

## Living Out The Grace of God Together

### Lesson 1

In what ways are personal relationships with others important to your spiritual growth?

#### I. Growing Satisfying and Lasting Relationships

- a. While there are many unknowns when it comes to human relationships, there is however, a well established body of research that has identified **five** key elements that grow satisfying and lasting relationships.
- b. These essential elements, are also confirmed in the **Word of God** for both man's relationship with God and man's relationships with other people. These principles hold for both vertical and horizontal relationships.
- c. The first essential element that defines a satisfying and lasting relationship is **commitment** to that relationship. Without commitment between the parties a relationship is destined to fail.
- d. In Biblical terms commitment equates with the covenant that God has established with **the redeemed** and the reciprocal commitment of the believer who is willing to face death itself in keeping the relationship intact. *Heb 13:5 for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. KJV*
- e. A second essential element is **shared values**. What is shared, are the fundamental beliefs and principles that underlie and guide beliefs, decisions and behavior. For the believer this is God's Word. *Ps 119:112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end. KJV*
- f. A third essential element is that of **mutual respect**. Mutual respect from God to man is expressed in God's loving-kindness toward the believer and the believer reciprocates by trusting God to be unchanging. *Ps 138:2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. KJV*
- g. From studies, it can be concluded that **self disclosure** is a primary competency leading to relationship satisfaction and longevity. Revelation is God's self disclosure to man.
- h. In man's relation with God, inward **truth** is self disclosure. In human relations, self disclosure allows individuals to reveal facts, feelings, thoughts and secrets about themselves. It creates empathy, understanding and respect. *Ps 51:6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. KJV*
- i. **Forgiveness** is another essential element of lasting relationships. Forgiving from the heart offers the forgiver deep peace within, a peace beyond anything words can ever describe. Being forgiven provides peace with God. *Rom 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: KJV*
- j. Forgiveness serves to strengthen the connection shared between two people. Deep peace is the fertile ground for **growing** greater love, intimacy, trust and confidence - all essential qualities for a lasting relationship.
- k. These five essential elements of relationships are made possible in the life of the believer by the operations of the **Spirit** through the process of sanctification. Relationships are the soil in which these elements grow.

#### II. Role of Sanctification in Growing Relationships

- a. After the conversion of the soul and the rebirth of the spirit, God **ensures** the sanctification of the believer in order to transform him into one who emulates Christ. *Gal 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, KJV*
- b. Sanctification includes growing the new-born Christian in his knowledge of God (**gnosis**). Gnosis is knowledge which may be imparted by studying the Word of God and memorization of it.
- c. However, a more substantial part of learning is **experiential**. Experiential learning results in true understanding that converts the intellectual knowing into something that is thoroughly understood. (epignosis)
- d. The difference between these two senses of the word "**knowing**" may be understood by considering the difference between attending a lecture on how to swim and actually getting into a pool and experiencing swimming.
- e. Epignosis implies a special **participation** in the object "known," and gives greater weight to what is stated and it stresses participation in the truth. *1 Cor 13:12 but then shall I know (piginosko) even as also I have been known (epiginosko)*
- f. This level of knowing is worked into the believer both by revelation and experience and this is what produces change in behavior. At this level we have spiritual **insight** into situations and relationships. *Col 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; KJV*
- g. Gnosis is good; epignosis is better. Unfortunately, epignosis, is mostly learned in the crucible of experience and that experience is mostly presented to us through the mechanism of **relationship** with others.
- h. It is in what we learn about God and ourselves as we relate **to others** that the fruit of the Spirit is brought forth and it is in the context of relationship with others that we learn to put the self on the altar of sacrifice.
- i. It is in relationship to others that we **learn** about agape love, and forgiveness; envy, deceit, treachery, friendship, communication, longsuffering, patience, yielding, assertiveness, joy, sorrow, loss and fullness.
- j. It is in relationship that we learn to **live Christ**. There is no substitute for this process and this explains why living as a recluse will not produce the Christ-like growth that is necessary in a truly transformed life.

## Living Out The Grace of God Together

### Lesson 1

- k. It is in relationship to others that we are put to the test and we make **full proof** (for our own recognition) of the transformational ground accomplished by the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.
- l. It is in Christ and through our relationships that the hidden man of the spirit is made **manifest** and we come to experience the meaning of grace; grace received and grace poured out. *1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. KJV*

### III. Grace As Enabler

- a. In every relationship between a believer and another person, the principle task is for the believer to live out and to present himself as he is in Christ...his **true self**.
- b. Since living one's life in the flesh often involves wearing various masks, pretenses and **fears**; it is not likely that in the flesh the true self will be much in evidence. This is something that is facilitated by the Spirit. *1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. KJV*