

Keys to Understanding

Relationships

Liberty

Keys to Understanding Relationships

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Introduction

Relationships appear to be very important to God. Jesus Christ felt so strongly about them that He overthrew the religious rules of His day to seek relationship with people in every walk of life. This drove the religious leaders of the times to crucify Him.

The Cambridge Dictionary says that relationships between two people or groups of people are defined as the way they feel about and behave towards each other. This describes the focus of this book—how people feel about and behave towards one another.

Relationships can be mutually enriched and nurtured to grow—or relationships can be soured with resentment and negative attitudes. Some relationships just stagnate because of indifference and neglect. The outcome depends upon how people *act towards* or *react to* each other. All good relationships are sustained by love and mutual enjoyment of each other; they should never be sustained only by a sense of familial duty or because of emotional neediness or by soulish manipulation. If some of your relationships are being sustained for wrong reasons, then this book can help you bring them into right, godly parameters.

Good relationships involve love, respect, courtesy, caring, trust, friendship, interest in another's well being, and loyalty. The words *respect* and *courtesy* mean that one sets a high value on someone, considers someone worthy of esteem, and prizes a relationship with that person. Bad relationships involve jealousy, manipulation, control, suspicion, self-interest, and little or no sense of loyalty.

1. ***The Living Bible* says a true friend is always loyal (Proverbs 17:17).**
2. ***The Message* translates Proverbs 17:17 as true friends loving through all kinds of weather and families sticking together in all kinds of trouble.**
3. ***The Living Bible* translates 1 Corinthians 13:7 to say that if you love someone, you will be loyal to him, no matter what the cost to yourself.**
4. **The *New King James Version* of the same verse says that love *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.***

Many Scriptures about *trust* refer to the words of a person or God as being true and safe to rely upon. Trust also means to set one's hope and confidence in, to feel secure with, and to have no fear of the one being trusted. David said to God in Psalm 56:3 (NIV), *When I am afraid, I will trust in you.* In many places in the New Testament, the word *trust* means to believe in someone.

To recap, saving the attributes of love for later on, the hallmarks of good relationships should be:

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1. **Respect and courtesy value, consider worthy of esteem, and prize a relationship with.**
2. **Loyalty is faithfulness, steadfastness, love at all times and through all kinds of weather, sticking together no matter the cost, bearing and believing and hoping and enduring all things that come with the relationship.**
3. **Trust means spoken words can be relied upon, there is safety in believing, hope and confidence exists, feelings of security, and no fear of the one being trusted.**

This is how to believe in and respond to someone you prize. How should you respond in love to your difficult people? It can be hard to respond positively to another person in the face of strife, animosity, dishonesty, anger, and unfaithfulness. Should you send flowers? Buy a gift? So often we try to express love by doing something for another person, deeds that we hope will be interpreted as love. However, the other person may have expectations of an expression of love involving the mind, the will, and the emotions.

When someone rejects a physical action that we hope expressed love, it does not always mean that our love has been rejected. Our act may have been interpreted as a substitution for a more personal and emotional response.

If I really want to know that I can count on you when the whole world has turned against me, I don't want diamonds, I don't want a boat, and I don't want your money. If that is all you know how to bring to our relationship, what will happen when your money is gone? Will you be gone, too? If the world has turned on me, the expression of love I really need is probably non-judgmental reassurance, availability, and the gift of quality time spent with you.

The best list of true love's responses is found in 1st Corinthians 13:4-7 which might be labeled as LIST IMPOSSIBLE by needy, hurting, and fearful souls. These souls might cry, "Not fair! No one ever did this for me!" Yet, someone could reply that Jesus has done everything on this list for you and me. The hurting soul might then respond, "Well, sure, I love Him like that." Yet the Word says:

If someone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also (1 John 4:20-21, NKJV).

Hate is a very strong word and it can mean to detest and loathe. But according to *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*, *hate* also means:

- to love less,
- to postpone esteem,

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- to slight,
- to disregard, and
- to be indifferent towards.

Ouch! Who has not felt this way about difficult people, particularly difficult relatives? Still, the Word encourages us to hold on and keep trying to do good for others:

Let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint. So then, as occasion and opportunity open to us, let us do good (morally) to all people (not only being useful or profitable to them, but also doing what is for their spiritual good and advantage). Be mindful to be a blessing, especially to those of the household of faith—those who belong to God's family with you, the believers (Galatians 6:9-10, Amplified Version).

Charles Spurgeon spoke this truth: We should never neglect our own household by only doing good for and blessing others, while disdain and devaluing those in our own homes. It certainly can seem easier to show compassion to those you don't have to live with, but our families are God's earthly training centers for learning how to love. Do you sometimes feel like you and others in your training center are back in preschool and somebody needs a nap?

God will crowd you into difficult, cranky, and irksome situations with family members, again and again, day after day, to teach you all how to love. He will accomplish this more quickly even if just one person in the family cooperates with Him.

If you were always able to express true love in the following ways, do you realize that you would have wonderful relationships with everybody? You would probably become the most beloved person in your city!

Love never gives up:

- Love sticks through thick and thin with a friend
- Love cares enough to help a family member in need more than once without complaining
- Love doesn't stop reaching out to strangers in need even if such an action backfired before

Love cares more for others than for self:

- Love will sit up all night in a hospital waiting room with a frightened family member or friend
- Love gives surly teenagers a second and third chance without nagging
- Love endures ill will without anger or resentment

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Love doesn't want what it doesn't have:

- Love doesn't covet other peoples' blessings
- Love isn't greedy and selfish
- Love appreciates what it receives and shares its bounty with others

Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head:

- Love is never proud
- Love is never arrogant
- Love is never snobbish

Love doesn't force itself on others:

- Love will wait patiently to offer help when someone is too overwhelmed to respond
- Love never takes the rejection of an offer of friendship or help personally
- Love is a good listener

Love isn't always me first:

- Love thinks of the other person's needs before it worries about its own
- Love always tries to give space, with a smile, to those who push in front of it
- Love tries to help others get ahead without undue concern for its own position

Love doesn't fly off the handle:

- Love works hard to be patient with everyone
- Love overlooks other's faults and differences
- Love counts to at least five hundred when someone is being difficult

Love doesn't keep score of the sins of others:

- Love doesn't make lists or keep scorecards on other people's actions
- Love strives to overlook or ignore other's faults and continues praying for them (not about them—FOR them)
- Love doesn't refuse to forgive because someone has done the same thing thirty times before

Love never revels when others grovel:

- Love never enjoys seeing someone being embarrassed or criticized when they fail
- Love never wants others to be uncomfortable
- Love is never pleased when someone seems to get paid back for mistakes or wrong actions

Love always takes pleasure in the flowering of the truth:

- Love is pleased when someone is acquitted of an accusation
- Love forgives the one who confesses a falsehood
- Love rejoices and stands with all who stand up for what is right

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