

God Revealed through the Church

The Church – A Demonstration of Godly Relationships

Life is the sum of our relationships whether we like it or not. Our relationships might be good or they might be bad but they are, nevertheless, relationships.

We have a relationship with God, with our spouse, with our children, with our parents, with our employee, with our employers, with our neighbours and many more. Some are close and intimate while others are distant and superficial. Some are wholesome whilst others are strained. However they are all relationships which make up our lives.

Someone has said “Our greatest wealth is not measured in terms of riches but relationships.”

The question is whether we reveal godliness in the way we relate to those around us?

Ephesians 5: 22 – 6: 9

1) The Foundation of Godly Relationships

- The nature of man is animosity towards others.
 - We might consider ourselves to be loving people and then often find ourselves in circumstances with people that are far from perfect and our true nature comes out
 - An example of this is the Christian talk show host on the reality program “Survivor”
- The majority of society issues in the world stem from relationship problems.
 - When we don’t adhere to the greatest and second greatest commands according to Jesus we are bound to have problems
 - On the contrary if we adhere to them we would living our the Lord’s prayer of “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”
- All the “self help” relationship building programs, tolerance promotions, new peace resolutions and so on never work because they rely upon ourselves and not upon God to make them work.
 - If we try and run a car on owner developed fuel and schemes and not by the manufacturers the car might run for a while but it won’t take long for it to grind to a halt.
 - Likewise life relationships are to be run on the basis of God’s design and not our own schemes and plans.
- Christ is the foundation of godly relationships.
 - It was Christ who, at the cross, reconciled us to the Father that we might have a relationship with God.
 - It was Christ who, at the cross, reconciled us with one another that we may have a godly relationships
 - Thus it is at the cross that we begin obeying the greatest and second greatest commands of loving God and love our neighbour.
 - It is at the cross that we lay down all our baggage that hinders us from having godly relationships.
 - Pride, unforgiveness, resentment, anger, self-righteousness, etc.
 - It is at the cross where we are changed even if the other person never changes.
- Godly relationships start in the home between husbands and wives, parents and children
- If we do not have godly relationships in our homes then we cannot expect to have them in our churches and in society.

2) Characteristics of Godly Relationships

- Mutual submission (5: 21)
 - The basis of submission is submitting ourselves to one another, or “giving way” to one another. Submission is giving way to somebody else. Anne Atkins, in her excellent book *Split Image*, says, “Before we can hope to be good husbands or wives, we must learn

to be good Christians. We must all become self-sacrificial and submissive.”

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- When both parties try and assert their will on the other then the result is an ungodly relationship of constant conflict.
- Mutual submission is the submitting ourselves to the other person’s ideas even if you do think that yours are better.
 - This is in the case of relative opinions not of absolute truth.
- However there ought to be consideration of the consequences of mutual submission.
 - Sometimes it could take a period of time of deliberation before submitting in a certain issue.
- Recognition of the God ordained order (5: 22 – 24, 6: 1 -2; 6: 5)
 - Although we recognise that all people have been created equal in the sight of God we also need to understand that God has created order out of chaos and has established His order in this world. The communistic ideal of order is not what God has ordained and neither is anarchy – a society void of all order and which does not recognise any authority.
 - Husbands and wives are equal but a husband is the head of the wife.
 - Parents and children are equal in God’s sight yet the child is commanded to obey and honour his parents
 - Christian employers and employees are equal in God’s sight yet the employer is told to work for their employers as working for Christ
 - Christian leadership is not authoritarian but leads, not from the top, but from the front.
 - This is the way Jesus led
 - When we don’t recognise God’s order in our homes, church and society we will fight against showing the proper respect, honour and submission and this won’t lead to the pursuit of a godly relationship.
- Treat everyone as an equal (6: 9)
 - Even if we are the head, leader, boss, employer we need to treat people as our equals as Christ treated us as His equal and He is the Master of us all.
- Sacrificial love (5: 25)
 - Love other as Christ loved the church – he sacrificed His life for the church
 - It isn’t how much we can get out of the relationship but how much we can give to it for the other person’s benefit even if you don’t benefit from it.
- Bringing out the best in the other person (5: 26 – 27)
 - This goes along with sacrificial love
 - We will all agree that when we say and do things that someone else really disagrees with or hates it normally brings the worst out in them.
 - We need to make the effort to do and say things that would bring the best out in them.
 - Do we encourage someone who needs encouragement or do we run them down for being unsociable?
 - Are we always criticising people thus breaking them down or do we look for ways to build them up.
 - If we know that someone has a gift or talent that they’re not using do we support them to bring that gift out of them to be used.
- Serve the other person (6: 7)
 - Mark 10: 45 “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

3) Benefits of Godly Relationships

- We will be blameless before Christ
- It will go well with us
- We will enjoy life on earth
- We will receive our reward from God.