What do your relationships look like?

At the very heart of our Creator’s design was that man should not be alone. God intended that all creation would reflect Him: in relationship. This profound truth has been woven into even the smallest of details by our Creator’s hand.

Take the water molecule for instance. Made of two hydrogen and one oxygen molecule, it is one of the most common, fundamental elements found on the earth, and yet in it, we recognize the wisdom found in Matthew 18:20, “...for where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” [NRSV]

God Himself resonates this need for community and connectedness through the Triune Godhead. Yet, relationships have become a tricky thing to understand these days.

After all, we now live in a time when relationships are often measured by the amount of “likes” we receive on FaceBook and Instagram or by the amount of followers on Tumblr and Twitter. Our “conversations” with others (even those sitting right next to us!) seem more limited to the keyboard on a mobile device than actual face to face interaction. Good, healthy relationships are already hard to find, so that could mean Godly relationships are *that*

much harder to come across (sadly, they’re sometimes hardest to find in the church!).

So, what does it look like to have Godly relationships?

Stop and think about the people closest to you, who you spend the most time with or have the most influence in your life. Do these individuals point you to God and vice versa? When there is conflict between you, is grace and forgiveness extended and reconciliation made? Have you grown in character since this person has been in your life?

This issue of Beacon Light will focus on some aspects of good, healthy, Godly relationships. None of our relationships are ever going to be perfect, but we can do our part to educate ourselves and trust in a God who is perfect --- He Who is Love. Keeping the structure of the Five Fs in mind, let’s be open to new perspectives and consider areas in our relationships with others that could be improved. Can we claim to love God, Who we cannot see, and be unloving to our family and friends, who we can see?

It is only through His transforming love in our lives that we will be able to love others, as He loved us.

“...since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and His love is perfected in us.” [1 John 4:11,12 NRSV]

We can love perfectly. It is possible! 💡

Image courtesy of imediainconnection.com



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Image courtesy of churchleaders.com

The Apostle Paul speaking to the elders in Ephesus said, *“From among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”* [Acts 20:29 ESV]

1. Be Slow to Speak. Make a decision not to react without thinking. People make foolish comments all of the time. A friend confronted me about something I did, and my response was that I had no idea why I did that. I did not have malice or intent, and my actions were completely contrary to my value system. I didn't make excuses (oh, I had a few), and I didn't attack his actions. Instead, I asked forgiveness, and he extended it immediately.

2. Filter Your Emotions of Anger Through the Gospel.

Nothing sets the Gospel aside quicker than loss of control in anger. When I am angry, I focus on how God responds to my ongoing sins and transgressions and idols. I often wonder why He puts up with me. I am convinced that He loves me more than I love myself and that He is full of grace, mercy, and forgiveness. I do sinful things,

God forgives me, and the ministry of reconciliation is exercised. I am both reconciled and am called to be a reconciler [2 Cor. 5:18-19; Rom. 5:10-11].

3. Be Quick to Hear. Deal with the conflict quickly. It is awkward to address it later, and it seems Satan puts a wedge deeper between friends with every passing hour a conflict is left to simmer. Letting the sun go down on our anger gives the devil an opportunity to gain an advantageous position in our relationships that creates bitterness [Eph. 4:26-27].

4. Avoid Texts and E-Mail Responses. The offended or offending party needs to hear the tone of your voice. I responded to one man's angry text by saying that I had forgiven him and that comments taken out of context and without the associated compassion and my personal grief for the outcome of the offense are rarely (ever?) understood rightly in digital format.

5. Acknowledge Your Role in the Conflict. One person can stir up trouble in a family, a church, or a relationship, but they often drudge up other's ancillary actions and words to deflect their own sin. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. Sinful people blame-shift. Nevertheless, be quick to acknowledge your role in the conflict even though it rarely justifies their sinful actions. It never benefits to hide our weaknesses and our indifference toward others.

“Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” [James 1:19-20 ESV]

Excerpted from ChurchLeaders.com by Scott Thomas, the director and Chairman of Acts 29 Network, a non-profit church planting organization of missional reformed churches.

Tension in our relationships can be good. But how well do we handle differences of opinion? Where we stand along the liberal and conservative spectrum could affect our ability to relate to others. Here's a perspective to consider:

Is God really smiling when he's listening to hymns and frowning when the music's too loud? Would Jesus prefer 3ABN or would he be more into The Record Keeper? Does the sense of elitism (better than thou) displayed by both sides grieve the heart of God? Is One Project really the Emergent Church and GYC the Old-Skool Church?

What if God is fully present and utilizing ALL Adventist Gatherings to bring as many of His children to Himself? He is very jealous and passionate for His children and would do anything to draw them to Himself.

More than any time in the history of Adventism, it's time for us to connect, collaborate and celebrate. What Jesus has been looking for all along were collaborators in His vineyard, not cavilers or criticizers.

If we're really serious and for real about revival and reformation - we'd be

rejoicing and celebrating with and for all the revivals and reformations that are taking place in each and every one of our gatherings and events.

If you're quick to doubt or down-play what's going on in people or places you do not personally agree with - it's most likely that your heart has not been revived or transformed.



Image courtesy of fluidforward.com

And this applies to both sides.

While we're to be on the look out for false prophets, false christs and false revivals - we cannot afford to simply judge and make "devils" or "legalists" out of our brothers and sisters in Christ without first having prayed for them and connected with them.

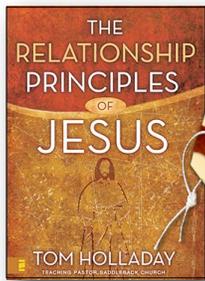
It's tragic to see some talk about a certain group in public without ever having the first-hand experience of interacting with them or attending that particular conference or gathering.

From the gospels, we see Jesus perfectly comfortable with both the Pharisee and the Prostitute in the same room. He is at ease with tension. He embraces it. He is big enough. They are both His children. In fact, He is tension. He is both Law and Grace. Justice and Mercy. Alpha and Omega. In Him, all things hold together. [Col. 1:17]. Paradox is his dialect.

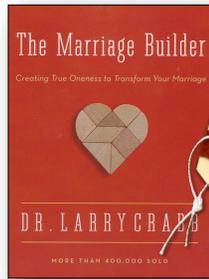
If we're to be like Jesus and follow Jesus - we'll need to learn to live with tension. To be at ease with GYC, The One Project and Just Claim It in the same room.

Excerpted from the blog "From GYC to One Project to Just Claim It: What is God up to in Adventism?" by Justin Yang. He is one of the forefront voices for NAD Campus Ministries and Young Adult ministry in the Adventist Church.

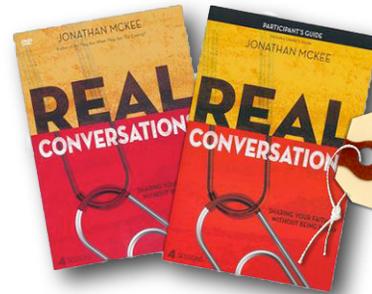
BOOKS and MEDIA | Work On Your Relationships



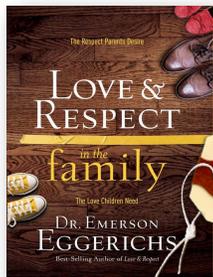
THE RELATIONSHIP PRINCIPLES OF JESUS
 Written by *Tom Holladay*
 Six principles taken from Jesus' example will help you love, listen and serve others as He did. Gain insights into fulfilling God's intention for all your relationships—even the difficult ones. Who better to learn from than the Master Communicator Himself!



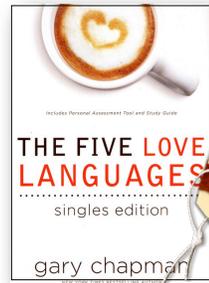
THE MARRIAGE BUILDER
 Written by *Dr. Larry Crabb*
 The deepest needs of human personality - security and significance - ultimately cannot be satisfied by a marriage partner. A discussion guide for couples allows readers to dig into the book and apply it to their own lives and marriages.



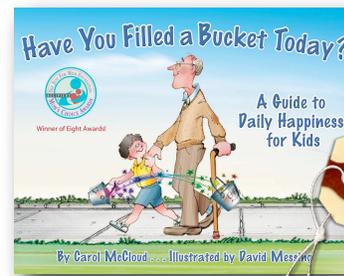
REAL CONVERSATIONS
 Written by *Jonathan McKee*
 In this DVD and combination participant's guide/leader's guide, you'll find everything you need to train your teenagers to reach out to share their faith with their friends without scaring them away. Simple and relevant evangelism principles for students are taught in four sessions.



LOVE AND RESPECT IN THE FAMILY
 Written by *Dr. Emerson Eggerichs*
 Children need love. Parents need respect. It's as simple - and complex - as that! In this insightful message, conflict arises when frustrated moms and dads feel dishonored, while kids blurt "You don't care about me!" - generating what is called the "family crazy cycle." Learn to establish healthier patterns - whether you have toddlers or teens!



THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES - SINGLES EDITION by *Dr. Gary Chapman*
 Whether you're widowed, divorced, separated, or never married, your deepest emotional need is to feel loved—and your greatest successes will be obtained by loving others. Do both effectively in situations unique to single adults—dating; roommates, classmates, and co-workers; family connections; and single parenting. Includes new discussion questions.



HAVE YOU FILLED A BUCKET TODAY?
 Written by *Carol McCloud*
 Through sweet, simple prose and vivid illustrations, this heartwarming book encourages positive behaviour as children see how very easy and rewarding it is to express kindness, appreciation and love on a daily basis. This wonderful book is a winner of seven awards.
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To learn more about how social media can be part of your spiritual life, and to gain some Biblical context on the critical question above, please visit crosswalk.com. Type the words "Social Media and Spirituality" in the search bar, [or click on the question above if viewing online].

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ON PERSONAL EVANGELISM ::

What is your PERSONAL Evangelism Style?

1. Confrontational
2. Apologetic / Intellectual
3. Testimonial
4. Interpersonal
5. Invitational
6. Service

Understanding HOW you come across is one of the first steps in developing your testimony and improving your relationship dynamic with others.

Personal evangelism is very intimidating for many people, perhaps for you as well. You want to share your faith, but fears stand in the way of your personal evangelism. To truly conquer your fear, you might want to invest in some kind of personal evangelism training. But the best way to grow in your skills is to learn how to **talk about your faith in a conversational way**. In other words, the key to personal evangelism is to simply, do it.

The best place to start in personal evangelism is not by asking the question: "What is the best method?" Rather, by knowing the gospel message and making it a part of your life. Allow it to transform you. Do you know the core content of the gospel? Can you share a version of the gospel? Master the message first, and then methods will follow. The Holy Spirit does all the rest.



RELATIONAL EVANGELISM

noun. [related terms: incarnational; friendship; lifestyle]

1. *Living in such a way that your faith is obvious*
2. *Being intentional in talking about the gospel*
3. *In the context of intentional Godly relationships*

To learn more about relational evangelism, visit "What is Relational Evangelism?" on EvangelismCoach.org by Chris Walker

A Practical Exercise

- Let's take a moment to look at your significant relationships. Think of people you choose to spend time with on somewhat of a regular basis.
- Make a list of friends who immediately come to mind. Try to name as many as possible in the next 60 seconds.
- Write those names down.
- Now look over the list.
 - 1) Who goes to church with you? Cross them off this list.
 - 2) Who attends another church regularly? Cross them off.
 - 3) Who shows evidence of a relationship with Christ? Cross them off.
 - 4) Who is left?
 - 5) Do you have anyone left on the list?

What now?

- Were you surprised by the results of this quick little exercise?
- What will you do about it?
- If you have plenty of non-Christian and unchurched friends, what do you do to maintain those relationships?

If you have few such relationships, what will you do this week that can start to change that?

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