

# “Healthy Relationships” series

Week 1: Foundations

May 24, 2026

*Matthew 22:34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” 37 Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

## Introduction

- There was a popular song written by Simon and Garfunkel in 1965. It was called “I am a rock” and it reached as high as #3 on the Billboard Hot 100.
- It resonated with people, but it was actually a bleak song about not wanting or needing relationships. Listen to some of the lyrics.
- “I’ve built walls, a fortress deep and mighty that none may penetrate
- I have no need of friendship, friendship causes pain, It’s laughter and it’s loving I disdain
- Don’t talk of love, well I’ve heard the word before, if I never loved I never would have cried
- I have my books and my poetry to protect me, I am shielded in my armor, hiding in my room safe within my womb. I touch no one and no one touches me.
- I am a rock I am an island, and a rock feels no pain, and an island never cries.”
- I wonder if it resonated because so many people have suffered in and from relationships.
- Most (if not all) of our greatest regrets and hurts are connected to people.
- Many of our greatest and happiness moments involve others.
- Someone once said: “Life would be easy if it weren’t for other people.”
- Yet simply leaving the human race and living alone in the middle of a desert isn’t a solution. Because we need people.
- “The most terrible poverty is loneliness and the feeling of being unloved.” (Mother Teresa)
- “Loneliness is my least favorite thing about life. That thing that I’m most worried about is just being alone without anybody to care for or someone who will care for me.” (Anne Hathaway)
- “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” (African Proverb)
- We are starting a new series today called “Healthy relationships – God’s design for living alongside others.”
- In this series we want to explore what it looks like to build and maintain healthy relationships.
- Because unhealthy relationships are exhausting. They are damaging and hurtful. They rob us of joy. They cause extra stress.
- But healthy relationships bring fullness, joy, are refreshing and renewing, building us up.
- It’s what we desire.
- We are going to look at seven different principles that are essential for a healthy relationship. Things like sacrifice, service, knowing yourself, communication, putting others first, trust and love.
- We have family relationships like parents, kids, grandkids, siblings and even extended family.
- We have working relationships with coworkers, bosses, employees.
- We have friendships, neighbors, those we do sports and hobbies with.
- All of these are better if they are in a healthy place.
- We will be examining ways to move in that direction over the next few weeks, but there are three things to consider before we jump in.

- First, we will be looking at principles that apply to ANY relationship. While the application of these principles will look different for different people, the principles do not change.
- Second, the only one you control in any relationship is you. While the healthiest relationships have two people employing the principles we are going to explore, even if only one party does, it still moves the relationship in a more healthy direction. It is worth it no matter what others do.
- Third, developing healthy relationships is a process. It takes time. It takes intentionality. This can be discouraging because things do not get better overnight, but it is actually encouraging because it means we can move the needle when we listen to and follow the ways of Jesus.
- So with all of that in mind, we need to lay a foundation. Before we begin looking at the specific principles, we need to understand why this matters.
- You might think that healthy relationships are “pie-in-the-sky” thinking and not possible with the people you know.
- You might be thinking that your relationships are good enough, or that you don’t really need relationships or people much.
- You might even believe that healthy relationships are a nice bonus in life, but not really necessary.
- What we’re going to see today is the **God designed relationships to bless us and others**. They are not optional. The quality of your relationships determine, to a large degree, the quality of your life.

## Main Sermon Text

- Sociologists and psychologists have done an increasing amount of research that show the value of healthy relationships.
- Studies have shown they can impact us biologically and enhance immune systems or the regulation of stress hormones. Relationship quality can affect health by influencing psychosocial factors such as mood, motivation and coping skills as well as eating and exercise habits.
- A Harvard study on happiness that began in 1938 (the longest running study on happiness – 85 yrs) found that the #1 factor on happiness was healthy relationships.
- A world economic forum report said that a longer, healthier life was a result of healthy relationships.
- The Stanford Research Institute says that the money you make in any endeavor is determined only 12.5% by knowledge and 87.5% by your ability to deal with people.
- That is why Teddy Roosevelt said, *“The most important single ingredient to the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people.”*
- Relationships are the foundation of what it means to be a person. None of this should be a surprise to the follower of Jesus because we know:

### I. We were created to live in relationship.

- It all began with the one who created us.
- When we read about the creation of the world, we read an interesting statement:  
*Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.”*
- “Us”. “Our”
- The apostle John says it in a different way.  
*John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
- “With”

- God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit – working together in perfect harmony, perfect relationship, creating people and making them in their image – as those who live in relationship. This is called the doctrine of the trinity. We see them operating together throughout Scripture. When Jesus was baptized, we read:

*Matthew 3:16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

- The perfect God, the most powerful, the one who designed people, is himself someone in perfect relationship. And he designed us to reflect this.

*Genesis 2:18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*

- This means that to be a rock, and island, like the song says, is NOT good for us. It is damaging. It is a lesser life. It is settling for a poor reflection of what we were designed to be.
- [SLIDE] We reflect the relational nature of our creator when we live in relationship.
- It is interesting that this is reflected in nature itself. Most plants flourish when planted or when they grow near what they call "companion plants."
- Beans (Companion plants: Corn – reduces insect pests significantly, Radishes – help repel cucumber beetles)
- Onions (Companion plant: Beets – Improve onion seed yield)
- Potatoes (Companion plants: Basil – Deters Colorado potato beetles, Garlic – Improves disease resistance and yield)
- Tomatoes (Companion plants: Basil – Enhances growth and pest resistance, Marigolds – Reduce whitefly populations, Borage – Attracts beneficial insects and pollinators)
- And on and on it goes. God's nature is relationship and when we live like him, we reflect him and it is to our benefit. On his last night on earth before the cross, when Jesus prayed for his followers, for his disciples and for you and me, his focus was on relationships.

*John 17:11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. . . 20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you."*

- Do you catch this? Jesus prayed that our relationships would be as good as his. His standard for relationship is the relationship he had with God the Father.
  - What does that mean? How did Jesus, the Father (and the Spirit) relate to each other.
  - Complete trust. Submitting to each other. Serving one another. Completely comfortable with each other. Total unity. 100% supported and loved.
  - That's what he wants for us in our relationships.
  - The problem is that our relationships are broken. Our natural tendency is to move away from healthy relationships.
  - After Adam and Eve sinned, the consequences of their sin were mostly relational in nature.
- Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." 16 To the woman he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."*
- Not only were Adam and Eve driven out of the garden and could not spend time with God daily, breaking that relationship, God told them that Satan was going to be opposed to humanity, and that now the relationships between men and women was going to be fraught with problems.

- God knew this and so the entirety of Scriptures is about how to live in a restored relationship with God and how this is supposed to impact our relationships with each other.
- When God brought Israel out of Egypt and for the first time gave them the law to follow, it was encapsulated in the 10 commandments. Have you considered that all 10 of the commandments are relational.
- The first four [LIST THEM] are about our relationship with God.
- The next six [LIST THEM] are about our relationships with others.
- The rest of the Old Testament is a record of how Israel succeeded and failed in their pursuit of these two sets of relationships.
- Then Jesus came along and someone asked him what the most important command for God's people was to follow. You remember his answer – it shapes everything we do as a church.

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- Everything, everything that is written in Scripture, hangs on relationships. Relationships with God AND relationships with others.
- What would happen if you read all of Scripture through the lens of how it connects to how we relate to God and to others?

## **II. Our relationship with God and others are connected.**

- You cannot have a healthy relationship with God and unhealthy relationships with others.
- You cannot have healthy relationships with others and an unhealthy relationship with God.
- They are intimately connected.
- We cannot focus on one and ignore the other.
- Jesus was very clear on this.
- He said that the way we show our relationship with God is how we relate to each other.
- Because our view of God and how we relate to him on a daily basis directly affects how we relate to the people that God loves.
- People who say, "I'm good with God, it's people I hate" have fundamentally missed something and it will affect the quality of their relationships.
- **God designed relationships to bless us and others.** This means our relationship with the creator affects our relationship with the created.
- Finally, and we briefly touched on this before:

## **III. Developing healthy relationships is an intentional process.**

- Healthy relationships are a result of ongoing choices that we make over time. Healthy relationships are never accidental and never easy and never quick.
- Paul, when writing to the church in Corinth, wrote about what healthy relationships look like. It is found in the letter we call 1 Corinthians and it is frequently read at weddings and it is called the "love chapter."
- But Paul actually wrote it to people in the church, to direct them on what it looks like to love each other. It is a description of what healthy relationships look like.

*1 Corinthians 13: 1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have*

*love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

- This is saying what we already said. You cannot say you are good with God and then not love others well. That kind of relationship with God has NO value.
- Then, to be very clear with this means, Paul expands on it.
- As I read this (it is very familiar), I want you to have in mind a relationship that you would love to see move in a more healthy direction. Keep that person in mind. Consider how you interact with them and they with you.

*4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.*

- Let's read it again, but let me change the wording to personalize it.

*When I relate to \_\_\_\_\_,*

*I am patient with them and their attitudes/actions.*

*I am kind to them in my words and actions*

*I do not look at them and wish them harm*

*I do not make it about me and my story all the time.*

*I do not try and defend or puff myself up.*

*I always seek to honor them and lift them up.*

*I look out for their interests before and above my own.*

*I listen to understand and do not get easily angry.*

*I am not always bringing up the past.*

*I am never happy when their lives are difficult, but rejoice in their growth.*

*I look to protect them and their reputation.*

*I trust them even when it seems undeserved.*

*I see them positively as God sees them.*

*I do not cut them off or walk out on them when it gets difficult.*

- That sounds difficult. But let me ask you, if someone regularly treated you this way, would not see them as a great friend?
- **God designed relationships to bless us and others.** This will take intentionality and work and focus. It is not always easy, but it is possible and my friends, it is SOO worth it.

## Conclusion

- So for the next weeks, we are going to look at how we do this, knowing that the only person we control in any relationship is us, and that God calls us to healthy relationships so that we are blessed and are a blessing to others.
- Don't confuse "healthy" with "perfect." No relationship is perfect – that will only happen in heaven. But even if they cannot be perfect, they can be healthy, giving life or at the very least, not being a drain on you.
- You might be generally happy with the quality of relationships in your life, but none of them are perfect and all can move towards health.
- So, maybe you would grade your relationship at a 2 out of 10. Or perhaps it's a 9. Where you are in it doesn't matter. We want to move towards greater health.
- During this series, be honest about the gaps. Recognize what is good. Don't deflect. Let God speak to you about the state of relationships in your life.
- So here is your homework over the next two weeks.
- First, while these principles will apply to all relationships, I want you to consider one or two that you want to see move towards health. A friend, family, co-worker, boss, spouse, sibling,

girlfriend or boyfriend. Just pick one of two. It can be overwhelming or difficult to try and move the needle in ALL your relationships, so pick one or two you can focus on. It might be a troubled relationship that you would like to see change or it could be a healthy relationship that you desire to see God grow even better.

- Second, make it a point to pray for them daily. To pray that God would pour his blessing on them and that he would grow your heart towards them.