

Unity of the Spirit

You must be connected with people who share your same values and goals in life.

Scientists know that every living thing, no matter how small, operates on the basis of relationship. From the tiny ant that joins with hundreds of other ants to build a colony to the enormous elephant that travels with a companion, the dependence on nurturing and support from others is evident everywhere.

Human beings also were created to live and thrive together. Genesis 2:18 says, “‘It is not good that man should be alone'” (NKJV). Relating to one another, however, is more than a privilege of human existence. It’s a necessity.

What about you? Do you create a loving environment that encourages closeness among people in your family? Do you treat others as you’d like to be treated? To develop healthy relationships we must cultivate partnerships and associations that are based on unity and destiny.

The Bible makes it clear that God blesses unity among believers. Unity means we come into agreement with a person or a group and deliberately work together. In fact, the Word instructs us to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3, KJV). Marriages, families, ministries, businesses, churches and friendships should be built on principles that make them one.

In my ministry and in the church I co-pastor, every staff member is challenged to come into agreement with our vision of evangelism and restoration. Because everyone shares the same

goal, we don't have to contend with confusion and chaos.

No agreement means no unity, and no unity means no blessing. In marriage, if one spouse wants to live on the south side of the city and the other on the north side, there will be conflict.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians that in order for them to walk in unity and worthy of their calling, they had to maintain "lowliness and gentleness" while "bearing with one another in love" (Eph. 4:1-2). In other words, unity takes effort.

Are you willing to love your brother, sister, friend or spouse unconditionally? God demonstrated this kind of love for us through His Son.

If you've ever been in a relationship with someone, you know human nature resists the command to be gentle and loving with those who are different from us. Though the words "bear" and "endeavor" refer to work, it goes against our pride to bear with other people in love and endeavor to keep peace if there is no common denominator.

The most important question to ask a person in any relationship is, "Are you going my way?" You must be connected with people who share your same values and goals in life. If you are not, then before you start the journey you might want to consider the negative implications of going in the opposite direction with a person.

When I met my husband, Randy, he was much heavier than he is today. He had a bowl haircut and wore green velvet bow ties,

platform shoes and polyester suits. He had no money.

But I did not marry my husband for his looks, his fashion sense or his wealth. I knew a great barber and a good tailor and had a reliable diet plan. I married him for who he was.

What I never wanted to change and knew I could not change was the man Randy was on the inside. That's the authentic person. The genuine person is not the outside package but the treasure, gifts and values within.

Many people falsely market themselves, especially while dating. They pretend to be beautiful, quiet, meek and laid-back. But two years into marriage, you discover your spouse has an in-your-face attitude. You need to know a person before you enter into covenant with him or her.

Here are a few questions to ask: How do those you relate to treat people they don't need in their lives? What is their destination in life? What do they value? Do they help others?

Moreover, are they helping you "come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph. 4:13)? If so, then you are well on your way to fostering healthy, godly relationships.