

Mother's Day—Building Lasting Relationships Ephesians 5:21—6:4.

- The celebration of Mothers Day began back in 1908...encouraged by Anna Jarvis of West Virginia, USA. It became an official holiday in the United States in 1914. It began in honour of Anna Jarvis' mother and took the form of a simple church service. The idea spread around the world.
- Celebrating Mother's Day reminds us of the need to build strong relationships in marriages, families, church and the community around us. Coronavirus has caused many people to work from home, or become unemployed, or put some people into self isolation for 14 days at a time. This can stress relationships when people are in close proximity for long periods of time. But there is a positive alternative to this in that it gives families more time together and thus potentially enriches relationships.



- A father asked a counselor—how can I best love my children? The counselor replied—“Love their mother”... How do we do this better might we ask? *Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.* Philippians 2:2 God's ideal for your relationships, whether you're married or not is harmony, intimacy (love) and unity (one mind). The reality is in the world a lot of relationships are in disharmony, conflict and disappointment. So let's look at some Biblical principles helping us develop better, stronger and thus longer lasting relationships.

Some practical suggestions:

1. A _____

Romans 15:7 "*Accept one another, then, just as Christ has accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*" Accept one another.

- Rick Warren reminds us that this is important in any relationship. This is important in a marriage because 70% of everybody who gets married, marry their opposites. In marriage the differences that attracted you to that person, later may be seen as an irritation. You may have heard it said, "Before we were married we had so much in common, and now that we're married we have nothing in common."
- One of you is impulsive and daring and the other one is cautious and reserved. One of you loves to talk. The other is quieter... One of you loves to spend money—the other is a tight wad. One of you is always on time and the other is never on time....
- The fact is folks, our differences are not wrong, we're just different. The question I start out with is, Do you accept your mate's differences? Acceptance is essential to marriage because everybody is imperfect. This does not mean we don't have to work on our weaknesses & grow in maturity in Jesus... eg if we are in the habit of being late (while the other is early) then our lateness to meetings does have to be dealt with as it is disruptive and unfair to others...
- Keep open lines of communication, make time to listen and listen to the others point of view. And pray together where that's possible. Pray for the other and for self.



- We all need lots of acceptance. Learn to be grateful for the differences.. in those differences are strengths and you can complement each other..

Resolving _____ Positively..

1 Peter 3:8...*Finally all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble*

- When we have differences over issues they need to be resolved positively. There is a difference between healthy and unhealthy conflict...
- In a selfish uncaring relationship anger is hurled directly at the partner. Hostile, person centred “you messages” strike at the heart and cause great personal pain. “You never do anything right!” “You are a bigot!” Proverbs 15:1... *A gentle answer...*
- The wounded partner often responds in like manner. This kind of fighting really hurts. The cutting words will never be forgotten. This type of conflict is really unhealthy.
- Healthy conflict remains focussed on the issue around which the disagreement began and does not attack the person. Issue centred “I” messages lets your partner know what is wrong but that he or she is not the main target...I’m worried about these bills... I get upset when I don’t know you’ll be late for dinner. I was embarrassed by what you said at the party last night
- Any area of struggle maybe tense and emotional at times but a healthy relationship can work through problems by consideration, compromise and negotiation & prayer...
- Never criticise your partner in a public situation. Work out your differences in private. Someone said... “The key to a healthy marriage is to keep your eyes wide open before you wed... and half closed thereafter”...
- Have an attitude of gratitude for each other.. Acceptance is important... one last point though ... this does not mean that physical, sexual, or emotional abuse has to be accepted. If this is happening seek help.



2. A _____

- We all need attention. 1 Peter 1:22 *"Love one another deeply from the heart."* Over sixteen times in the Bible it says "Love one another." If you love somebody you will pay them attention. You can't love from a distance.. For some the coronavirus has meant more time at home... potentially good for family life!

Do you remember how much attention you gave to your spouse when you were dating?
Carried her over the puddles... held the car door open... But sometimes today ... *continued*

- when this same lady – now a little older comes out of the supermarket laden with groceries some husbands (none of us here of course!) are sitting in the car with the engine warming up as she struggles to get in the door
- Fathers, our children watch us carefully. The way we treat our wife will be the way our sons treat her as well... (and treat their future wives!). Love is a fragile thing. It must be maintained and protected if it is to survive. Love can perish when one works 7 days a week, when there is no time for romance, no time to talk.
- Acceptance and attention are two ingredients for building lasting relationships. We need to accept one another. We need to love one another deeply from the heart.

3. A _____

We need to adjust to each other. Ephesians 5:21 *"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."* That means there is a mutual adjusting. Submission: .. *Having the courage, respect and consideration to give up my rights to meet another person's needs*

- *Better Homes and Gardens* did a survey of 300,000 marriages and asked "Why do marriages fail?" The number one reason was immaturity. The number two reason was selfishness. Immaturity and selfishness. Those two words are commonly called incompatibility. Some people say: "We're just incompatible." What does that mean? It may mean I am stubborn and unwilling to change. It may mean I am being selfish. Weeding a garden takes energy and effort. Developing a relationship takes energy and effort
- We need acceptance; accept one another. We need attention; love one another. We need adjustment; submit to one another.



4. _____

Colossians 3:13 *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."* That's the key. You've been forgiven so you ought to forgive. *"Over all these virtues put on love which binds them together in perfect unity."*

- Resentment will kill your marriage quickly. You need amnesty, forgiveness. Everybody hurts each other some time. Sometimes it's on purpose, sometimes unintentionally. But the fact is when you live close to somebody you're going to hurt them. You have two options with that hurt. You **can rehearse** it or you can **release** it. Rehearse it -- I go over and over it. And it gets bigger and bigger. That leads to bitterness and resentment. Or you can release it that bitterness by confessing and apologizing. And you can forgive. The other person needs to be genuinely sorry too... sorry enough to stop doing the wrong thing...
- Repentance...Acts 3:19... *Repent* (μετανοέω) *then and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...* stop making self no 1 in your life.... but turn and obey our Creator .. remember ... JOY—Jesus first; Others 2nd



- and Yourself 3rd.. If leaving clothes all over the bathroom floor is an irritation to the other...and it is! ... then a genuine love means I won't do that anymore. I will do what is most helpful for my spouse/friend...
- Be prepared to say "I'm sorry. Please forgive me"... Very hard words to say... Be willing to change our behaviour if it is selfish and insensitive.. What do you do? Remember that God has forgiven you when we come to Him in repentance and confession...

5. A _____

1 Thessalonians 5:11 *"Therefore encourage one another."*

- We are to **accept** one another, **submit** to one another, **forgive** one another **and encourage** one another and build each other up. The most encouraging thing you can do is express **appreciation**. Everybody needs appreciation. The power of praise is awesome. It is much more effective than nagging. You appreciate. People blossom under affirmation.
- That was an awesome meal you prepared. Thankyou! Thanks for washing the car. It looks great! What does it mean to appreciate? To appreciate means to raise its value. When your home appreciates, it rises in value. It's the opposite of depreciate. When you depreciate something you put it down, you devalue it. Whenever you appreciate your wife/husband you are actually increasing their value.
- The world is full of put-downs. The last place you need more of it is at home. There are a lot more critics than there are complimenters in the world. **Acceptance** is when you say, "I accept you in spite of all your faults." **Adjustment** says, "I'm willing to change. I'm willing to meet you half-way. I'm willing to make an effort. I'm willing to work on my part." But **appreciation** says, "I not only accept you, but I find things in you that I like. I find something that's good, that's significant."
- **Acceptance** will give your marriage stability. **Appreciation** will give your marriage a spark. It will raise up all kinds of romantic feelings in your marriage. It will put a spark into the relationship if you start appreciating your spouse/friend, complimenting them. Appreciation raises the value of your home and it increases your love for each other.
- How often should I appreciate? Hebrews 3:13 *"Encourage one another daily."* I think every marriage ought to have a minimum daily requirement of at least one compliment a day. Look for ways to be creative and appreciative.
- In the church family and beyond—encourage each other—appreciate each other ... wonderful Christ honouring things will happen!! Pray together.... All this will help build a long lasting relationship....



6. Jesus Christ first in our lives..

Foundational to all of the above is: Romans 10:9 & Matthew 6:33...*Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.*