Stewardship of Relationships

Romans 12:10

God is a God of relationships. After God created Adam, He said, “It is not good for man to be alone.” Obviously, God cares about relationships.

The Ten Commandments is about relationships. The first three commandments concern our vertical relationship to God. The last six deal with our horizontal relationships to each other. The fourth commandment deals with both relationships. Jesus summed up all Ten Commandments in two commandments (Mt. 22:37-40).

Since God created us as relational beings we must view relationships as a stewardship to initiate, maintain, and promote for God’s glory.

I am responsible for my relationship with God… AND, I’m responsible for my relationships with those around me. I should not only be seeking God’s good, but also seek the well being of others.

➤ Our text emphasizes the importance of relationships.

The phrase “one another” occurs 41 times in the New Testament. For example, just in the Book of Romans:

1. Honor and prefer one another (Rom. 12:10).
2. Be of the same mind towards one another (Rom. 12:16).
3. Love one another (Rom. 13:8).
4. Judge not one another (Rom. 14:13).
5. Edify one another (Rom. 14:19).
6. Receive one another (Rom. 15:7).
7. Admonish one another (Rom. 15:14).
8. Greet one another (Rom. 16:16).

Many other passages encourage relationships:

1. Care for one another (1 Cor. 12:25).
2. Serve one another (Gal. 5:13).
3. Bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2).
4. Forbearing one another (Eph. 4:2).
5. Be kind to one another (Eph. 4:32).
6. Submit to one another (Eph. 5:21).
7. Forgive one another (Col. 3:13).
9. Pray for one another (James 5:16).

I. Relationships that need to be STARTED. Good relationships don’t “just happen” by accident.

- Jesus didn’t wait for the twelve disciples to come to Him. He went after them and choose them.

A. We function better in the fellowship of another (Eccl. 4:9-10—
   *Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.*).

- This is illustrated in God placing us as members in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:21).

B. Teams accomplish more than people acting alone. But teams don’t come together by accident. **They must initiated.** We cannot wait for them to come to us.

C. “Life Groups” were started for this purpose.

II. Relationships that need to be SUSTAINED / STRENGTHENED. (Rom. 15:2).

- We all have relationships that could be better.

A. Relationships require maintenance otherwise they will gradually deteriorate. That is how marriages end up in divorce... Why friendships “go south.”

- Your relationships will be as close, as fulfilling, and as good as you make them.

B. **How do you sustain and strengthen a relationship?** By nurturing them... serving one another... caring for one another... putting self-interests aside and looking upon the needs of others.

- I read about what some “small groups” did in one church:

  - The wives get together one Saturday a month to nurture and disciple their daughters and young ladies in the church. They collec-
tively expose the girls to things they enjoy: Cooking; sewing; decorating; taking hikes; studying about courtship.

• At the same time, the husbands gather to invest in their sons and young men in the church by doing service projects together—
  ➤A church project that needs to be done (repairs; maintenance).
  ➤They select a person who needs help, go to his/her home, and ask, “What do you need done?”
  ➤They talk about hunting, fishing, sports, etc.

III. **Relationships that need to be SET RIGHT**. (Rom. 12:17-18).

A. Relationships sometimes get damaged or become broken. Maybe you’ve been offended, or perhaps you have been the offender.
  ➤Paul said, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16).
  ➤Paul addressed two women in the church at Philippi, “I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord” (Phil. 4:2).
  ➤Jesus said, “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Mt. 5:23-24).

B. Grudges have no place in a Christians life. A broken relationship with a father/mother — son/daughter — brother/sister — fellow believer — a strained friendship needs to be SET RIGHT.
  ➤Colossians 3:13—*Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

IV. **Relationships that need to be SEVERED**. (1 Cor. 5:11; Amos 3:3; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; 2 Thess. 3:6; 14-15)

A. Relationships that are wrong... destructive... spiritually unhealthy need to be severed (or at least be redefined).
B. You are who you run with (1 Cor. 15:33).

C. Introduce me to your closest friends, and I'll introduce you to your destiny. Show me your friends and I’ll show you where you are headed.

D. If you are a single adult trying to decide whether a potential boyfriend or girlfriend has good character, check out their friends.

E. Watch out for people who are a source of temptation to you.

F. If you’re in a relationship that is hurting your relationship with God, either redefine it, or lovingly and tactfully break it off until the person has genuinely changed.

SUMMATION: READ: “Good Friend, Bad Friend”\(^1\) (Chazown - section 44).

Jessica and Jenny were inseparable twins, dressing alike and sharing their parents' faith in Christ. Both were morally strong. Their futures were bright with possibilities.

Here is the story of the summer things changed. Jessica followed family tradition. As in years past, she attended a Christian camp. This year she made friends with some missions-minded girls. They didn't talk a lot about boys or music or movies. They talked about impacting the world. Feeding the poor. Reaching the lost.

In her church, Jessica was known as a strong Christian. But her new friends seemed to have a turbocharged faith. When these young girls prayed, they really prayed. During free time, they often read their Bibles. They talked of God as if He was a close friend, loving and directing them moment by moment. Jessica was caught by their passion.

Late in the summer, Jessica agreed to travel with her new friends to Honduras, to build homes for the poor and tell people about Jesus.

That experience changed Jessica's life forever.

After two years of college, she took a year off to minister in Honduras. There she met Rob. They later got married, and now they serve in China as full-time missionaries. Jessica glows with the love of Christ.

That same summer was also a fateful one for Jenny.

\(^1\) Craig Groeschel, Chazown. Multnomah Books (Section 44)
Instead of attending Christian camp, Jenny talked her mom, Monica, into letting her stay with a family at their beach house along with several other girls from school. Monica hesitated, because she didn't know the family well. But she gave in. For the rest of her life, Monica would regret this decision.

At first, Jenny was taken aback by this family's behavior. The parents gave the teenage girls beer. Lots of beer.

For a week, Jenny watched, not participating with the wild crowd. They seemed to be having so much fun. After several nights of pressure from her friends, Jenny drank her first beer. The next night, she got drunk. The night after that, she smoked pot.

That was only the beginning. Jenny met an older guy by the water. On the last night of the trip, drunk and high, Jenny gave away her virginity.

Having discovered new friends who were more “fun” than the church crowd, Jenny was different when she returned home. More sophisticated. More grown-up. And more prone to trouble.

Today, Jenny is an alcoholic on her third marriage, raising children from her first two husbands and a third man she met in a bar. Tonight she will sleep in a women’s shelter.

And her mom will cry herself to sleep.

Two sisters... Two sets of friends... Two drastically divergent destinations.

**SUMMATION:** Is there a relationship that you need to start (to win a lost person to Christ?)... strengthen... set-right... or sever?

Your most important relationship is with God. Are you saved? Are you close to God?