

Teacher’s Guide for Living Holy

Theme: Holiness in Our Relationships

Life Application:

Understanding and applying Scriptural guidelines to our relationships with others.

Key Verse for Meditation:

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? – Amos 3:3

Focus Scriptures:

1 Samuel 18:1-4; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; Romans 1:7-12; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Hebrews 10:24

Lesson Key:

Biblical guidelines concerning the relationships of Christians fall into two main categories. First is the principle of separation—refraining from choosing close connections with the ungodly. Second, we find positive instructions about building pure, selfless, and godly connections with fellow believers. Detailed instructions are given for both relationships that are simply part of our assigned environment (such as family members, classmates, business associates, or neighbors) and for relationships that we choose (such as our spouses and close friends).

Introduction:

God set in motion the laws that bind one person to another, and groups of people to each other. He invented friendship. He instituted fellowship. He ordained marriage. To put it simply, relationships were His idea! Included in His Word are numerous guidelines that should govern our connections with other individuals, and as people dedicated to Him, we have a desire to learn and follow those guidelines.

As humans, we tend to take on the characteristics of those with whom we bond. Thus, one of the basic principles in God’s Word regarding relationships is that we must choose with great care those with whom we closely associate. If we have devoted ourselves wholly to God and have a deep desire to live holy lives, we will want to remain separate from influences that could pull us in another direction. Since we are warned in Proverbs 22:24-25 that wrong associations can set a “snare” for our souls, we would not choose to be in a relationship that defiles, hinders spiritual growth, or is not in accordance with God’s Word.

Relationships that follow God’s guidelines will be characterized in several ways. They will place God first; He will be the “third strand” in a threefold cord (Ecclesiastes 4:12). They will be based on a love for and adherence to godly principles. They will involve a give-and-take communion anchored in humility and selfless consideration for the other party. They will be marked by unity, mutual trust, acceptance, appreciation, commitment, and loyalty.

Opener Ideas/Activities:

Bring a pan full of sloppy mud. Dip your hands in the mud and then offer to shake hands with students in the class. Most likely they will refuse! Ask what would happen if someone did respond to the handshake. Obviously, some of the mud would come off on that person. If a person who is covered with filth approaches us, the natural instinct is to withdraw and refuse contact. We do not move closer and hold out our arms and accept all that mud. The point should be made that if we want to keep ourselves morally clean and free of contamination, we must avoid close association with those whose lives are impure—who are contaminated with anger, bad language, bitterness, dirty jokes, or any kind of sin.

The downloadable video clip “A Lesson from Geese” could be a good opener. Search for the title at <http://sermoncentral.sermonspice.com>. The words on this clip go quickly, so you might want to have someone read them aloud as the clip is played.

Give out a book on building good Biblical relationships as a door prize.

Distribute copies of the “Find a Friend Sign-up Activity” included in your packet to the members of your group. (This works best with a large group.) In a specified period of time, ask your group to circulate and get as many people to sign in appropriate places on the sheet as possible. The winner is the first person to complete the sheet, or the one with the most signatures at the end of the specified time.

Do a contest challenging your group to find Scriptures related to Biblical relationships. For example, ask who can find a Scripture related to:

Mother/Son relationship
Friend relationship
Spiritual mentor relationship
Father/Son relationship
Cousin relationship

Do a quick game with your class called “Identifying Famous Biblical Relationships.” Hold up flashcards with the letter pairs given below (you may think of others to expand the game). Whoever can identify the Biblical names and state the relationship between the two individuals is given the card.

Whoever ends up with the most cards wins.

A & E - Adam & Eve	M & M - Mary & Martha
P & S - Paul & Silas	J & C - Joshua & Caleb
D & J - David & Jonathan	A & P - Aquila & Priscilla
D & G - David & Goliath	I & R - Isaac & Rebekah
M & J - Mary & Joseph	A & S - Abraham & Sarah
C & A - Cain & Abel	R & L - Rachel & Leah
J & J - James & John	E & E - Elijah & Elisha
R & B - Ruth & Boaz	J & E - Jacob & Esau
M & A - Moses & Aaron	S & D - Samson & Delilah

Bring a strong magnet to class, along with some things that will stick to the magnet: paper clips, metal shavings, tacks, nails, etc. Pass the magnet over the items. Point out how the magnet does not have to physically touch the items for them to stick to it; it only has to come close. The point should be made that if we associate closely with rebellious, critical, or worldly people, their reputations will eventually stick to us. Even if we do not actually participate in their activities, by hanging around them we draw their actions to ourselves like a magnet.

Write the words “One Another” on a dry erase board. Explain to your class that a study of the “one another” passages found in Scripture can help us understand how we can develop the right kind of relationships. With their input, make a list of Scriptures or paraphrases that give us instructions about “one another.” Thoughts brought out may include: we are to love one another, edify or encourage one another, forgive one another, pray for one another, be patient with one another, carry one another’s burdens, serve one another, and worship with one another—all in all, a pretty good recipe for building and maintaining a solid, God-directed, God-blessed relationship!

Questions from Student Handout:

1. What principle regarding a Christian's relationships is developed in Amos 3:3 and 2 Corinthians 6:14-17?

The principle in these verses is that Christians should choose to form close relationships with believers, not those who are ungodly. Unity comes from agreement, so close relationships with those who have a different goal than we do could hinder us spiritually.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, Paul presented three arguments to try to convince these believers that they must separate from that which is contrary to the will of God. The three points could be summarized as follows:

(1) The nature of the believer determines his associations (verses 14-16). The Christian possesses a divine nature and should want to associate himself only with that which pleases the Lord.

(2) Separation from unbelievers is a command from God (verse 17). "Come out" implies a definite act on one's part. Separation is a positive act of dedication to God. We must separate from sin and unto God.

(3) God will bless those who separate themselves from the world of sin (verse 18). He longs to receive us in love and treat us as His precious sons and daughters.

Discussion should bring out that as long as we live in the world, there will be association with unbelievers on some level. However, when God has transformed a person through salvation, there should be an inward caution regarding a willful, close alliance with those who are not Christians. There is danger in choosing to put ourselves in positions where our relationships could cause us to compromise our principles.

If your students are young, or you have two people who are willing, you could illustrate Amos 3:3. Tie together one foot of each person, and have them try walking different directions.

2. What characteristics or patterns of behavior would we expect to see in the relationships of an individual with a pure and holy heart? 1 Samuel 18:1-4; Ecclesiastes 4:12; Ephesians 4:32; Philippians 2:3; Hebrews 10:24

Class discussion should bring out such thoughts as: relationships will be strong; they will evidence commitment to the well-being of the other; be marked by humility and selflessness; God will be at the center; there will be a desire to inspire, challenge, and strengthen the other person in the Lord; they will be marked by thoughtfulness, empathy, etc.

3. What are the factors that build Christian relationships? What are the factors that could hinder?

Your class could generate two lists on the board:

Build

Selflessness

Faith

Committed to serving God

Being of the same mind

Sharing the "battle zone"

Honesty

Reliability, etc.

Hinder

Different doctrine

Different values

Criticism

Negativity

Self-promotion

Contending for one's own way

Inconsistency, etc.

4. How should we go about establishing friendships that will be helpful to us spiritually?

Proverbs 18:24

This verse will point your students to the necessity of being friendly. After that point has been discussed, broaden the discussion by asking your students to come up with some other things we can do to build good spiritual friendships. Points that could be covered in your class discussion include:

- *Develop in ourselves the qualities we look for in our friends.*
- *Practice the golden rule.*
- *Make sure we do not isolate ourselves from others.*
- *Give our friendships a high priority; do not take them for granted.*
- *Cultivate transparency. Be open and honest with our friends.*
- *Let our friends know they mean a lot to us.*
- *Do things for our friends unselfishly; put friendship into action.*
- *Accept our friends for what they are; do not try to control or manipulate them.*

The Bible says we are to love one another, edify or encourage one another, forgive one another, pray for one another, be patient with one another, carry one another's burdens, serve one another, and worship with one another—a good recipe for building and maintaining a friendship.

5. Think of three or four people who have had the most positive influence on your life. Why were they so helpful? What was it about them that impacted you?

This, of course, is a personal question. However, some of your students might be willing to share characteristics about others that have had a positive effect on their lives. Discuss what common qualities come up and how we can develop such traits in our own lives.

6. Solomon captured one of the key ingredients in a godly relationship in the second part of Proverbs 20:6. What is it? Why do you think this is such a crucial ingredient?

The key ingredient is faithfulness. Relationships have much more endurance if there is faithfulness (or trustworthiness) and loyalty. Ask your students to suggest some ways faithfulness to a friend will be revealed in actions. Suggestions might include: bearing each others' burdens, empathizing with concerns, offering spiritual, material, and emotional support, etc.

Additional Questions:

What are some of the characteristics you would look for in a friend?

The list your group generates might include: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiving, loving. (See Colossians 3:12-14).

How can we initiate and promote conversations that will build us up spiritually?

If we have spiritual matters on our minds and in our hearts, it will be natural to talk about them. If we are focusing on positive things that build up, we will have something to discuss. We should ask the Lord both to give us boldness and to help us recognize and take advantage of openings as they present themselves. Our purpose should be to encourage others and share what the Lord has done for us.

Sometimes friendship is costly. It means more than empty talk or warm-fuzzy feelings. What might we need to invest into a friendship to make it work?

It may be necessary to invest time, emotion, energy, and even material wealth.

When we have a problem with someone—whether it be a parent, a friend, a spouse or just an acquaintance—it may be tempting to discuss the problem with others. Why can sharing a problem with others be dangerous? If we really need advice about something, who would be an appropriate person to talk to?

Talking about problems can sometimes make the problem bigger by getting more people involved—making room for even more negative feelings and miscommunications. Furthermore, when the problem between you and the other person is resolved, the people you told might not know it is resolved, which could drag the problem out longer than necessary.

If we really need counseling on a matter, the first place to go is to our Counselor, the Lord. Asking other people for advice is a good idea if it is necessary, but it should be someone who is well removed from the situation and has a history of making good decisions. This could be a mentor, teacher, parent, pastor, etc.

It is a good idea to ask the Lord to direct and bless our relationships, even if there are no problems between us and the other people. What might be the results of such prayers?

Praying for those we love and are close to can help prevent problems. It will strengthen the relationship, and open the door for God to bless in unexpected ways.

Word Search:

In Hebrews 10:24, we find a directive that applies to godly relationships. We are told, “Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.” The word that is translated *consider* comes from the root word *katanoeo*, which means “to observe fully, to behold, to perceive.” Our relationship with others should help us “see” them—to come to an understanding of who they really are. Why? So that we can “provoke” them to love and good works. *Provoke* is a strong word—an action word! If we know each other as we should, we will understand how to inspire, challenge, and strengthen one another in the Lord.

Supplemental Resources:

“One Woman for One Man for Life” by Rene Cassell, *Higher Way* Vol.97-4

“Unity: Embracing the Blessing of Oneness” by Darrel Lee, *Higher Way* Vol.95-5

Find a Friend Sign-up Activity