

# Relational Health, Wellness, Wholeness

Committing To Expressing How We Feel Toward One Another

**SCRIPTURES OF THE DAY** Monday, August 16 2021

[Psalm 133](#); [Luke 17:1](#); [Romans 12:18](#); [Ephesians 4:3](#)

## STUDY & REFLECTION

Our studies on the nature and importance of relational health, wellness and wholeness, have been challenging but I trust helpful. We should by now see the critical importance of relationships, and how they affect and determine, and often open a window for us to see the level of our spirituality.

The Word of God reveals to us the importance of relationships from God's perspective. As we review them, we see the following:

1. We were created by a wise and loving God to be **relational beings**, not loners.
2. We can please God and fulfill our God-given purposes in life, only as we connect and live in genuine community with others.
3. Conflict is a part of life that we cannot avoid or escape.
4. The Lord wants us to learn how to deal with differences and conflict in such a way that we **grow and mature in our walk with God through others**.

We cannot escape the fact that a key to improving and enriching critical relationships is **effective communication**. Effective communication is the foundation of all that we do in this world. Without it, nothing can be built, not a marriage, not a church, not a thriving business, not a healthy family.

Since this is true, we must make effective communication a priority and work at how to become better at it, even in the face of disagreement or conflict. Conflict is a part of life, and avoidance and keeping things within will not help or heal the situation.

**We must commit to learning how to express ourselves to one another, so that our relationships can prosper and grow, and that harmony and unity will become a spiritual reality in our faith community.**

## ACTION ITEMS

Examine the health of your relationship with one or two persons close to you. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the healthiest, how healthy are those relationships? Over the past few months, have disagreements or conflict arisen in those relationships? How well have you handled them?

## INVOLVING OTHERS

Share your action items with your small group. Discuss to what degree you as a group deal with conflict and disagreement by sharing with the person in that relationship and expressing to them what has happened and how you feel. **Listen to the feedback that you receive.**



**STUDY & REFLECTION** **What are our options in a situation of disagreement or conflict?** What are the common ways we handle adversity in a relationship? What are the possibilities at our disposal?

David Augsburger, noted Christian psychologist and professor of pastoral care, offers the following. In a conflict situation, we can approach it in at least 5 ways:

1. I win—you lose
2. I want out—I'll withdraw
3. I'll give in for the sake of good relationship
4. I'll meet you half-way
5. I can care and confront

In **I win—you lose**, I am out to prove you wrong and I'm right. This gives little value to the relationship. It simply wants to prove a point.

In **I want out**—I'll withdraw, the issue is not addressed. The disagreement is not identified or resolved. It leaves a land-mine for a future explosion.

**I'll give in for the sake of the relationship**, can bring a sense of relief, but if it becomes a pattern, the relationship will not grow nor last. It often causes beneath the surface anger and sometimes bitterness.

**I'll meet your half-way** can be a road to health, but often leaves critical issues and habits unidentified and unresolved.

**I can care and confront** is where we can say and express the truth, in a manner that speaks of the worth and value of the relationship, and a commitment to moving to a place of healing because of our mutual love and respect. It speaks of I care and I want.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

Examine the shared options of handling conflict or disagreement.

- Do you see or recognize a pattern that you use in these situations?
- As you see where you have used an approach, how easy was it?
- How would you qualify its success or failure?
- How willing are you to explore other options?

### **INVOLVING OTHERS**

Discuss with those in your small group what you have discovered in the action items. Be open to listen to others responses and learn from them. **Discuss what the outcomes have been for each and how you might improve going forward as a group.**

**STUDY & REFLECTION** **Caring:** a good word **Confronting:** a bad word.

David Augsburger in his book Caring Enough To Confront introduces a phrase that may be able to help us embrace the need to confront, which we often fear leads to a bigger problem and loss of relationship, but connects it with showing love, care, and mutual respect.

He coined the phrase...**CARE—FRONTING**. He calls it, the *Creative Way Through Conflict*.

He states, when you combine Caring with Confronting, you provide the balance of love and power which leads to effective communication in human relationships.

He notes we often in common practice keep these two dynamics distinct and separate. He points out, when I'm angry, I confront. To talk of caring at a moment like that would be false. When I care deeply about another, I cannot confront, because hurting another is the very last thing I want.

**Care—Fronting** becomes a useful and powerful word. It offers genuine caring that bids another to grow, because caring is to welcome, invite and support growth in another.

**Care—Fronting** offers real confrontation that calls out new insights and understandings. To confront effectively offers the maximum of useful information with the minimum of threat and stress.

**Care—Fronting** unites LOVE and POWER. It unites concern for the relationship with concerns for goals. So someone can have something to stand for (goals) and someone to stand with (relationship) without sacrificing one for the other. **These are not contradictory, they are complementary.**

**ACTION ITEMS** Please give focused attention and reflective prayer to a way of confronting and at the same time caring and loving. What insights have you gained as you considered how *truth* and *love* can be combined as a genuine tool and bridge in order to resolve conflict and restore relationships?

**INVOLVING OTHERS** Sharing with others here is critical. Could it be that we have been affected with the way we do things (culture...even church culture) that we have overlooked a powerful weapon to deal with disagreement and conflict? **Speaking the Truth In Love.**

### STUDY & REFLECTION

**Consider the power and healing virtue embracing this passage and committing to enacting it can bring to our relationships.**

*Instead, we will lovingly follow the truth at all times-- speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly-- and so become more and more in every way like Christ who is the Head of his body, the Church. Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly, and each part in its own special way helps the other parts, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. Eph 4:15-16 (TLB)*

Here is our challenge as we endeavor to grow in God and to grow healthy relationships in the Body of Christ. Trust must always be spoken, but if healing, resolution, growth is to take place it must be spoken in an atmosphere, **in the spirit of loving concern and respect for the one who is being spoken to**. Clearly, in order for truth to be spoken in love, a loving relationship had to exist *prior* to the truth being spoken, and a commitment exists to honor the relationship no matter the cost (agape love: *sacrificial*).

Augsburger puts it this way....I love you. If I love you, I must tell you the truth. I want your love. I want your truth. Love me enough to tell me the truth.

Paul says in Gal 4:16, *telling you the truth in a loving way cannot lead to or cause you and I to be enemies*.

**Care—Fronting**, or Speaking The Truth In Love is the way to mature and enrich right relationships. This is what John meant when he wrote about Jesus....*and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father ...full of Grace and Truth!*

***Our healing is assured in Christ because in our struggle and conflict He brings Grace (loving kindness) and Truth.***

### ACTION ITEMS

Speaking the Truth in Love, genuine Care—Fronting is not normal. It is learned under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. To become effective and good at it, it must be learned and embraced. Examine the nature, content, and intent of your common daily messages. Do they conform to *Speaking the Truth in Love*?

### INVOLVING OTHERS

**Allow others access and let them weigh in on your action item.** Do they agree with your characterization of your speech patterns? Be prepared to push aside defensiveness and clearly 'hear' what they share.

Ephesians 4:1; Ephesians 4:3; Ephesians 4:15;  
Ephesians 4:32

**STUDY & REFLECTION** As we study God's Word, and are committed to actually enacting it in our day-to-day lives, we must ask ourselves a difficult but critical question: **If conflict and disagreements are inevitable, yet God wants us to grow and mature as we walk together in life, what must be present in my heart and spirit for this to actually happen?**

This question targets the heart of the issue of Godly relationships. In order to experience such transformation and be able to care-front conflict and disagreement with success, God gives us a roadmap that demands that we embrace His Word, surrender to the Holy Spirit and courageously put into action what we *in Faith* understand.

**Eph 4** is one of those passages that take the spiritual resources the Lord has placed in the Body, and instructs us how to practically and consistently apply them in order to see miracles happen in our relationships. Let's take a look at what we are admonished:

- **Eph 4:1** We are called to walk in a manner (conduct our lives) that measure up to the gifts and spiritual graces we are given. Walk Worthy
- **Eph 4:3** Committing to maintaining the Unity of the Holy Spirit as Peacemakers. We must have the faith and courage to deliberately work in every situation to bring about Peace. (Are you committed to being a Peacemaker?)
- **Eph 4:15** Always speaking Truth to one another, based on a relationship where we love each other in a deep and sacrificial way (Agape Love)
- **Eph 4:32** Conducting our interactions with others in a framework of KINDNESS....being gracious to others. Demonstrating a spirit that others find enjoyable and easy to get along with. TENDERHEARTED.....one of compassion and sympathy. Relating to the situation others are going through as if you yourself were going through it. FORGIVING.....easily showing gracious favor to pardon the wrong of another....**Just like Christ forgives us.**

**ACTION ITEMS** Reflect on the passage in Eph 4. (Kindness.....Tenderhearted.....Forgiving? Be introspective and honest. Do you believe what is contained in this passage is actually attainable? To what degree do you see such dynamics in your dealing with others in your family, social/work group, or church relationships?)

**INVOLVING OTHERS** Have an honest discussion relating to the teaching. **Don't let shame or guilt stop you from seeing where we are and what we can and must do as we seek God's grace Together.**

# Relational Health, Wellness, Wholeness

## Review and Commitment

**SCRIPTURES OF THE DAY** Saturday, August 21, 2021  
**Review Scriptures From This week**

### **YOUR ASSIGNMENT**

The set of devotional scriptures and teachings this week have been broad and challenging. Yet I believe the Lord will help you/us, to **spend the weekend reviewing them, reflecting on them, praying about them, and seeking to have personal insights on how they are presently manifested in our critical relationships or if they are woefully lacking in our personal experiences.**

Realize that as we come to truth and begin to embrace new insights, we come being *born-again but unfinished*. The spiritual focus on relationships is one the enemy hopes we will never give real attention to. As we take the time to focus on this area, know that the Lord is preparing us spiritually to grow and experience real maturity in Christ.

I am believing God that for the ensuing week, we will journey together, **identifying one or two important relationships**.....most likely one within our family, and one outside our family, and using what we have learned, begin in an initial way to see them differently, care-front with them, and move forward by God's grace into a new level of relationship.

Shalom!

