

God's Key Element to Enjoying Great Relationships

Relationships are an important part of life. Healthy relationships have the ability to bring us great joy and satisfaction; however, unhealthy ones have the power to make life miserable.

Throughout my life, God's Word has taught me so many great lessons about how to get along with people—something I wasn't very good at. But I think the greatest lesson was this: Choose to live in peace with others.

Simply put, it's God's will for us to live in peace and harmony with one another, and His Word offers clear instructions on how to get along with people in our daily lives.

First Peter 3:11b (AMPC) says, "Let him search for peace (harmony; undisturbedness from fears, agitating passions, and moral conflicts) and seek it eagerly. [Do not merely desire peaceful relations with God, with your fellowmen, and with yourself, but pursue, go after them!]"

Notice how this verse says we can't merely *desire* peaceful relationships—we have to *pursue* them!

Now, this doesn't mean we won't ever disagree. People are naturally going to have disagreements, and it's OK to disagree if we can do it respectfully. But we must avoid strife.

What is strife? The dictionary defines it as "bickering, arguing, a heated disagreement or an angry undercurrent."

Strife is one of the greatest threats to the body of Christ, and it has the ability to destroy marriages, personal relationships and even churches. Like a seed, strife can get

planted through something we say or do and eventually grow to become a major problem.

God's Word tells us it's the "little foxes" that sneak into the vineyard and spoil all the grapes (see Song of Solomon 2:15). I believe this is true when it comes to strife. Left unchecked, even minor disagreements or frustrations can eventually destroy a relationship.

So, how do we keep strife out of our relationships? Here are a couple practical tips:

Maintain a Humble Heart

Where there is contention and strife, there is also pride. That's why it is so important for us to practice humility.

We all like to be right—whether it's an argument about a major issue or something trivial. However, humility insists that we give up our right to be right.

I can't tell you how many times my husband, Dave, and I went round after round, arguing about the same thing. But even when I won, I still lost, because I damaged our relationship and gave up my peace in the process.

I challenge you to adopt an attitude of humility. If you're having an argument, be the first to make peace or apologize, even if you know you're right. It may be painful in the moment, but you will reap the rewards long after it's all over.

Let Love Be Your Guide

Strife isn't just a 21st century problem. In fact, the apostle Paul wrote to the early church, encouraging them to avoid strife and stay away from petty arguments.

In Phil. 2:2 (AMPC), he writes, "Fill up and complete my joy by living in harmony and being of the same mind and one in

purpose, having the same love, being in full accord and of one harmonious mind and intention.”

Where there is unity, there is also blessing and anointing (Ps. 133). And God’s Word tells us there is power in agreement (Matt. 18:19). However, we can’t truly agree and walk in unity if there is bitterness, offense or unforgiveness in our hearts.

I can put a big smile on my face and say all the right things, but if I’m still purposely harboring all sorts of negative thoughts and feelings about Dave or a friend, I’m not walking in real love or unity. It’s not just the outside that matters. Even more important is what’s going on inside.

First Cor. 13:5b (AMPC) tells us that love “is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it.” Verse 7 goes on to tell us that love believes the best of every person.

Wow! Can you imagine what would happen in our relationships if we simply followed these two verses?

I encourage you to truly love the people in your life. Make a decision to stay unified no matter what tries to get between you. Because, after all, “love never fails” (1 Cor. 13:8).

Seek the Prince of Peace

The best relationship advice I can give you is to develop a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. I encourage you to spend regular time with Him through prayer and by reading and studying His Word.

As you do, He will literally change you from the inside out, causing you to think and act differently. It is only when we receive His peace and His love that we can truly give it away to others.

I am so grateful for the peace of God in my life. The Lord has

not only changed my relationships, but He has changed me. And He will do the same for you.

It is possible to enjoy stable, joyful, fulfilling relationships.

And it all begins with a simple decision to pursue peace.
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