

REALationships Series# 2, Don't Turn your Relationships into Battleships

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John 14:27 "I leave the gift of peace with you—my peace. Not the kind of fragile peace given by the world, but my perfect peace. Don't yield to fear or be troubled in your hearts—instead, be courageous!"

REAL-ationships: They're Worth It! (Philippians) **TITLE: Don't Turn your Relationships into Battleships**

No matter where we go in life we are surrounded by relationships. Success, failure, favor, dating, are all built on relationships.

A few years ago, Shawn Boltz came and said the next move of God will revolve around "healthy family". God has moved in the streets, shook the world but the next one will be more localized. A revival that looks like HEALTHY FAMILY which translates into REALationships in the church.

All over the planet People are looking for place to plant themselves

Recap:

Philippians 2:5 (NIV)

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Last week we addressed 5 ways to have the mind of Christ?

Am I Willing to Sacrifice

Am I Willing to Serve

Am I Willing to Sow

Am I Willing to Submit

Am I Willing to Suffer

Matthew 22 "36"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"

37Jesus answered him, " 'Love the Lord your God with every passion of your heart, with all the energy of your being, and with every thought that is within you.' 38This is the great and supreme commandment. 39And the second is like it in importance: 'You must love your friend in the same way you love yourself.'

Many people don't have a problem with loving God with everything in them; they just often fall short of learning to love people. But I've found that when I learned to love people passionately, my love for God increased!

Philippians 2:1-11 *"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the **same mind**, having the **same love**, being in full accord and of one mind "In your **relationships** with one another, **have the same mindset** as*

*Christ Jesus:” (NIV) 6-8... who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied himself**, by taking the form of a servant.*

NOTE: (IF) is the deciding factor! If there is no encouragement in Christ, comfort from love, partnering with the spirit, affection and sympathy....we will not be of same mind, love. Accord, and we will not empty ourselves but always feel entitled.

Sometimes you will have toxic and destructive people to pin you against the wall and make you pick sides. They will pit you up against each other and say something like, “I shouldn’t say anything but...” Don’t be their door mat. I want you to try as much as possible to lean into and not away from relationships.

Intro:

Let’s be REAL! Although relationships can be tough and the temptation to isolate and withdraw can be real, leaning in and pursuing relationships and connection is worth the effort because:

1. We Were Designed for Relationship:

The greatest shake up in spiritual climate is not always on a global scale but one that happens within.

2. Relationships are good for our health and well-being. The world will know you are my disciples by your love for one another not owning your rights.
3. Healthy ones help you to be you.

Context:

Paul is writing this letter to the Philippians church around AD60 when Timothy was visiting him in prison. He had a special relationship with the Philippians.¹

Philippians 1:8

“God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.”

But, even these best relationships can be tough and lead even the most resolute to wonder, “are there any better options?”

Philippians 1:21-23

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far...”

How many wonder whether relationships are worth the hassle, even good ones. How much more when they aren’t as good as Paul had it with the Philippians? What about in legit bad times?

if you asked most people about what the biggest problem was in their life it would have a name, or a name closely associated with it. Paul named names in Philippi. He said you guys got a problem and their names are:

Philippians 4:2

“I urge *Euodia* and *Syntyche* to iron out their differences and make up. God doesn’t want his children holding grudges.”

Some interpretations say, “TO think the same thing”

“SAME THINKING” IN PHILIPPIANS

Philippians 3:15: To think like mature Christians

“Think” (*phroneō*) is a keyword in Philippians; it occurs ten times in this letter. In chapter 3, Paul has been encouraging people to have the same thinking, or attitude, as himself, that of pursuing the goal of spiritual perfection ([Phil. 3:12ff](#)). And he writes, “as many, then, as are mature, *let us think this (touto phronōmen)*” ([Phil. 3:15a](#)). It could be that Paul is carrying on this idea and, using similar language in the Greek, is saying, “I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche *to think the same thing (to auto phronein)* in the Lord,” that of aspiring to spiritual maturity and perfection ([Phil. 4:2](#)).^[1]

Philippians 2:5: To think like Jesus

Another possibility is that Paul is asking the women to have the same thinking as Jesus. [Philippians 2:5](#) begins with *touto phroneite*, literally, “you (plural) think this.” Paul wanted all the Philippians to have the same thinking—the same sacrificial, selfless and humble attitude—that was in Christ Jesus.

Perhaps “the thing” Paul wants the women to think “in the Lord” is the attitude of **selfless service that Jesus exemplified**. Paul acknowledges that Euodia and Syntyche are his fellow workers who have served and worked hard alongside him in gospel ministry ([Phil. 4:3](#)).^[2] He may have wanted to encourage their selfless service.

Philippians 2:2: All are to think the same thing

Paul does not just tell Euodia and Syntyche to think the same thing, however. He urges all the Philippians (literally), “*that you (plural) may think the same thing (hina to auto phronēte)* having the same love, united in spirit/soul, one mind . . .” And he continues, in one long sentence, to speak about humble and deferential behaviour. Paul follows up the long sentence in 2:1-4 with 2:5 where, as mentioned above, he tells the Philippians to **think like Jesus, that is, have the same attitude as Jesus**.

Nancy Colier wrote in Psychology Today, “Grudges come with an **identity**. With our grudge intact, *we know who we are*—a person who was “**wronged**.” As much as we don’t like it, there also exists a kind of rightness and strength in this identity. We have something that defines us—our anger and victimhood—which gives us a sense of solidness and purpose. We have definition and a grievance that carries weight. To let go of our grudge, we have to be willing to let go of our identity as the “wronged” one, and whatever strength, solidity, or possible sympathy and understanding we receive through that “wronged” identity. We have to be willing to drop the “I” who was mistreated and

step into a new version of ourselves, one we don't know yet, that allows the present moment to determine who we are, not past injustice."

Science backs up what we theologically and intuitively know:

Sherrie Bourg Carter Psy.D. in *The Hidden Health Hazards of Toxic Relationships*.

"...many health-conscious people don't realize that the quality of their relationships can be just as toxic to their health as fast food or a toxic environment. In fact, unhealthy relationships may contribute to a toxic internal environment that can lead to stress, depression, anxiety, and even medical problems."

In a long-term study that followed more than 10,000 subjects for an average of 12.2 years, researchers discovered that subjects in negative relationships were at a greater risk for developing heart problems, including a fatal cardiac event, than counterparts whose close relationships were not negative."²

You can't just isolate and withdraw. Equally damaging! Why? How many of you argue with yourself, fight alone and role play alone. You play out the "What if" game. You go to bed alone, wake alone, walk out alone and live alone abandoned and emotionally helpless.

**Harvard health Publishing - (Harvard Health School)
The Health Benefits of Strong Relationships**

"...a relative lack of social ties is associated with depression and later-life cognitive decline, as well as with increased mortality. One study, which examined data from more than 309,000 people, found that lack of strong relationships increased the risk of premature death from all causes by 50% — an effect on mortality risk roughly comparable to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, and greater than obesity and physical inactivity."³

So we need relationships. We can't live without them, and we have to find a way to navigate them. Pastor Karl's "Jesus Mindset"

**FREEDOM IS FOUND IN FORGIVENESS
WE MUST GIVE UP THE GRUDGES**

Philippians 2:6-11

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

He was all about serving. Sometimes we need to dethrone ourselves. We need to embrace the process of servant hood and let go of knighthood. We are engraving way to many plaques and receiving way to many trophies.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Healthy Relationships Happen:

1. When You Let Go "...but emptied himself," When you voluntarily surrender your rights and yield your path to the throne.
Completely yielded to the Father.
2. When You Go Low "...taking the form of a servant," There is a towel for everyone. We need to present people with options to grow from. You never want to serve someone with the sole purpose of changing them because that becomes slavery. You serve them to demonstrate what the ultimate servant has done for you and in you.
Complete Identification.
3. When You Do More "...count others more significant than yourselves."
Complete Humility honors the lonely and abandoned. It elevates them to a new level of self-worth.
4. When You Say Lord
"...highly exalted Him ...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,"
Complete exaltation!!! You were not created to satisfy my needs; you are not my source and its unfair for me to place my expectations on your shoulders. When I say, "He is Lord" it means You are not!

Jesus Is Your Source not my ticket. A lamp has no value until its plugged into a power source.

When you approach relationships with the right mindset, you'll find that a lot of the difficulties are resolved simply by a change of mind or attitude towards them and by adjusting your expectations.

Embracing the "Jesus Mindset" in relationships and leaning into them rather than running from them is worth it because:

1. We Were Designed for Relationship:

Daniel Goleman in his book "Social Intelligence" writes about the emerging new discoveries in neuroscience. He says, "the most fundamental revelation of this new discipline: we are **wired to connect**...To a surprising extent, then, our relationships mold not just our experience but our biology..." (p.4).

To truly see ourselves we have to look to God. And when we do, we see that he is immensely relational.

Zach Sloan "The Trinitarian nature of our picture of God makes you shift how you see individuals. Think of personhood not as isolated individuals as islands to themselves, but let the Trinity shape your perception of personhood.

They have worked well with each other since time began. They found a way to be equally unique and individual yet working together as one.

Trying to perform tasks or complete assignments to gain God's favor only lends us to view Him as a taskmaker that takes us out of relationship. How many of you function better out of relationship than obligation? It's our of union that you serve greater and want less. Obligation is when you serve less and want more. Relationship is an invitation to experience God intimately up close and personal.

Relationship is so fundamental to God, it's who he is and what he is all about. And relationship is what we are all about as those made in His image.

It is for this reason that trying to work for God, trying to serve Him, trying to accomplish His will in your life or even advance His Kingdom, if you attempt these things as tasks to be completed, assignments to be carried out, functions to be performed, rather than as a beautiful invitation to know and walk with the Lover of your soul, you won't get it done. And whatever you do do, it will be disconnected from God's heart and being. It will look like "do do."

Philippians 3:7-11

"...everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung. I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him. I didn't want some petty, inferior brand of righteousness that comes from keeping a list of rules when I could get the robust kind that comes from trusting Christ—God's righteousness.

I gave up all that inferior stuff so I could know Christ personally..."

Paul had to embrace this new radical reorientation in his life over achievement. He was no longer going to live as a principled law keeper bound to tradition. When relationship becomes your basic orientation in life not achievement nor works nor service, not only will you prioritize connection with God, but also with people. You can't love people you won't relate to: You are out of sink when you embrace achievement, works and striving as the benchmarks for spiritual significance and recognition.

All these things drive a wedge between a REAL ationship

1 John 4:20 - 21

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

To not prioritize relationship is to deny a vital aspect of who you are.

The link between physical illness and toxic emotions and thoughts is more and more pronounced. Having the right people in your life can actually reverse the negative and produce positive health outcomes.

2. Relations are good for your health and wellbeing.

Daniel Goleman

*"Our social interactions even have a role in reshaping our brain, through neuroplasticity....These new discoveries reveal that our relationships have subtle, yet powerful, lifelong impacts on us. That news may be unwelcome for someone whose relationships tend towards the negative. But the same finding also points to reparative possibilities from our personal connections at any point in life."*⁴

Example of restorative impact of a relationship preserved. Paul talks about the anxiety, the grief and distress that he and the Philippians had over the sickness experienced by Epaphroditus and just the thought of having to do life and ministry without him.

Philippians 2:27

And he certainly was ill; in fact, he almost died. But God had mercy on him—and also on me, so that I would not have one sorrow after another.

Epaphroditus faithfully delivered the gift from his home church and then went above and beyond the call of duty. In his fervor to serve the Lord by serving Paul, Epaphroditus became seriously ill and, in fact, almost died. God graciously granted Epaphroditus health, and Paul sent his friend back home with the newly penned book of Philippians. This is part of what Paul wrote: "I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the

more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me” ([Philippians 2:25-30](#)).

To the Philippians, Epaphroditus was a messenger who delivered a package. To Paul, however, he was so much more: a “brother” (belonging to the same family), a “co-worker” (laboring toward the same goal), and a “fellow soldier” (sharing the same trials). Epaphroditus was a man of obvious devotion, faithfulness, and self-sacrifice. He put “the interests of others” before himself and so modeled the mind of Christ ([Philippians 2:4-5](#)). He labored on Paul’s behalf until his own health broke, and, even when he was sick, Epaphroditus took no thought of himself; rather, he was distressed because his church had heard of his illness, and he didn’t want them to worry.

Paul mentions Epaphroditus again near the close of his letter: “I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God” ([Philippians 4:18](#)). The very next verse is the oft-quoted promise that God takes care of those who put God first: “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” ([Philippians 4:19](#)).

Interestingly, Epaphroditus’s name is of pagan origin. It means “belonging to Aphrodite”—the name of the goddess is actually incorporated into the name Epaphroditus. Such is the power of the gospel that a man is set free from dead paganism to serve the living God. When Epaphroditus received the gospel, he was “belonging to Jesus,” and the idol had no more claim on him, regardless of his name. The new birth trumped the birth name.

When a man like Epaphroditus gives of himself for the sake of God’s kingdom, many people benefit. Such a man is worthy of honor, and his presence is cause for rejoicing ([Philippians 2:29](#)).

Paul had one sorrow after another, yet Epaphroditus’s presence in his life made him stronger and more resilient, to the point where to remove Epaphroditus was to remove health, strength, and well being from Paul and the Philippians church. I think God has an Epaphroditus for each of us...the kind of people who when they are in your life you feel better. Your spirit, your mood, your attitude and approach to life is elevated by their presence in your world. You got to get some of these people. ***The best way to do that is to be that to someone one else first.***

The Epaphroditus effect, it happens in relationship and in your openness to them. It’s reciprocal: you can’t check out of relationships or try to numb or insulate yourself from the vulnerability and pain they have the potential to produce, and then still reap the positive benefits of them.

You can’t just shut down and numb yourself to people without any care. When you do that you open yourself up to the potential risks associated with being isolated. You start believing you’re the victim and create justification by hiding behind your fears. We must learn to trust each other, confide in one another and feel safe in a gossip laced society.

The Internet has created isolated introverts in incubation.

"We cannot selectively numb emotion. If we numb the dark, we numb the light. If we take the edge off pain and discomfort, we are, by default, taking the edge off joy, love, belonging, and the other emotions that give meaning to our lives." – Brene Brown in "Dare to Lead"

Remember the candy Sweet and Sours? Well it doesn't work in the real world. STAY SWEET even in the sour times. Otherwise you will join the **SOURPATCH KIDS CLUB**.

When you shut down one area of your life, the tendency is to shut down the good Godly influences as well.

3.Relationships bring out the real you.

Bob Blakley VP and Research Director, Burton Group:

"thinking of identity as an artifact all by itself is unsatisfactory because we can talk about an identity and the attributes of an identity leaves out important details about how identities are created and how they evolve...relationships are the landscapes in which identities exist."

Relationships are what identify us. Significance comes in the relationship. In our culture there are no shortages of forces out there that are attempting to shape and mold you into something other than the person that God made you to be. Relationships can have this affect too, for better or worse.

Think about it: your identity as a child of God only has meaning because of the relationship you have with the Father. I have an identity as one who is loved, because of the One who loves me.

This can go horribly wrong and or wonderfully right.

Philippians 3:2-3

Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—

We all need Pauls in our lives. Those who can help us, fight for us, remind us of who we are, and through the love and care and affection of Christ for us, fight against, tear down, warn and chase off those voices that attempt to distort us, and mutilate our true identity and nullify our real worth.

Don't let those people mutilate. We need people who will fight for us, defend us and back us and minister to us. They will help chase out those who attempt to mutilate our true identity.

Connection is the vehicle where the truth of who you are gets conveyed back to you

Watch out for those dogs!

Summary:

Relationships can be tough. Let be REAL! But let's lean into them, not run from them.

We were made for relationship; it's wired into us and part of who we are. They make us healthy, and it's in relationships that we fully embrace who we are in Christ and who he made us to be!

Lean in, don't run from - they're worth it!