

10 Golden Rules for Meaningful Millennial Relationships

Relationships are the most influential part of our lives as human beings. They have the power to bring us life and joy or the power to completely tear us down. As a professional counselor, every day I see the importance of getting relationships right, because so much of who we are stems out of our relationships.

We are made for relationships, because we are made in the image of a God who loves us and longs for relationship with us. But when it comes to navigating the complex world of interpersonal relationships, Christians are often left feeling confused, with the simple echo of “love one another” ringing in their ears, yet unsure of how to actually apply this important truth.

Many Christian millennials feel lost in the constantly evolving world of relationships, trying to keep up with the ever-changing rules. Yet even in our shifting culture, the good news is that there are certain principles of establishing healthy relationships that will always remain the same.

To help millennials sort through this relationship clutter, I partnered with ChristianMingle, the largest and most trusted Christian dating website, to develop a list of 10 golden rules for millennials to keep in mind when cultivating meaningful relationships. Whether with friends, family or a romantic partner, here are some things to keep in mind as you strive to practically live out God-centered relationships.

1. **See people as God sees them:** As you draw close to God, His love begins to fill your life, overflowing into all of your relationships.

People often get wrapped up in the whirlwind of their social lives, work lives and other activities that they tend to forget that God has put us on this Earth for a reason—His reason. The more you connect with Him, the more His heart and vision for the people around you begin to transform you. With a God-centered focus, you are freed to focus more on the giving than the receiving. You live to give. This is the first step to changing your life and relationships.

2. Do life together: Meaningful friendships permeate our life.

It's easy to compartmentalize our lives as we have a tendency to over-value and misinterpret the idea of "independence." However, the Bible tells us to live life together. Meaningful relationships happen when we invite others into our lives and then step into theirs. Consider ways of inviting people into your world by serving together, eating together, worshipping together and simply living life together in the intimacy that comes with community. Relationships take on a whole new meaning and purpose when they become an integral part of our everyday lives.

3. Communicate openly: Say what you mean, and mean what you say.

Oftentimes it is our lack of openness that kills our relationships. It's important to speak the truth in love and to share your heart with the people in your life. We often carry expectations of people that have never been communicated, and we come out disappointed in the end. Meaningful communication means we learn the art of saying what we mean—but never without the grace of saying it with love and respect.

4. Be grateful and encourage: Take time to express what is in your heart.

Some of our best feelings never make it out of our hearts. It's far easier to express criticism than it is to express gratitude—especially in tough situations. But whether you had a disagreement with your best friend or tension with a family member, it's important to remember that even with their imperfections, they have been placed in your life for a reason. They will be the ones to support you through everything—good and bad—and should never be taken for granted. Be grateful for the important people in your life, and then take the time to let them know that they matter to you.

5. Be present in the moment: Take the time to be face to face with those you love.

According to a recent report by ChristianMingle, one-third of singles believe they miss out on personal interaction because they spend so much time texting or emailing. To counteract this, set a certain amount of time each day to be without the phone, computer or television and take a break from technology. Instead, use this time to reconnect with the important people in your life face-to-face, and soak in the moment.

6. Listen without judgment: Be quick to listen and slow to speak.

We often are more concerned with speaking than we are with listening. But sometimes, the best support you can give to another person is an open heart and mind. If your partner, friend or family member knows they can confide in you honestly without feeling judged, then discussions become more honest and make room for relationships to grow.

7. Forgive to be free: Forgiveness frees us to be healed.

We hear a lot about forgiving and forgetting, but it's a cliché that's easier said than done. Forgiveness is not about

excusing hurts, it's about experiencing healing. Allowing yourself to truly forgive is a difficult task, but it's one that is absolutely necessary if you want to build and maintain healthy relationships. Be willing to completely forgive, and free yourself from the chains of resentment. True forgiveness allows you to be free from your wounds and open yourself up for God's peace, grace and restoration.

8. Acknowledge your mistakes: Take responsibility and learn.

Everyone makes mistakes; it's the way we learn and grow from there that makes all the difference. Taking responsibility for your mistakes not only will help you grow, it also will allow those around you to see that you are mature enough to address your own shortcomings. Ask God to reveal to you what needs to be changed, and then take the steps to do your part to become the best you can be.

9. Love yourself: You can't learn to love others until you've learned to love yourself.

Loving yourself is a critical step in developing a healthy relationship, because according to God's Word, loving others is contingent on our ability to love ourselves. The key is to love yourself as much as God loves you. Don't compromise your needs, your morals, your health or your beliefs for someone else. Strive to always hold true to your principles with a self-respect that is deserving of God's (and your) love.

10. Keep moving forward: Remember the past, but stay excited for the present and future.

No one wants to spend all of their time with someone who dwells on the past. Whether caught up in the "good old days" or struggling with the "pain of the past," God calls us to forget what is behind and to move toward what is ahead. Keep a

positive attitude, and always strive for a better future. This will lead you into a life filled with light, which is something that those around you will notice and appreciate.

These interactive golden rules are stepping stones to cultivating a positive relationship in both the present and future. With each tip and with a stout trust in the Lord, you'll have everything you need to thrive with your friends, family and even in your love life.

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