

Getting Control of Your Life! Part 3: Getting Control of your Relationships

Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by the demands and responsibilities that are a part of the many relationships you have?

Have you ever seen a mother bird fly back to its nest with one bug in her mouth and there are about eight little baby birds all chirping away, mouth open, as if they are all saying "me, me, me, me, me..." Do you ever feel that you can relate to how that mother bird feels? Not in regards to having that many children, but in having so many relationships each with their own set of demands. Too many people, too many needs, too many demands, too many very deserving of attention...but simply not enough time.

Getting control of your relationships. Relationships are an integral part of our life. It is very important that we maintain a proper control of our relationships. Otherwise, they will be a constant source of frustration, instead of the blessing God intended them to be.

A proper control of relationships is also important for another critical reason. Relationships influence your life. They contribute to your morals and values,
your opinions,
your outlook,
your attitude,
your mood, and even your beliefs.

John Maxwell states, "...the main difference between who you are today and the person you will be in five years will come from the books you read and the people you associate with. Who you spend your time with specifically influences your attitude. The old adage is true: Birds of a feather do flock together."

Relationships have a critical influence on your life.
This morning we are going to look at four steps to controlling your relationships:

1. Minimize bad influences.

Henry Ford said, "My best friend is the one who brings out the best in me. Think about what your friends bring out in you, and if it's not your best, it might be time for you to make some changes."

Do you need to make some changes in your life?

1 Corinthians 15:33 "Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

The New American Standard Version says, "...Bad company corrupts good morals."

The message is clear, be careful who you select to be your good friends.
Minimize bad influences.

Jesus was not afraid to be selective in who he spent time with. Look at this very unique verse: John 2:24, "Jesus would not entrust Himself to them, for He knew all men."

Jesus minimized bad influences, He kept some people at a distance.

Of course, this needs to be tempered. We are not saying that you can't have any non-Christian friends. Obviously, you are going to have to work with non-Christians, live next door to non-Christians, even have family members who aren't believers.

We are saying, be careful who your closest friends are. Make sure you have more good influences in your life than you do bad influences in your life.

The Apostle Paul addressed this issue:

1 Corinthians 5:10, "I do not say that you should avoid immoral people of this world... to do so you would have to leave the world."

We are just saying that you need to be smart about your relationships. Be aware of who you are allowing to be an influence in your life.

Just be careful as to who is influencing whom!
Minimize the bad influences in your life.

2. Maximize good influences.

I believe with all of my heart that the best influences you can find in regards to positive Christian values, you will find in your relationships with others right here at church.

I am not saying that Christians are perfect, because none of us are. But I am saying that comparatively speaking, your best influences from other people will be found in Christian circles.

Hebrews 10:24-25

24 "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

You find your best friends at church!

That's where you find people with Christ centered morals

Christ centered values

Christ centered principles

Christ centered priorities

Christ centered attitudes

Christ centered convictions

At church is where you find Christ centered people!

Church is where you can maximize the good influences in your life AND in the lives of your children. Where else are your children going to find godly kids to hang out with?

Proverbs 27:17 "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

The best way to build those relationships with others at church is in small groups.

Bible study, HomeTeams, Sunday School teachers, youth sponsors, mission trips, service projects, church socials, children's programs, youth group activities.....all provide opportunities for you to build relationships with other Christians.

Proverbs 13:20 "He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm."

You can sharpen your spiritual development through good, healthy church relationships.

John Maxwell writes, "The people closest to me determine my level of success or failure. The better they are, the better I am."

How many of you have read the Charlie Brown comic strip?

A Peanuts cartoon showed Peppermint Patty talking to Charlie Brown. She said, "Guess what, Chuck. The first day of school, and I got sent to the principal's office. It was your fault, Chuck."

He said, "My fault? How could it be my fault? Why do you say everything is my fault?"

She said, "You're my friend, aren't you, Chuck? You should have been a better influence on me."

Make sure your friends are a good influence on you. Maximize those good influences.

3. Be a good influence.

It's a two way street. You need to BE a good influence as well as HAVING good influences. The Bible teaches that we are to be a good influence to those around us.

Ephesians 4:29 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

1 Thessalonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up..."

We are to be a good influence to those around us.

Motivational speaker Charles Jones said that he made a vow to himself "always to say something positive to everybody about everything all the time. I'm not talking about being a Polyanna; I'm talking about being sincerely positive – making an effort to charge other's batteries rather than drain them."

That's a great concept: "charge other's batteries."

Do others feel "charged up" when you are around them, or do they feel drained?

Mother Teresa was a "charge 'em up" kind of person. She said, "Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless."

Be a good influence in your relationships.

4. Care For Your Family

Your family is the most important set of relationships you have. God expects us to care for family.

1 Timothy 5:3-4

3 "Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need.

4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God."

If you are so busy with other people that you are too busy to care for your family, then it's time you made some adjustments. We are to care for our family.

1 Timothy 5:8 "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

Getting control of your relationships begins at home. It begins with the marriage relationship and it includes the parent - child relationships.

The bible says Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands love your wives..."

Ephesians 5:33 ".....the wife must respect her husband."

Family relationships can be the most challenging at times, but they are without a doubt the most critical of all our relationships.

We've got to care for our family! God expects us to care for our family.

When we get those relationships right it leads to so much joy and so many blessings.

Family relationships begin of course with the marriage relationship. Priority number one is to protect and nurture your relationship with your spouse.

Along that line, I found some advice that children have offered concerning marriage.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHO TO MARRY? Alan, age 10:

"You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like, if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the chips and dip coming."

HOW CAN A STRANGER TELL IF TWO PEOPLE ARE MARRIED? Derrick, age 8:

"Just see whether they are yelling at the same kids."

WHAT DO MOST PEOPLE DO ON A DATE? Lynnette, age 8:

"Dates are for having fun, and people should use them to get to know each other. Even boys have something to say if you listen long enough."

WHAT DO MOST PEOPLE DO ON A DATE? Martin, age 10

"On the first date, they just tell each other lies and that usually gets them interested enough to go for a second date."

WHAT IS LOVE? Lori, age 8:

"Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other."

WHEN IS IT OKAY TO KISS SOMEONE? Pam, age 7:

"When they're rich."

HOW WOULD YOU MAKE A MARRIAGE WORK? Ricky, age 10:

"Tell your wife that she looks pretty, even if she looks like a truck."

You can get all kinds of advice about marriage. I suggest you just stick to what the Bible says. Husbands, love your wife. Wives, respect your husband. That's the foundation of a good marriage.

The Bible also talks about raising children. Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children..."

Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents....."

Parents and grandparents, don't every underestimate the influence you have on your children. Next to your relationship with the Lord, your marriage and your children are by far the most critical relationships you have.

A grandson was sitting on his grandfather's lap. The grandson asked his grandpa how old he was. Grandpa said that he was 72 years old. The little boy thought for a moment and then asked, "Did you start at 1?"

Let me end this morning with this statement from the late Erma Bombeck:

IF I HAD MY LIFE TO LIVE OVER - by Erma Bombeck

"I would have talked less and listened more.

I would have eaten the popcorn in the 'good' living room and worried much less about the dirt when someone wanted to light a fire in the fireplace.

I would have taken the time to listen to my grandfather ramble about his youth.

I would have sat on the lawn with my children and not worried about grass stains.

I would have cried and laughed less while watching television - and more while watching life.

I would have shared more of the responsibility carried by my husband.

Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I'd have cherished every moment...

When my kids kissed me impetuously, I would never have said, "Later. Now go get washed up for dinner."

There would have been more "I love you"... more "I'm sorrys"...
but mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute...look at it and really see it..live it..and never give it back."

You are not going to have the chance to live over again.
But you are going to get the chance to live the rest of your life.
You can't change the past. But the future is still available.

What will you do with it?
Who will you spend your time with?
Who will you allow to influence your life and shape the you of tomorrow?

When all is said and done, what really is most important?
Relationships!
And what is the most important relationship you can have?
A personal relationship with God your creator.

Jesus Christ makes that relationship possible.
He removed the barrier of sin that separates us from God.

Isn't it time you started getting your relationships in control?
Start at the top, God is waiting.