

CALVARY BIBLE COLLEGE: SHILLONG

Spiritual Emphasis Week 2011

A PAPER PRESENTATION ON

BUILDING RELATIONSHIP

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INTRODUCTION: In life, everyone needs a relationship with his/her fellow human being and with God (with whatever God they worshiped). Especially, we the believers of the true God are commanded to live together in harmony and with love. Our God also wants to have a good relationship with his children and that is why our loving God humbled himself and suffer for us on the cross. The main reason for this is to bind the broken relationship. Therefore, in this paper we will study together the horizontal relationship and vertical relationship that the human beings ought to have. The horizontal relationship will deal with our relationship with our fellow human and the vertical relationship will deal with our relationship with God.

HORIZONTAL RELATIONSHIP: Life is meant to be shared. God intends for us to experience life together. The Bible calls this shared experience 'fellowship'.¹ In Colossians 3:15 it says – "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace" and the Psalmist says in Ps 133:1 – "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity." Therefore we, as the followers of Christ have to have a good relationship with others.

Jacob is one character in the Bible who had a literal physical struggle to give up his independence. As a young man, he was astute, ambitious, self-seeking. He deceived his brother Esau and his father Isaac and Laban, his father-in-law. But he had to run away from Esau and Laban. But when he wrestles with God, he gave up his independence and restores his broken relationship with them.² If one had a genuine relationship that is rooted in the inner heart, then there will be no gossiping, no quarrelling, no hatred, no loathing but love, peace, joy and fellowship.

What is Genuine Relationship?

In a genuine relationship we often have a heart-to-heart sharing, there is no suspicion, no distrust and no disbelieve. Genuine relationship happens when people get honest about who they are and what is happening in their lives.³ The Bible says (in I Jn 1:7), "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,

1 Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 138.

2 Derek Prince, *Empowered for Life* (Christchurch: Derek Prince Ministries, 2006), 18.

3 Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life...*, 139.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIP

we have fellowship with one another,” therefore real relationship happens in the light not in the dark. In darkness we hide our feelings, hurts, pains etc. while in the light we accept, share and put out all our feelings.

In a genuine relationship there is sympathy for others, not only that, they also have empathy i.e. to put our foot on the shoes of others. If we have empathy, we know exactly what others are experiencing and going through. Every time when we understand and verify other’s feelings, we establish a true friendship and build our relationship.⁴ No Christian can live successfully who does not constantly and systematically seek to share the love of the Lord Jesus Christ with those who do not know Him, and no Christian will ever begin to do this until he or she feels a real concern, a burden for the salvation of the multitudes of men and women who are lost (Luke 19:10).⁵ Therefore, in genuine relationship we there is a concern for others and love for their souls, there is a genuine fellowship and friendship.

How to Build a Relationship with Others?

In Eph 4:3, it says, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace,” therefore we must try our best to have a better fellowship with others throughout our lives, not only with our near and dear ones, but also with strangers, and even our enemies. Unfortunately, many people were brought up in a broken family and unhealthy relationships, so they lack the relational skills needed for real fellowship. I think many people cultivate a fake relationship with our fellow classmates, members, colleagues or co-workers, we act outwardly as if we are best of friends, but when we are not together, we back-bite each other and we gossip with others against our fake friendship! There may be many ways to build or establish a relationship with other, whether it is long lasting or for only a short period of time. Let us see only few points (out of many) how we can build a right relationship with others.

i) **Building Relationship Requires Honesty:** In building relationship with others, we ought to speak the truth about ourselves. If there is something hidden or buried problems, a genuine relationship can never happen. In order to build a right relationship one must speak the truth in love. We all know that the beginning of breaking good relationship is lack of conversation, and they are not honest enough in sharing their thoughts and hide something about the truth. Eve did not consult with her husband Adam and God and lied which led her to obey Satan. Therefore, our conversation should cover our present situation, past life and future plan; it should cover our joy, problems, thoughts and our activities.

4 Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life...*, 141.

5 Francis W. Dixon, *Secrets of Successful Living* (Bangalore: Vineyard Publishing House, 2005), 21.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIP

Many of our relationships were shallow and artificial just because we are afraid of conflict. Whenever problems pop up that might cause tension or discomfort, it is immediately glossed over in order to preserve a false sense of peace. Everyone knows about the problem, but no one talks about it openly. This creates a sick environment of secrets where gossip thrives.⁶ But we should know that Paul has the solution for the problem of broken relationships in Eph 4:25 which says - *“Therefore each of you must put falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”* Therefore we must be frank and truthful to our neighbors and we must always remember that when conflict is handled correctly, we grow closer to each other. We must be honest and truthful in our dealings with others. There should be no hidden motives of self-gain. Our desires should be to give, not to get.⁷

ii) Building relationship requires humility: Pride, egocentrism, selfishness, smugness and self glorification destroy relationships very quickly. Pride builds walls between people; humility builds bridges. Humility is the oil that smoothes and soothes relationships.⁸ Richard Baxter says, “Humility is not a mere ornament of a Christian, but an essential part of the new creation. It is a contradiction to be a true Christian and not humble. All that will be Christians must be Christ’s disciples and come to him to learn, and their lesson is to be meek and lowly.” In human life it is very easy to have pride and look down at others. As Christians, we all need humility in our lives, especially we, who are trained for God’s ministry need it very much as we are going to deal with different kinds of people. Humility is the virtue opposite to pride; it is self-forgetfulness that exalts the glory of God.⁹ Paul says, “Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody

Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.¹⁰ Paul, in his letter to Christians in Philippi (Phil 2:3-4) wrote, “Give more honor to others than yourselves. Do not be interested only in your own life, but be interested only in the lives of others.” The proud person sees self as above the other, one of the symptoms of this is the refusal to take others into account, to hear or respect that person as of equal importance as oneself. As we are the followers of Christ, it is a must to respect our fellow beings as of our equals.

6 Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life...*, 147.

7 Ralph Mahoney, ed., *The Shepherd’s Staff* (Chennai: World MAP, 1993), 28.

8 Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life...*, 148.

9 David Warner, *Humility in Christian Lives* (New York: Christian Publishing House, 2003), 34.

10 Ibid

iii) Building Relationship Requires Regularity: In building relationship, it is necessary to frequently meet other people. We can talk together and have fellowship together and know each other because we have regularly met each other. In order to build relationship we need to meet each other frequently. If we spend a lot of time together whether we like it or not, then that brings a better relationship. If we want to build a relationship whether in the church, in a community life or in our individual life, it will mean meeting together even when we like it or not, but we meet just because we feel it is important.

The Christians in the first century used to worshipped together regularly at the Temple *each day* and used to meet in small groups in homes for fellowship and they even share everything they have. They regularly meet each other and that build their relationship better. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need (Acts 2:44, 45).¹¹

iv) Talking to God Before Talking to the Person: Many of our broken relationship is because of prayerlessness. Sometimes many of us look to others and try to find peace, joy and happiness in them, gossiping with them when we have a problem with others instead of looking to God. But we have to know that God wants us to go to him first and promised us a solution for our problem because he says - "If you ask anything in my name, I will give you."

In order to build up a relationship with others sometimes we do not know what to do and where to start. It is very difficult especially when we have a quarrel with the other person previously. But the best move or the best start is to first talk to God before we talk to the person. If we pray about the conflict first instead of gossiping to a friend, you will often discover that either God changes our heart or he changes the other person without our help.¹²

v) Building Relationship Requires Us to do What is Acceptable to Both Sides: When we are trying to build up a relationship with others, we need to do what is acceptable and satisfactory for both sides. Most of us find it difficult to act against our wish or our will, but in order to build a genuine relationship we sometimes need to act against our will or our wish. In our relationship building, sometimes we tend to do what is right on our side only and ignore the other side, which will never bring a genuine relationship. In a real relationship, we must do what is acceptable from our side and from other's side.

¹¹ Ralph Mahoney, ed., *The Shepherd's Staff...*, 28.

¹² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life...*, 154.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIP

vi) Attack the Problem, not the Person: In a broken relationship, it is very easy to attack the person with whom we have a quarrel and then whatever that person do or whatever he achieve is null and void for us. We find complaints here and there, gossip against them and ignore whatever they do. This means that we are not really trying to build the broken relationship. The Bible says (in Prov. 15:1), “A gentle response defuses anger, but a sharp tongue kindled a temper-fire.”

In resolving conflict, how you say it is as important as what you say. If you say offensively, it will be received defensively. For the sake of building relationship, we must destroy our armour ourselves first and with that a genuine relationship can occur.¹³

VERTICAL RELATIONSHIP

In the beginning, there was a good relationship between human and God. But the relation between them had been broken because of the disobedience of the first couple. But God wants us to be with him once again and paved the way for human beings by sacrificing himself. The snare to which Adam and Eve fell was the promise of independence. Once you know good and evil, you will be free to make your own decisions. You will no longer dependent on God.¹⁴ This motive of Adam and Eve’s desire on being independent is still inherited by human beings. This desire for independence from God broke the relationship with God. We often try to seek independence from God by earning a lot of money and material possessions. But what we need to know is that without God we are nothing, therefore we need a close relationship with God.

Now, let us see some of the ways how we can build a stronger and genuine relationship with God.

i) Talking with God and Listening to Him: In order to build a stronger relationship with God, we need to talk frequently with our God. By meditating on his word (the Bible) we can let God talk to us and by praying, we can talk to God. The literal translation of the Hebrew word for prayer (Tepila) can mean ask or request.¹⁵ In I Thessalonians 5:17, Paul urged the church to pray continually that they will fulfill God’s will. The means of promoting religious joy is prayer. This prayer is to be “without ceasing,” implying constancy and perseverance it is an exhortation to live in a devotional frame of mind. It is impossible to be always on our bended knees, but we may be in the spirit of prayer when engaged in the duties of our earthly calling. Prayer may be

¹³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life...*, 157.

¹⁴ Derek Prince, *Empowered for Life ...*, 12.

¹⁵ Revd Chuauthuama, *Bible Thumal Hrilfiahna* (Kolkata: Revd Chuauthuama), 806.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIP

without ceasing in the heart which is full of the presence of God, and evermore communing with him.¹⁶

Meditating on the word of God also help us in letting God talk to us. When the seed of God's Word is implanted in the heart, our faith starts to grow.¹⁷ When we allow God to talk us through meditating on His Word, we experience joy and happiness in the midst of our personal problems; we are relieved from our burdens. A meditation on God's Word also brings us closer to God and feels secure in Him.

ii) Walking with God: As we see in Gen 5:24, Enoch was walking with God, this means that Enoch was willing and has a desire to walk with God. It may also means that they are in the same mind. Even though human beings have a broken fellowship with God, Enoch's earthly responsibilities did not prevent him from maintaining unbroken fellowship with God. We also cannot walk with God unless we are in perfect agreement with him. Amos had questioned that "*Do two walk together unless they have made an appointment?*" So, in order to walk with God also, our mind should be in tune with God's mind in order to have a pleasant walk together with him. Full fellowship with God is impossible if there are things contrary to His will in our life.

God always want to walk with us, but in order to walk with God, we must have a desire and a willingness to walk with Him. And even if we have a desire to do evil things, we will never try to do those unwanted thing if we always feel ourselves as walking with God. Not only that, we must be qualified to walk with God. This means that we need be free from all the unwanted things from the sight of God so that we will be able to freely walk with God. If we walk with God, others will be able to perceive the depth of grace and the sweetness of the love of God flowing through our lives. Our lives will speak to them. Our walk with Jesus should be deepening day by day until at last we attain His perfection and walk with Him into the glory He has prepared for us.

iii) Praising God: God does have a perfect plan for our life. We may look at circumstances surrounding us and think we've been standing still forever in one painful spot. The more we pray and cry for God to help us, the more the circumstances seem to pile up. The turning point cannot come until we begin to praise God for our situation instead of crying for Him to take it all away.¹⁸ An important step in the act of praising God is to take our eyes off the threatening circumstances and look to God instead. We don't have the power

¹⁶ CD- ROM, *The Pulpit Commentary* (Rio, USA: AGES Software, 2001).

¹⁷ Derek Prince, *Empowered for Life ...*, 119.

¹⁸ Merlin Carothers, *Power in Praise* (Secunderabad: Authentic Books, 2008), 11.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIP

to deal with the circumstances of our lives, so obviously, the battle isn't ours, but God's.¹⁹

Accepting every little thing that happens with joy and thanksgiving will release the power of God and through us, and we will soon experience a feeling of joy as well. But don't look for the feeling as a sign. Our praise and thanksgiving must be based on faith in God's Word, not on our feelings.²⁰ So, when we praise our God wholeheartedly, our relationship with God became so strong that we experience peace, joy and happiness. God has a double purpose in teaching us to trust and praise Him in everything. It releases his power into our situation, and it also draws others to Him.

iv) Obedience: Obedience is a selfless expression of faith. When Naaman obeys the prophet's directions, doing all the requirements exactly as he was told and humbling himself, he received the healing. We must also obey God's commandment as we are the followers of Christ. In order to be an obedient servant we have to humble ourselves before God and our fellow human beings. For God, obedience is far more important than sacrifice as we see in the life of Saul. In II Cor 12:9 we see - "I am with you; that is all you need. My power shows up best in weak people." Therefore, we can see from here that if we just obey God in spite of our weaknesses He can use us for his instrument to do a mighty task also. If God only used perfect people, nothing would ever get done.

If we obey God's commands, our relationship with our God is genuine and real, there is no secret to hide. And when we are obedient we are always protected by Him and always bless us in one way or another. Therefore, let us be obedient to God.

CONCLUSION

Building relationship with God or our fellow human being is the task of every Christians because we are taught and commanded to do so. When we have a strange relationship with God or other people, we often feel lonely and uncomfortable, but when we have a close relationship we feel ease and there is joy from the depth of our heart. So, let's try to build a better relationship with our God and with our fellow human beings.

For Discussion:

1. What are the main reasons why we cannot have a genuine relationship in our day-to-day life?

¹⁹ Ibid, 20.

²⁰ Merlin Carothers, *Power in Praise ...*, 118.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIP

2. What are the steps that we can take to build a better relationship with other believers?
3. Apart from the points mentioned in the paper, point out some means to build a relationship (especially out of a broken relationship).