

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

MAKE LOVE YOUR AIM
(1 Cor 14:1)

GOAL: Participants evaluate their lives in the light of God's standard for interpersonal relationships and state how they intend to grow.

CONTENTS:

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLICAL LOVE RELATIONSHIPS
 2. WHAT IS LOVE?
 3. PREREQUISITE: KNOW GOD'S LOVE
 4. WHOM MUST WE LOVE?
 5. RELATIONSHIPS IN THE LIGHT OF THE CROSS
 6. HOW TO BUILD BIBLICAL LOVE RELATIONSHIPS
 7. A MODEL FOR RELATIONSHIPS
 8. INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD RELATIONSHIPS
 9. RESTORING BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS
 10. FORGIVENESS
 11. HANDLING CONFLICT IN LOVE
 12. AIM FOR MATURITY
 13. AVOID COMMON PITFALLS
- ADDENDUMS 1 - 4



1. **THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLICAL LOVE RELATIONSHIPS.**

God created man for loving and holy relationships with Himself and with other humans.

This is commanded by God in the O.T. Lev 19:18

By Jesus in the New Testament Matt.22:34-40; John 13:34; John 15:12,17

"Love your neighbour as yourself" is the second of the two Great Commandments and

sums up all other commandments. Rom.13:8-10

1.2. Unity amongst believers is essential

for the health and effective functioning of the body of Christ. Eph 4:15,16

for an effective witness to the world John 13:35; John 17:20-23

to glorify God. Rom 15:5,6

1.3. Love is the greatest. 1 Cor 12:31; 13:1-3,8,13

Write a summary in your own words of the following:

SCRIPTURE

SUMMARY IN OWN WORDS

1 Cor 13:1-3	
1 Cor 13:13	
1 Cor 13:8	
Rom.13:8	

2. **WHAT IS LOVE?**

2.1. Definition.

.....

2.2. Similar concepts but not the real thing

.....

.....

3. **PREREQUISITE:**

Know God's love experientially Rom 5:5, have it: 1 Cor 13:1-3

Be a fountain person. Ps 23:1; John 7:38

Assignment: study the first epistle of John on the theme: "Love"

4. **WHOM MUST WE LOVE?**

- 4.1. the brotherhood/family of believers. 1 Pet.2:17
- 4.2. all men 1 Thess 3:12
this includes individuals from all temperament groups, both sexes, all age groups, all ranks/classes of society, all denominations, all racial groups. Act 10:34
- 4.3. our enemies. Matt 5:44, Luke 6:27,28
- 4.4. husbands, wives, children Eph 5:25, Titus 2:4
Concentric circles of responsibility/involvement:
immediate family;
friends, neighbours, other relatives
work (boss, colleagues, clients/patients)
church
other segments of society
world missions
- 4.5. Application:
From the following scriptures, note who the 'objects' of our love should be. Then write down the names of the persons with whom you have regular contact who fall into each category.

SCRIPTURES	OBJECTS	NAMES
1 Pet 2:17 Eph 1:15 Gal 6:10		
Matt 19:19		
1 Thess 3:12		
Luke 6:27,28 Matt 5:44		
Eph 5:25 Tit.2:4		

4.6. **HOW DO WE GET LOVE?**

- 4.6.1 1 John 4:7 Prerequisite of being born of God
- 4.6.2 1 John 4:19 Meditating on His love for us
- 4.6.3 Gal 5:6,22 Faith is the root, love the fruit. Faith is based on the meditated Word. The Holy Spirit, when in control, produces the fruit in our lives
- 4.6.4 1 Cor 14:1 Pursue, follow after love. 1 Tim 6:11
- 4.6.5 Heb 10:24 Spur one another on to love
- 4.6.6 1 Thess 4:9 Let God teach us to love one another
- 4.6.7 Phil 1:9 Pray for more love
- 4.6.8 Gal 2:20 Live a crucified life

5. RELATIONSHIPS IN THE LIGHT OF THE CROSS:

Eph 2:11-18 Christ-centred, Cross centred relationships.

- ⊥ The Cross enables us to build relationships which are pleasing to God.
- ⊥ Christ has broken down the dividing wall of partition between God/man and man/man.
- ⊥ He is the bond of unity.
- ⊥ The Cross unites us in the bond Christ
- ⊥ it also separates us preventing fleshly attachments
- ⊥ We relate to the new man 2 Cor 5:14-17

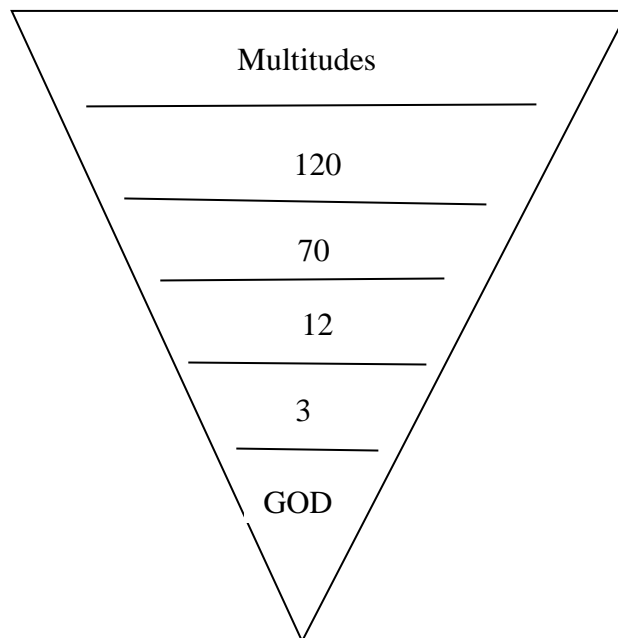
6. HOW TO BUILD BIBLICAL LOVE RELATIONSHIPS:

- Through much **prayer**
- Have a **vision** ie ask God to show you His purpose for the relationship.
- He may give you a specific **scripture** for each relationship
- Faith** - believe that God will enable you to be to the other person what He wants you to be
- Action**- don't wait fr the other person to show love, before expressing it in action. Choose to act in love, feelings often follow later.

7. A MODEL FOR RELATIONSHIPS:

Problem: Too many superficial relationships, few close, no intimate friends. No account-ability. Love/hate relationship Often also problem with sexual identity.

Solution: Let Jesus be Lord of whole life, and all relationships. Cut superficial contacts, learn to build heart relationships with a few good friends. Be a friend.



8. **INGREDIENTS FOR GOOD RELATIONSHIPS:**

Good relationships can be compared to the pillars of a house. We will look at five pillars, the foundation and roof/covering:

8.1 **Consideration/unselfishness** Rom 13:10; 14:15,21; 1 Cor 10:24; Phil 2:4

8.2 **Commitment/loyalty** Gal 6:1,2; Rom 15:1-3; 14:19; Rom 12:10; 1 Thess 5:11

Loyalty means:

% being committed unconditionally to one another in love and trust.

% It includes not criticising a person in front of others,

% defending him/her when attacked by others,

% keeping confidences.

% Loyalty also includes rebuke: Lev 19:17 (do not hate in your heart)

Prov.27:5; Eph 5:11; Matt 18:15-17

% Being willing to lay down one's life: John 15:13; 1 John 3:16

8.3 **Acceptance/tolerance** Eph 4:2,32; 1 Thess 5:14,15; Matt 7:1-5

% Accept the other person realistically, with strong and weak points.

% Drop the dream picture of what we think the other "ought to be".

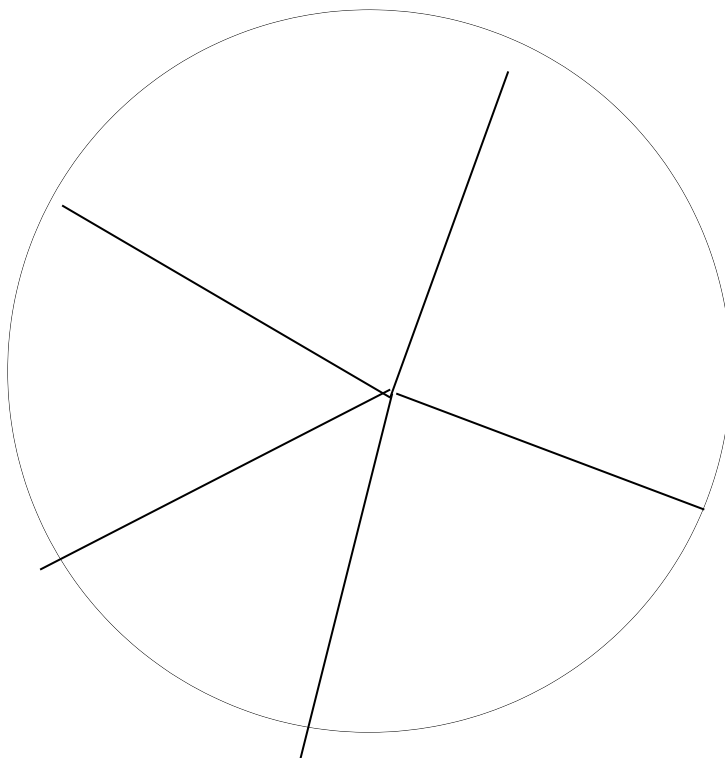
% Where acceptance prevails, members are secure and have nothing to "prove", therefore have scope to grow.

% Leave freedom for others to be themselves, to be 'different' in culture, theology, habits, ways of working.

% Love and be flexible

8.4 **Communication** Rom 12:15; Matt 18:15-17

The "wheel" of communication runs well on 5 spokes:



Listening: not only to the words, but the message conveyed and the message behind the words. Good listening takes concentration, patience and sensitivity; and freedom from wondering: What does the other think of me? Do they care for me? Who is stronger/smarter? ie freedom from self interest

Speaking: Be clear and simple, avoid double meanings. Let "yes" be "yes" and "No" "no". Avoid:

- > Generalised accusations eg. "You always leave a mess...."
- > Verbal manipulation eg "Don't you feel that.."
- > Insinuations eg "He isn't very.. eh you know?"
- > Contradictory body language/voice tones, conveying a different message.
- > False assumptions ie taking for granted that the person knows what you mean, especially when delegating work or explaining procedures

Sharing:

- % Being real in sharing our innermost thoughts, feelings, fears.
- % The depth will not be the same with everyone, but we should aim to "walk in the light".
- % Masks stop effective communication

Encouraging:

- > Affirmation, encouragement, expressing appreciation form a strong basis for good communication.
- > People respond positively to this, when done honestly, rather than to criticism

Confronting:

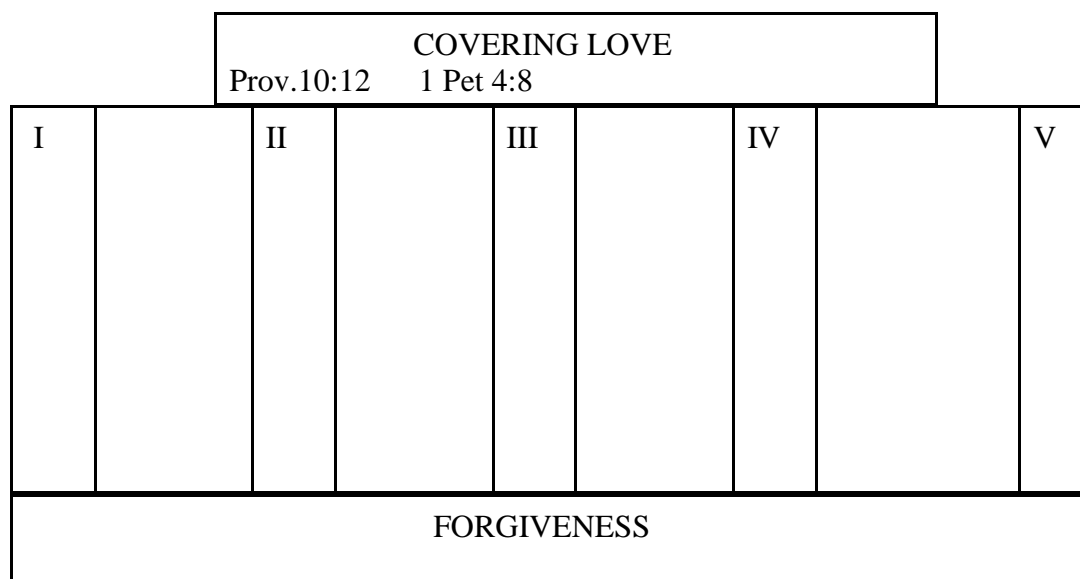
- > Essential that this be done tactfully and in love, when clear cut sin or wrong attitudes is evident.
- > We need to have a loving and secure relationship before we can confront with a positive result.
- > We also need to be willing to be confronted by others ie be accountable to them.
- > We need to develop a vulnerable, non-defensive, teachable and humble attitude when they point out wrong things in our lives.

8.5 **Helping/serving/spending time** Gal 6:10; 5:13b; John 13:1-5; Phil 2:4-7
2 Cor 8:24; 1 John 3:17

- % Our schedules should not be so busy that we have no time for each other.
- % On the other hand we also need to be willing to be served, to show we are not self sufficient.
- % No relationship can flourish without investment of time.
- % Often, while spending time in serving the Lord together, deep relationships are forged.
- % When working together, it is also beneficial to do fun things together so balanced relationships are built.

8.6 **Forgiveness forms the foundation of the house.** 2 Cor 2:7,8; Eph 4:32;
Matt 5:22,23; 18:33,35

Forgiveness is the foundation of our relationship with God, and with each other. We live in a sinful world, full of imperfect people, so we will be let down by others, and we will let them down. Only as we forgive and receive forgiveness can we work together in love and unity



8.7 **Factors that corrode the house:**

Factors:	Areas/pillars destroyed:
8.7.1. Resentment	Foundation
8.7.2. Selfishness/indifference	I & IV
8.7.3. Breaking confidence/ gossip/ Non-commitment	II
8.7.4. Domination/criticism/ pride/ Jealousy/ rejection	III
8.7.5. Wrong attitudes/ fear of conflict/ Inferiority/ defensiveness/ Uncontrolled emotions/ counter Attack	III

8.7.1. **Resentment:** (opposite of Forgiveness, the Foundation) Some people are easy

offended. When our response is way out of proportion to the incident, we need to determine why. It could be related to unforgiveness or a grudge from the past.

Possible root causes could be:

- ± inability to succeed or reach our own inner goals. So resentment develops against people/things that obstruct our goals.
- ± setting our targets too high for ourself (hard to please ourself = pride)
- ± failure to forgive persons who have hurt us in the past (parents, authority figures, peers)

8.7.2 **Selfishness/indifference:** (opposite of consideration/unselfishness)

- > We see a need, but take no time to meet it - our own schedule is more important.
- > Indifference is reflected in either not seeing the need, or not caring enough to do something about it.
- > Sometimes, however, we may just not be able to cope with many demands;
- > this calls for understanding from the other person in the relationship.

8.7.3 **Breaking confidence/gossip:** (opposite of commitment/loyalty)

- > Loyalty is destroyed by talking/gossiping, or taking sides against the person; also by an attitude of non-committal.
- > We need to stick with the person, regardless of what happens.

8.7.4 **Domination/criticism/jealousy:** (opposite of acceptance and tolerance)

- ± *Acceptance* is not the same as approval.
- ± Some insecure people interpret any disapproval as non-acceptance, so feel rejected.
- ± We need to understand the difference between our performance (which may meet with disapproval) and our value and identity as a person (which is acceptance in Christ)
- ± Inner acceptance of who we are in Christ is the foundation for being able to accept others.

- ± *Domination/criticism* are enemies of acceptance/tolerance.
- ± A domineering, overbearing person leaves no room for another to be himself.
- ± In a natural relationship, the stronger dominates, the weaker complies.
- ± In a spiritual relationship the stronger needs to learn to submit.
- ± It is unwise to give in to the domineering person in order to avoid conflict, as this will not help him.
- ± A critical attitude can stem from anger, faulty comparisons, feeling inferior to the other person, or just a habit picked up from the world.
- ± The better we see our own faults, the less we are likely to be critical of others.

8.7.5 **Wrong attitudes/inferiority/ defensiveness:** (opposite of good communication)

True dialogue can be obstructed by:

- % trying to give advice;
- % being patronizing;
- % being judgemental,
- % moralizing;
- % being the teacher;
- % fear of conflict, so just keeping quiet;
- % always wanting to be right;
- % feelings of inferiority;
- % defensiveness;
- % emotional outbreaks;
- % escape mechanisms.

8.7.6. **Application:**

We may have become aware of areas of weakness in our relationships. With the help of the Lord we can change, learn to put away carnal and immature behaviour patterns, learn to interact freely with Spirit inspired and controlled responses (rather than reactions). Strained relationships may be God's tools to help us to grow.

Evaluate your own life in the light of these principles.

Are some pillars missing altogether? Where do you need reconstruction?

9. **RESTORING BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS:** How to rebuild the house.

- 9.1 Forgiveness - settle conflict Biblically (see later)
- 9.2 Admit real need
- 9.3 Admit own selfishness/sin and ask forgiveness Col 3:12,13; Matt 6:14,15
- 9.4 Decide to put the needs of others first Phil 2:3,4
- 9.5 Act out 1 Cor 13:4-8
- 9.6 Start thanking God for the other person in the relationship
1 Thess 5:18 (Ampl)
- 9.7 In an ongoing relationship eg marriage, be committed to:
 - > a common goal
 - > forgive mistakes
 - > forget wrongs - choose NOT to remember. Jer 31:34b, Heb 8:12;10:17
 - > work to improve the relationship on a continuing basis
 - > put God first, seek to please and honour Him
 - > Have faith and leave room for the other person to change. Do not see them in a fixed role
 - > Seek practical ways to show love and help (be sensitive)
 - > Allow time - restoration and healing take time
 - > Give the other person the benefit of the doubt
 - > Some time away from the scene of conflict can help to get perspective again

- > If other person refuses to be reconciled, do not become bitter
Rom 12:18

10. **FORGIVENESS:** Matt 18:15-35

- 10.1. Christians are commanded to forgive and to be reconciled to one another
Matt 5:23,24; Mark 11:25; Luke 17:3-5
- 10.2. Our forgiveness is prerequisite for God's forgiveness Matt 6:14,15
- 10.3. Forgiveness is an act of the will Luke 23:34
- 10.4. Forgiveness is an attitude Eph 4:32; Matt 18:21,22
- 10.5. Forgive as Christ forgave Col 3:13; Jer 31:34
- 10.6. What makes it hard to forgive? (hurt, anger, injustice, rejection =feelings)
- 10.7. **How to forgive**
- ± Choose to forgive as an act of obedience to God
 - ± In prayer:
 - = thank God that He has forgiven you
 - = Ask Him for His love to operate through you
 - = Thank Him for good things in that person, and blessings you have received through him/her
 - = Ask God to bless that person (pray positively)
 - ± Handle **feelings** of hurt:
 - = Each time the incident comes up in your mind, forgive again
 - = Refuse recurring thoughts, Phil 4:8
 - = Receive emotional healing through the Cross Is 53:4,5
 - = Do not raise the issue again. To others = gossip;
to the person = accuse;
to yourself =brood. Is.43:25
 - = Prove forgiveness by attitude and actions
 - ± Learn to forget. Heb 8:12

10.8. **Results of an unforgiving spirit:**

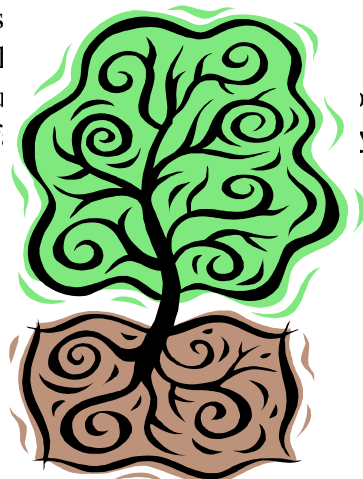
10.8.1 Broken relationships:

- with God. No communion, unanswered prayer
1 Pet 3:7; 1 John 4:20
- with fellow men. Disunity, discord, dissensions, factions
Gal 5:20, 14,15

10.8.2 Bitterness: Heb 12:15 – 17

- & caus
 - & defil
 - & sexu
 - & prof
- n)
y from God)

Defiles



Perversion

Torment

Profanity

Root of Bitterness

10.8.3 The devil will outwit you 2 Cor 2:10,11; Eph 4:26,27

10.8.4 Physical affliction - disease Ps 32: 1-5; Ps 38:3 - 8

11. **HANDLING CONFLICT IN LOVE**

There are few things in life as encouraging and motivating as good relationships with fellowmen. Unfortunately the opposite is also true. Poor relationships sap our energy, can be a source of discouragement, sleepless nights, headaches and stomach ulcers.

Relationship problems can also be viewed from different perspective

- & They can be seen as an opportunity to grow and mature.
- & We can become a stronger person, not in spite of, but because of the trouble that we experience.
- & We will learn things about ourselves and others which we may otherwise not face
- & Growth potentially comes through conflict, but some people may suffer in vain.
- & Emotional pain puts us at a crossroad.
 - > We become bitter, critical, insulted, pessimistic, defeated, angry;
 - > or we will be forced into a path that will help us develop in our relationship with God and with other people.
- & **Growth comes by facing conflicts and dealing with them in a Biblical way.**

11.1 **Definition:**

Conflict develops when a person does not act or react in the way we want or expect them to. The resulting unrest, discord or antagonism is called conflict. A situation needs to be identified as conflict, before we can deal with it.

11.2 **Causes of conflicts:**

- ± Pride - I am right, my way is best. Prov 13:10
- ± Hidden agendas. Inner drives that are stronger than my conscious desire for right relationships. Jam 4:1,2. eg argue my point to prove my self-worth; misinterpreting the motives of others; jealousy.
- ± Selfishness. Doing my own thing Is 53:6 Want things my way regardless of needs of others/cost to others
- ± Deceitfulness of heart. Jer 17:9. "I am convinced I'm right, don't confuse me with the facts." Have been deceived, can't be objective

11.3. **Reasons for not resolving conflicts:**

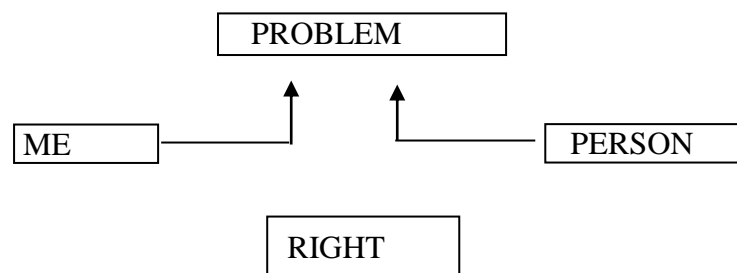
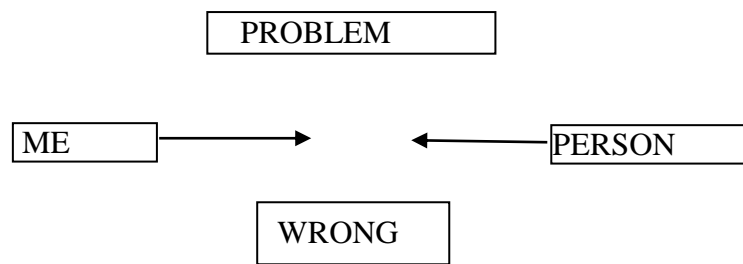
- Fear:
 - = of man. Prov 29:25
 - = of confrontation. Matt 5:9 peace-keeper vs peace maker
 - = of negative reception
 - = of rejection - keeping "face"
- Cowardice

- = ignoring the problem, pretend it is not there
- = ignoring the person, stay out of their way
- Pride "I am right, you are wrong, no use to talk"
- Blame-shifting. Gen 3:12
- Result % guilt. Unconfessed wrong cannot be forgiven.
- Unresolved guilt may lead to emotional and physical problems
- % bitterness leading to serious problems (see under forgiveness)

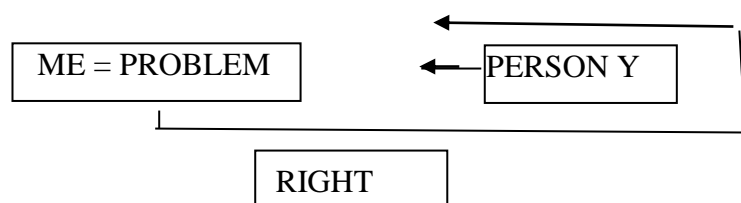
11.4 **Handling of conflict:**

11.4.1. **Agree on principles**

- ± open communication
- ± aim to listen and share while seeking a solution that will benefit our relationship with God and one another.
Eph 4:15; Jam 1:19
- ± aim at understanding one another. Prov 4:7(b)
- ± aim at tackling the problem, not one another.



We stand next to one another and prayerfully seek a solution to the problem
 What if one person is the problem?



I need to be objective about myself, so we can stand next to one another and prayerfully seek a solution to the problem

- ± Exactly what is the problem we have to talk about?
NB Handle one at a time!
- ± Right time and place to talk? If not, make an appointment within the next 24 hrs. Keep short accounts, don't let things build up.
Eccl.3:1; Matt 5:23,24
- ± Let the Word of God and the peace of God be the referee
Col 3:15,16
- ± The higher the voice volume, the lower the possibility for a satisfactory solution. Cool down first, be calm, make time to talk later.

11.4.2 Pitfalls to avoid/communication breakdown

- Avoid dirty tricks like:
 - personal attacks - you are useless, stupid etc
 - digging at past failures - 10 years ago you...
 - unfair comparisons - Jane would never do that
 - generalizations, you always/never...
 - unwilling to acknowledge conflict/avoid handling it
 - drawing other people in, family/friends
- Avoid use of dangerous "tools"
 - hatred - Gal 5:20
 - sharp tongue Jam 3:6
 - poisonous words Rom 3:13
 - unforgiving, bitter attitudes Heb 12:15
 - steamroller approach - keep quiet and listen to me!
 - uncontrolled anger Eph 4:31
 - fists, bread knives etc.
 - feelingless logic
- Avoid devious tactics:
 - Vague hints
 - Ice-berg/freezer/cold shoulder/won't talk
 - Judgemental attitude Rom 2:1
 - Critical spirit
 - avoidance tricks like "migraine", "too tired"; keep yourself busy when someone wants to talk.
 - Storming out/slamming doors in anger

11.4.3. Steps in Handling conflict: prayerfully (keeping in mind principles of 11.4.1.)

± Trust God to solve the problem. He is on the side of unity
John 17:21

± Forgive the person for not acting or reacting the way I
wanted/expected Matt 6:14,15; 18:21-35

Remember: Forgiveness is an act of the will in obedience to God's
command Eph 4:31,32. I am not say "You are right"

± Start with myself:

% Where am I wrong? Matt 7:1-5

% What does the Lord want **me** to do? Matt 5:23,24

% Are my attitudes right?

= Humility - 1 Pet 5:5

= Meekness - 1 Pet 2:21-23

= Patience - Jam 1:4

= Forbearance - we are living in a
world full of imperfect people

% Willingness to risk confrontation - pay now or pay
later? Matt 5:9 Peace-keeper?

% Move for reconciliation - before the sun goes down.
Matt 5:23,24; 18:15 It is always **my** move first.



))) Matt 5:23,24)>
<)) Matt 18:15))))

Offender

Offended

% Not important who is right or wrong, we should
meet halfway!

% ask forgiveness for my share of the wrong

% express forgiveness to the other person. If they ask
forgiveness, don't say "It does not matter" - because
it does! Say: "I forgive you"

% Pray together, each asking forgiveness for their
wrong

% accept forgiveness from God and one another

% recognise that the issue may not be resolved eg

difference of opinion - but relationship can be restored. Rom 12:18

- % Celebrate the reconciliation because:
 - = God has been glorified Rom 15:5,6
 - = Love has been demonstrated 1 Cor 13:4-7
 - = Healing and growth has taken place 2 Thess 1:3

11.5 Application:

Identify the steps in handling conflict which you have omitted

- confess it to God
- receive forgiveness
- List any people to whom you need to be reconciled?

NAME	WHAT I AM GOING TO DO	WHEN

12. AIM FOR MATURITY:

- 12.1. Mature realistic appraisal of myself. Rom 12:3
Secure in Christ Is 43:4; 49:16
Free from an inflated ego and from 'self' Gal 2:20; 5:19-21
"No person can consistently behave in a way that is inconsistent with the way he perceives himself" see Addendum 1
- 12.2. Mature relationships with authority figures. How to love them 2 Cor 6:11-13; 1 Pet 5:5; Heb 13:17
- 12.3. Mature relationships with individuals from the opposite sex/ married couples and different age groups 1 Tim 5:1-3
- 12.4. Mature love reaches out across cultural barriers. Col 3:11
- 12.5. Mature love reaches out across denominational barriers 1 Cor 3:1-8, 21-23 See example of the Trinity. Addendum 2.

13. AVOID COMMON PITFALLS:

- 13.1. **Emotionally dependent relationships:**
We all have a deep need, placed in us by God, for intimate friendship. However, when our deepest needs for love are not being met by God, we develop imbalance in our relationships with people. One of the dangers of an unbalanced relationship life (see

no 7 - a model for relationships) is that we develop an inappropriate dependence on people. How can we recognise that we have crossed the line into dependency?

Characteristics of a Dependent Relationship: When either party in a relationship:

- experiences frequent jealousy, possessiveness and a desire for exclusivism, viewing other people as a threat to the relationship
- prefers to spend time alone with this friend and becomes frustrated when this does not happen
- becomes irrationally angry or depressed when this friend withdraws slightly
- loses interest in friendships other than this one
- experiences romantic or sexual feelings leading to fantasy about this person
- becomes preoccupied with this person's appearance, personality, problems and interests
- is unwilling to make short or long range plans that do not include the other person
- is unable to see the other's faults realistically
- becomes defensive about the relationship when asked about it
- displays physical affection beyond that which is appropriate for a friendship
- refers frequently to the other in conversation; feels free to "speak for" the other.
- exhibits an intimacy and familiarity with this friend that causes others to feel uncomfortable in their presence.

There are some significant differences between a healthy friendship and an unhealthy relationship:

Healthy Relationship:	Unhealthy Relationship:
1. Free and generous, both are keen to include others in their relationship	1. Resents others intruding into the relationship
2. Glad when one friend hits it off with another person	2. Jealous of others, prefers to keep the friend to themselves.
3. Desires to see the other reach his/hers full potential, developing new skills and interests	3. Relationship is ingrown, creating mutual stagnation and limiting personal growth
4. Balanced reactions to what our friend says and does	4. A casual remark can cause heights of ecstasy or pits of grief.
5. Feels natural sorrow when a close friend moves away	5. If one partner moves, other is gripped by anguish, panic and desperation.
6. Normal healthy and upbuilding	6. Produces bondage.

See Addendum 3 for further details

13.2. Relationships with unsafe people:

When God created us in His image, he also created us with **a need for relationship**, with Himself and with others. Gen 2:18 is not only about marriage, but about relationships in general. However relationships with others are fraught with danger since the fall, and we need to learn to find "safe" persons for relationships otherwise we be hurt and suffer the negative consequences of bad relationships

1 Sam 16:7; Matt 23:25-28. **We choose people based on outward appearance**, and only later on experience what is on the inside of them. Unsafe people can appear winsome and promising; their character problems are subtle. What qualities do we look for in a future spouse or a friend? Somebody spiritual? godly? ambitious? fun to be with?

However, when people are in trouble in their relationships, they do not talk about the person being godly, ambitious, fun to be with; they say:

- # He doesn't listen to me
- # She is so perfect she cannot understand my struggles
- # He seems so distant that I feel alone
- # She always tries to control me
- # He makes promises but does not keep them
- # She is condemning and judgemental
- # He is always angry at me for something I did not do
- # I cannot trust him
- # My worst comes out when I am with her

We need to look deeper to check on **character and relationship** issues.

Unsafe people come in three main categories:

1. Abandoners:

- start with a relationship but cannot finish it,
- they destroy trust

2. Critics:

- take a parental role with everyone they know,
- are judgemental,
- speak the truth without love,
- have no room for grace or forgiveness.
- are more concerned with confronting errors than with making connections,
- jump on doctrinal bandwagons; neglect love, compassion and forgiveness,
- love truth and righteousness, but often poisoned with judgementalism.

3. Irresponsibles:

- don't take care of themselves or of others;
- cannot delay gratification,
- don't consider the consequences of their actions,
- don't follow through on their commitments.
- are like grown-up children.
 - ± You pick up after them
 - ± Apologize to others for them
 - ± Make excuses for them
 - ± Give them chance after chance after chance
 - ± Pay for their sins and forgetfulness
 - ± You nag and resent them

For every irresponsible there is an enabler, someone who protects

13.2.1. How do we recognize unsafe people?

PERSONAL TRAITS OF UNSAFE PEOPLE	INTERPERSONAL TRAITS OF UNSAFE PEOPLE
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They “have it all together” 2. Are religious instead of spiritual 3. Defensive instead of open to correction 4. Self-righteous instead of humble 5. Apologize instead of changing 6. Avoid working on their problems 7. Demand trust instead of earning it 8. Believe they are perfect/don’t admit faults 9. Blame others/don’t take responsibility 10.Lie, instead of telling the truth 11.Stagnant, instead of growing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoid closenesss instead of connecting 2. Concerned about ”I” instead of “us” 3. Resist freedom instead of encouraging it 4. Flatter instead of confronting 5. Condemn instead of forgiving 6. Relate as “parents/children” not adults 7. Unstable over time, instead of consistent 8. Have a negative rather than positive influence 9. Gossip instead of keeping secrets

13.2.2. How do we recognize safe people?

A safe relationship does three things:

- Draws us close to the Lord so we fulfill Matt 22:37,38
- draws us closer to others so we fulfill Matt 22:39
- helps us to become the real person that God created us to be. Eph 2:10

Some descriptions of safe people:

- Someone who accepts me just as I am
- Someone who loves me no matter how I am or what I do
- Someone whose influence develops my ability to love and be responsible
- Someone who creates love and good works in me
- Someone who gives me an opportunity to grow
- Someone who increases love within me
- Someone with whom I can be myself
- Someone who allows me to be on the outside what I am on the inside
- Someone who helps me deny myself for others and God
- Someone who allows me to be the “me” that God intended
- Someone whose life touches mine and leaves me better for it
- Someone who helps me to be like Christ
- Someone who helps me to love others more

The best example of a safe person is found in Jesus. John 1:14 says: “The Word became flesh and **dwelt among us** and we have seen His Glory, the Glory of the Son, Who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth**”

1. **Dwelling:** This refers to someone’s ability to connect with us, so camp or reside with us. They are able to connect in such a way that they are “present” with us
2. **Grace:** This means unmerited favour. Someone is “one our side” they are “for us” It implies unconditional love and acceptance with no condemnation. Rom 8:1; Eph 4:32. When people require us to be different before they accept us, we are unable to use their love, as it has to be earned. Grace does the opposite. It says you are accepted just as you are, and you will not be ashamed or incur wrath for whatever you are experiencing.
3. **Truth:** In relationships it means honesty, being real with one another, and living in the truth of God. Safe relationships will give confrontation as well as grace, we need people who will tell us where we are wrong and where we need to change. We need friends walking in the truth and living out the principles of God with us. Gal 6:1. Truly safe relationships are where we can speak the truth to one another, confronting one another as needed. Grace and the absence of condemnation allow us to do this with less fear than in a condemning relationship.

For further details: see Addendum 4.

ADDENDUM 1

WHO AM I? Concepts from "Victory over the darkness" - Neil Anderson

Read the following verses, putting in your own name in the blank spaces:

.....is the salt of the earth	Matt 5:13..
.....is the light of the world	Matt 5:14
.....is a child of God	John 1:12
.....is a friend of Christ	John 15:15
.....is chosen and appointed by Christ to bear fruit	John 15:16
.....is a joint-heir with Christ	Rom 8:17
.....is a temple of God	1 Cor 3:16; 6:19
.....is a member of Christ's body	1 Cor 12:27; Eph 5:30
.....is a new creation	2 Cor 5:17
.....is reconciled to God	2 Cor 5:18,19
.....is a saint	Eph 1:1; 1 Cor 1:2; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2
.....is righteous and holy	Eph 4:24
.....is a citizen of heaven	Phil 3:20
.....is seated with Christ in heaven	Eph 2:6
.....is hidden with Christ in God	Col 3:3
.....is filled with all the fullness of God	Col 2:10
.....is chosen of God, holy and dearly beloved	Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4
.....is a partaker of Christ and shares His life	Heb 3:14
.....is born of God and the evil one (the devil) cannot touch me	1 John 5:18,19
.....is what is by the grace of God	1 Cor 15:10
.....is <u>not</u> the "I AM"	(Exod 3:14, John 8:24,25,58)

Becauseis in Christ, there is nothing can do to make any of these facts more true, but can make these traits more meaningful by choosing to believe what God says about 1 John 3:1-3.
Hallelujah!

ADDENDUM 2

EXAMPLE OF THE TRINITY IN RELATIONSHIP

Let us measure any and all of our relationships alongside God's standard for us, which is the relationship of the Trinity

1. God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in authority but different in functions
2. They complete each other in ministry functions - never compete. Often we are unaware where One starts and Another ends. There is total blending of the Three
3. They are totally dependent on each other, based on the humility that knows they desperately need each other
4. They have absolute truth in their relationship - therefore absolute trust
5. They glorify one another and serve one another
6. They have singleness of purpose
7. They have absolute holiness in all their relationships and therefore they experience the ultimate in enjoyment of one another
8. They are an invincible team who have an eternal indestructible kingdom and who achieve the ultimate in effectiveness

Look again at No 7 "They have absolute holiness in all their relationships" When we really believe this truth we can understand that any relationship is only pleasurable, purposeful and fulfilling to the degree that the fear of God remains the basis for the relationship.

Excerpt from Joy Dawson "Intimate Friendship with God"

ADDENDUM 3

EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY:

Mary had spent long hours with Sarah counselling her and helping her through the struggles of being a new Christian. They seemed to have a great friendship with lots of common interests and a mutual love for the Lord. Sarah felt that Mary understood her better than anyone ever had. Even Sarah's husband, Bill, could not provide her with the closeness she experienced with Mary. Mary and her husband, Tom, had a fulfilling marriage, but Tom's sales career kept him away from home often. A loving person, Mary willingly invested her time and caring in Sarah, who really seemed to need her. It was rewarding for Mary to see Sarah growing in the Lord and she enjoyed Sarah's obvious admiration. The shock came when Mary and Sarah found themselves emotionally and physically involved with each other. Neither women had ever been aware of homosexual feelings before. Both of them loved God and cared for their husbands. Their friendship had appeared to be Christ-centred, as they frequently prayed and read the Bible together. If what they were doing was wrong, who hadn't God stopped them? Why hadn't they seen the danger signals along the way? Now that they were so closely involved they could not imagine being apart. "What are we going to do?" they wondered.

1. WHAT IS EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY?

Long before Mary and Sarah were involved homosexually, they had entered into an emotionally dependent relationship. Emotional dependency is **the condition resulting when the ongoing presence and/or nurturing of another is believed necessary for personal security**. This nurturing comes in many different forms of input from one person's life into another's.

- ± attention
- ± listening
- ± admiration
- ± counsel
- ± affirmation
- ± time spent together

Emotionally dependent relationships may appear harmless or even healthy at first, but they can lead to destruction and greater bondage than most people can imagine. Whether or not physical involvement exists, sin enters the picture when a friendship becomes a dependent relationship. If we have been enjoined to seek first the Kingdom of God, making the Lord Jesus Christ the center of our doing and being, then transgression has taken place when a relationship - any relationship - is made central to existence instead of God. God must be the provider of personal security because a human being ends up doing so only imperfectly.

To differentiate between the normal interdependency that happens in wholesome relationships and an unhealthy dependency, we will look at factors that make up a dependent relationship, how and why it gets started and how it is maintained. (see earlier notes for characteristics)

2. SET-UPS FOR EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY

Emotional dependency comes as a surprise to most people. Like Mary and Sarah, they do not see the problem coming until it has a hold on them. However, dependencies do not happen in a vacuum.

Definite elements in our personalities/situations can set us up for binding relationships. Sins and hurts from the past leave us vulnerable, too. Having an awareness of these set-ups can help us know when we need to exercise special caution in our relationships.

2.1. Who is susceptible? Anyone can fall into a dependent relationship given the right pressure and circumstances. However, there are a few common personality patterns that consistently gravitate towards each other to form dependencies. The basic combination seems to be the individual who appears to "have it all together" teamed up with one who needs the attention, protection and strength the other offers. Variations on this theme include:

- ± counsellor/person with problems
- ± "in control" person/one who needs direction
- ± parent/child
- ± teacher/student

Although these pairs appear to include one strong person and one needy person, they actually consist of two needy people. The "strong" one usually has a deep need to be needed. As often as not, the one who appears weaker actually controls the relationship. I have talked with people who have been "weak" in one relationship and "strong" in another, and sometimes these elements are not apparent at all. A balanced friendship can turn into a dependent relationship if other set-ups are present.

2.2. When are we most vulnerable? Certain times in our lives find us feeling insecure, ready to grasp whatever security is available to us. Some of these include:

- > life crises: relationship break-up, death of someone close, loss of a job
- > transition periods: adjusting to a new job, moving to a new home, getting engaged or becoming newly married, starting college, becoming a Christian
- > peak pressure periods: finals week, deadlines at work, personal or family illness, holidays such as Christmas or thanksgiving.
- > being away from the familiar and secure: vacation, camp, conference, prison, military service
- > times of boredom and/or depression.

The best way to avoid trouble is to recognize our need for special support during these times and plan ahead for these needs to be met in healthy ways. This might include sharing our burdens with a small prayer group, scheduling a series of appointments with a counsellor or pastor, increasing our contact with family members, and most important, cultivating our relationship with Jesus through special quiet times. Also there is nothing wrong with letting our friends know we need their support! Problems only develop when we lean too much on one particular friend to meet all our needs.

3. WHY ARE WE PRONE TO DEPENDENCY?

In a dependent relationship one or both people are looking to a **person** to meet their basic needs for love and security, rather than to Jesus. Unless underlying spiritual and emotional problems are resolved, this pattern will continue unbroken. Typical root problems that promote dependency include:

- = covetousness: desiring to possess something (or someone) that God has not given us
- = Idolatry: when something or someone is at the centre of our lives rather than God
- = Rebellion: refusing to surrender areas of our lives to God
- = Mistrust: failing to believe God will meet our needs if we do things His way

- = Sometimes hurts from our past leave us with low self-esteem, feelings of rejection, and a deep unmet need for love.
- = Bitterness or resentment towards those who have hurt us also open us up for wrong relationships. These sins and hurts need to be confessed and healed before real freedom can be experienced. This can happen through confession and prayer, both in our personal times with the Lord and with other members of the of the body of Christ

Emotional dependency is a painful thing to discuss. Most of us have experienced this problem. None of us are exempt from the temptation to draw our life and security from another person, specially when that person is handy and cooperative. Dependent relationships can form in opposite sex and same sex friendships. They can happen between married couples and between parents and children. But in the heart of the Gospel there is the message of truth that can free us from self seeking relationships. For a lot of us that is really good news!

4. MAINTENANCE THROUGH MANIPULATION

Manipulation is an ugly word. None of us likes to believe we could ever be guilty of this activity. Yet when emotionally dependent relationships form, manipulation often becomes the glue that holds them together. My working definition of manipulation is **attempting to control people or circumstances through deceptive or indirect means**. Webster's Dictionary describes manipulation as being insidious, which means:

- ± treacherous, awaiting a chance to entrap
- ± seductive: harmful but enticing
- ± subtle: developing so gradually as to be well established before becoming apparent, having a gradual but cumulative effect.

There are a variety of forms of manipulation, but here are some which I've seen used to begin and maintain a dependent relationship.

- & finances: combining finances, personal possessions (a property & furniture) moving in together
- & gifts: giving gifts and cards regularly for no special occasion, such as flowers, jewelry, baked goods and gifts symbolic of the relationship
- & clothes: wearing each other's clothing, copying each other's styles
- & romanticism: using poetry, music or other romanticism to provoke an emotional response
- & physical affection: body language, frequent hugging, touching, rough- housing, back and neck rubs, tickling and wrestling
- & eye contact: staring, giving meaningful or seductive looks, refusing to make eye contact as a means of punishment
- & flattery and praise: "You're the only one who understands me" "I don't know what I'd do without you" (Prov 29:5 says, "Whoever flatters his neighbour is spreading a net for his feet")
- & conversational triggers: flirting, teasing, using special nicknames, referring to things that have special meaning to both of you; in the company of others using language that excludes by creating a secret double conversation that only the two of you understand.

& failing to be honest; repressing negative feelings or differing opinions
 & needing "help": creating or exaggerating problems to gain attention and sympathy
 & guilt: making the other feel guilty over unmet expectations: "If you love me then..."
 "I was going to call you last night, but I know you're probably too busy to bother with me."
 & threats: threats of suicide and backsliding can be manipulative
 & pouting, brooding, cold silences; when asked "what's wrong" replying by sighing and
 saying "nothing"
 & undermining partner's other relationships: convincing him others do not care about
 him; making friends with partner's friends in order to control the situation
 & provoking insecurity: withholding approval, picking on partner's weak points,
 threatening to end the relationship.
 & time: keeping the other's time occupied so as to not to allow for separate activities
 These are common ways manipulation is used to hold dependent relationships together.
 Some of these things are not sinful in themselves. Honest praise and encouragement, giving
 of gifts, hugging and touching are important aspects of godly friendship. Only when these
 things are used for selfish ends - to bind or control another, to arouse responses leading to sin - do
 they become manipulative.

5. WHY ARE DEPENDENCIES HARD TO BREAK?

Even when both parties realize a relationship is unhealthy, they may experience great
 difficulty in breaking the dependency. Often those involved will begin to separate, only to run back
 to each other. Even after dependencies are broken, the effects may linger on for some time.
 Let's look at some of the reasons why these attachments are so persistent

5.1. There are benefits. We usually do not involve ourselves in any kind of behaviour if
 we do not believe it benefits us in some way. As painful as dependency is, it does give us some
 gratification. The fear of losing this gratification makes dependent relationships hard to give up.
 Some of the **perceived** benefits of an emotional dependency include:

- emotional security: a dependent relationship give us the sense that we have at least
one relationship we can count on. This gives us the feeling of belonging to someone.
- intimacy: our need for intimacy, warmth and affection might be filled through this
relationship
- self worth: our ego is boosted when someone admires us or is attracted to us. We
also appreciate feeling needed.
- relief from boredom: a relationship like this might add excitement and romance when
life seems dull otherwise. In fact the stressful ups and downs of the relationship can be
addictive.
- escape from responsibility: the focus on maintaining the relationship can provide an
escape from confronting personal problems and responsibilities
- familiarity: many people do not know any other way of relating. They are afraid to
give up the "known" for the "unknown".

5.2. We can't see it as sin. The culture we live in has taken the truth "God is love" and
 turned it around to mean "Love is God". In modern history romantic or emotional love is
 viewed as a law unto itself: when you "love" someone (meaning: when you have intense romantic
 feeling for someone) anything you do with that person is "OK" Viewed in this light, dependent
 relationships seem beautiful, even noble.

± Dependent attachments can be easy to rationalize, especially if there is no sexual involvement.

± Genuine feeling of love and friendship might be used to excuse the intense jealousy and possessiveness present in the dependency.

± Also we may not be able to see how a dependent relationship separates us from God. "I pray more than ever" one woman told us. What she didn't mention was that she never prayed about anything **but** her dependent relationship.

± Sometimes people say "This friend draws me even closer to God" What usually has happened is that the emotional dependency has given them a euphoric feeling that masquerades as "closeness to God". When the friend withdraws, even slightly, God suddenly seems far away!

5.3. Root problems are not dealt with. We might end a dependent relationship by breaking it off or moving away. However, if we still have unhealed hurts, unfilled needs, or an unrepentant heart, we will fall right into another dependent relationship, or return to the one we left. Dealing with the surface symptom rather than the real problem leaves the door open to future stumbling.

5.4. Spiritual influences are overlooked. When we ignore the Holy Spirit's correction, we make ourselves vulnerable to satanic oppression. Those who willingly enter dependent relationships become candidates for spiritual deception. Wrong begins to seem right to them, and truth begins to sound like a lie. When breaking free from dependent relationships we sometimes overlook the importance of spiritual warfare: prayer, fasting and deliverance. If emotional ties have gone deep into a person's life, especially if sexual sin has been involved, there is a need to break the bonds that have formed between the two people. When dependency has been a lifelong pattern, ties need to be broken with all past partners as well. If the spiritual aspects are not dealt with thoroughly, this sin pattern will continue.

5.5. We don't want to give up our sin. Counsellors know the frustration of going through all imaginable steps of counselling, support and spiritual warfare on behalf of a counselee only to realize this individual has no interest in changing. People in dependent relationships sometimes say they want out, but they really want to be relieved from the responsibility of doing anything about the problem. They hope talking to a counsellor will free them from the pressures of their conscience. Meanwhile their desire and intent is to continue having the dependent relationship. Sometimes the bottom line is this: an emotional dependency is hard to break because **the individuals involved don't want it to be broken.**
Jam.4:8

6. THE PATH OUT OF DEPENDENCY

The tendency to draw our life and security from another human being is a problem nearly everyone faces. However it is only after we encounter repeated frustration and sorrow in emotionally dependent relationships that we hunger for something more satisfying. We long to find contentment and rest in our relationships with others, but how do we break the old patterns?

Before we start exploring the different elements in overcoming dependency, we need to grasp an important truth: **there is no formula** that leads us to a transformed life. Lifelong tendencies towards dependent relationships cannot be changed by following "ten easy steps". Jesus Christ desires to do an intimate and unique work within each of us by the power of His Holy Spirit. Change will come as we submit to Him and cooperate with that work.

The guidelines we are considering here illustrate ways God has worked in various people's lives to bring them out of emotional dependency. Some of these suggestions apply to gaining freedom from a specific relationship, other pertain to breaking lifelong patterns. All represent different aspects of a whole picture: turning away from forms of relationships rooted in our sin nature and learning new ways of relating based on our new natures in Christ.

6.1. Making a commitment to Honesty. Dependencies are often hard to break because of the deception that sets in; we can't see dependency as sin. This deception is broken when we are **honest with ourselves**, admitting we are involved in a dependent relationship and acknowledging our dependency as sin. Then we are ready for **honesty with God**, confessing our sin to Him. We do not have to hide our confusion, our anger or any of our feelings. We just need to pour out our hearts to Him asking Him to give us the willingness to obey His will in this matter.

6.2. Being honest with another person. We can seek out a mature brother or sister in Christ and confess to them, "Look, I'm really struggling with my feelings towards my partner on the evangelism team. I'm getting too attached to her. Could you pray with me about this?" As we "walk in the light" in this way, we can be cleansed and forgiven. If we are aware of specific ways we have manipulated circumstances to promote the dependent relationship, we can ask forgiveness for these actions too. The deeper the honesty, the deeper the cleansing we will receive.

In choosing someone to share with, the best choice is a stable, trustworthy Christian who is not emotionally involved in the situation. The person can then intercede for us and hold us accountable, especially if we give him or her freedom to periodically ask how things are going. Extreme caution needs to be used in sharing our feelings with the one we are dependent on. I have seen regrettable results when one brother (or sister) has shared with another in an intimate setting, "Hey, I'm really attracted to you. I think I'm getting dependent" It's better to seek the counsel and prayer of a spiritual elder before even considering this step, and, even then, we need to ask the Lord to shine His light on our motives.

6.3. Introducing changes in Activities: Gradual Separation. It's easy to begin planning our lives around the partner in the dependent relationship. Often this may include being involved in the same church. Quitting that church just because the other person is there is not the best solution. A parting of the ways must take place however, and that may incorporate involvement in individual activities and only getting together in group situations. Placing ourselves unnecessarily in the presence of the person we are dependent on will only prolong the pain and delay God's work in our lives.

6.4. Allow God to work. This sound so obvious, but it's not as easy as it seems! After we confess to God that we are hopelessly attached to this individual and are powerless to do anything about it, we invite Him to come in and "change the situation". The Lord never ignores a prayer like this. Some people begin to confront us about this relationship, but we assure them that it is all under control. Our friend starts going to a different Bible study, and soon we find a

good reason to switch to the same one. The Holy Spirit nudges us to get rid of certain record albums, but we keep forgetting to do it. We ask God to work in our lives, but then we do everything in our power to make sure He doesn't! I've learned from my own experience that thwarting God's attempts to take someone out of my life only produces prolonged unrest and agony. Cooperation with the Holy Spirit brings the quickest possible healing from broken relationships.

6.5. Prepare for grief and depression. Letting go of a dependent relationship can be as painful as going through a divorce. If we acquaint ourselves with the grief process and allow ourselves to hurt for a season, our healing will come faster. If we repress our pain and deny ourselves the time we need to recover, we will carry around unnecessary guilt and bitterness. Some people have said that they found the Psalms to be very comforting during this time of "letting go".

6.6. Cultivate other friendships. Even if it's difficult, scary, and our hearts are not in it...we need to do it. Our feelings will catch up later, and we will be glad we have made the investment in the lives of our new friends. The Lord will choose relationships for us if we will let Him. Willingness to accept the friend He gives us will deepen our relationship with Him as well. He knows just the relationships we need to draw out our special qualities and chip off the rough edges.

6.7. Discover God's vision for relationships. If we love another person as God loves him, we will desire to see that man or woman conformed to the image of Christ. The Lord wants to bring forth qualities in us that reflect His character and gifts that enable us to do His work. Andy Comiskey of Desert Stream in Santa Monica, California, has said: "At the onset of any friendship, we must choose a motivation. Either we mirror a friend's homosexual desirability or his/her new identity in Christ. This may sound tough but our willingness to be disciplined emotionally might just make or break a friendship. When we exchange another's best interest for our own neediness, we run the risk of losing the friendship". If we desire an exclusive emotional involvement with this friend, then our desires are in conflict with what the Lord wants. We need to ask ourselves: "Am I working with God, or against Him in this person's life?"

6.8. Resolve the deeper issues. The compulsion to form dependent relationships is a symptom of deeper spiritual and emotional problems that need to be faced and resolved. Self-analysis is the least effective way to uncover these problems.

± The most effective way is to go directly to Jesus and ask Him to show us what is wrong. "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given him." (James 1:5).

± Another effective way is to go to those God has placed in positions of authority over us and submit to their counsel and prayer.

± For some a long term counselling relationship will help us face the sins we need to repent of and the hurts that need healing.

± For other a small covenant group that meets regularly for deep sharing and prayer will help tremendously.

± Sometimes personal prayer and fasting draws us to God and breaks sin bondages in a way nothing else will. The desire to find our identity and security in another human being is a common sin with a myriad of possible causes.

± Confession, repentance, deliverance, counselling and inner healing are means the

Lord will use to bring purity and emotional stability into our lives.
 ± The healing and forgiveness are ours through Jesus' atonement. We can receive them
 by humbling ourselves before Him and before others in His body.

6.9. Prepare for the long haul. Sometimes victory escapes us because we prepare for a battle rather than a war. Whether we are trying to gain freedom from a specific attachment or from lifelong patterns of dependency, we need to prepare for long term warfare.

- > We need to know ourselves: our vulnerabilities, the types of personalities we are likely to "fall for", the times when we need to be specially careful.
- > We need to know our adversary: know the specific lies Satan is likely to tempt us with and be prepared to reject those lies, even when they sound good to us!
- > More than anything we need to know our Lord. We need to be willing to believe that God loves us. Even if we cannot seem to feel His love, we can take a stand by faith that he does love us and begin to thank Him for this fact.
- > As we learn of God's character through His Word, we can relinquish our images of Him as being cruel, distant or unloving.
- > A love relationship with Jesus is our best safeguard against emotionally dependent relationships.

7. IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEPENDENCY?

Though overcoming dependence may be painful for a season, it is one of the most curable ailments known to man. Often people are so healed that they cannot even conceive of the extent of their former bondage to dependent relationships.

7.1. The immediate reward in giving up a dependent relationship is **peace with God**. Even in the midst of pain over the loss of the dependency, we experience peace, relief and joy as our fellowship with God is restored. "It's like waking up after a bad dream" one woman told us

7.2. **Peace with ourselves** is another blessing we receive. It's much easier to like ourselves when we are not scheming and striving to maintain a relationship we know God does not desire for us. When we have relinquished a dependent attachment, we are no longer tormented with fear of losing the relationship. This too brings peace to our hearts.

7.3 In the aftermath of dependency we discover a new **freedom to love others**. We are members of one another in the body of Christ. When our attentions and affections are wrapped up totally in one individual, other people in our lives are suffering for it. They are not receiving the love from us God intends them to have.

7.4. Individuals who have given up dependent relationships say they discover a new **caring and compassion for people** that's not based on sexual or emotional attraction.

7.5. They find they are **less critical of people and less defensive**.

7.6. They begin to notice that their lives are founded on the **real security** found through their relationship with Christ, not the false security of a dependent relationship.

7.7. And, finally, overcoming dependency brings us a **freedom to minister to others**.

We can only lead others where we have been willing to go ourselves. When we no longer rationalize wrong attachments, we have new liberty in the Spirit to exhort and encourage others! Our discernment becomes clearer, and spiritual truth is easier to understand and accept. We become clean vessels, fit for the Lord's use.

In our desire to remain free from this problem, we need to remember that hiding from people is not the alternative to dependency. Dependency is a subtle counterfeit to the tremendously rich and fulfilling relationship the Lord intends for us to have through Him. If we are trying to overcome the sin of dependency, let's remember that Jesus is not harsh with us. He will teach us to love people in a holy way, and He knows that this takes time. There is a battle between the flesh and the spirit in every area of our lives - relationships are no exception. But Jesus is the One who is bringing His body together, and we are learning. "I am confident of this: that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6)

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Available from: LOVE IN ACTION
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RECOMMENDED READING

These hand-outs are available through:

OUTPOST:

1821 University Ave So #296,
St Paul, MN 55104

Wayward Emotions - Ed Hurst

Living in the Safety Zone - Ed Hurst

The company you keep - Robbi Kenney

Healing through the body of Christ - Robbi Kenny

and this book: Homosexuality: Laying the axe to the Roots - Ed Hurst & Robbi Kenney

These hand-outs available through: LOVE IN ACTION:

Relinquishment - Lori Thorkelson

Emotions: How do we handle them? - Lori Thorkelson

Dependent Relationships - Bill Hernandez

Idolatry: as aspect of Gay Relationships - Ladonna Baumer

EXODUS INTERNATIONAL- North America,

P.O.Box 2121, San Rafael, CA 94912

Sources:

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5. van der Weele, Theo, Counsellor, lectures at IHCF Training centre
6. Notes in relationship by Truus Wierda, wife of missionary Dr in Middel East
7. Anderson Neil, book, Victory over the Darkness
8. Dawson Joy, book, Intimate friendship with God.

Compiled by Helga Penzhorn July 1988 and Leonora van Tonder, March 1989.

Updated by Leonora van Tonder, April 1992 and June 2002

ADDENDUM 4.

SAFE PEOPLE:

1. WHY DO WE NEED SAFE PEOPLE?

1.1. **We need others to help us grow:** Relating to each other is a spiritual activity. We think that the only indicator of whether we are growing spiritually, is in our service, but our human relationships are one of the key indicators of our spiritual life and growth. Jesus came to earth not only to save us, but also to show us how to love God and others. We need others to grow into the kind of people that God wants us to be

1.2. **Supply of emotional and spiritual energy:** Tiredness, loss of motivation, depression can be expressions of emotional emptiness, the lack of being connected to others, isolation. Col 2:19. The body is supplied by other members of the body

1.3. **Comfort.** 2 Cor 7:6 Paul was comforted by the coming of Titus. Those who are grieving are comforted by the presence of another, not by what they say or do. Eccl. 4:9-12

1.4. **Strength to set boundaries.** One of our greatest needs for emotional and spiritual health is to have healthy boundaries. We need to have the ability to say “no” to evil and sometimes this evil comes from hurtful people. Sadly we at times don’t have the strength to stand up to it. We need the support of a group of safe people to strengthen us, so we can say “no” and make a stand against evil.

1.5. **Foundation for aggression.** Aggression is not always negative, as it can help us to achieve our purpose in life. Passive people do not know how to go out and attack life and accomplish their goals. Lacking the modelling from a strong man/woman we need the support of a group of safe people and their modelling can enable us to develop our God-given aggression in the right way.

1.6. **Encouragement and support.** It can be discouraging to “fight the good fight” Rom 15:4; Phil 2:1

The Bible teaches that we need to be encouraged by one another. Eph 6:21-22. Although we have an image of Paul as a spiritual giant, but he writes in many places that the encouragement and love of others kept him going through difficult times. Eccl 4:9-12

1.7. **Modelling.** We all come from a dysfunctional family - the family of Adam, and may not have received the modelling at home to become Christlike adults. God gives us the body of Christ to parent, mentor and teach us. 1 Cor 4:16,17; Titus 2:3-8

1.8. **Healing.** The healing of any emotional disorder is through grief. We need to grieve painful losses, love that will never be realized, dreams that have been crushed. Matt 5:4 - blessed at those who mourn for they shall be comforted. We cannot do this without something new to attach to. Grieving requires a new relationship. We must have the Lord and others to connect to, so as to let go of what we have lost.

1.8. **Confrontation and Discipline.** Others need to love us enough to confront us when we are wrong. We are usually unaware of the areas where we most need to change; or we know but resist owning; or know and rebel against it. In all these cases we need the loving confrontation of the body of Christ, so we can be saved from ourselves. Gal 6:1 It has to be done in Humility, honesty and gentleness.

Sometimes this can be very painful and conflictual, but it is so important for us to save each other from ultimate destruction. Discipline and confrontation are some of the best gifts our family of safe relationships in the body of Christ can give us.

1.9. **Good deeds.** We need good relationships to stimulate us to do good deeds, to give

our lives in the service of the Lord and others. Heb. 10:24-25

1.10. **Rooting and grounding.** We need relationships in which we are rooted and grounded so we can weather the bad times when they come. Col 2:2 being knitted together in love - this gives us the support we need to be able to grow through the trials of life

1.11. **Love.** We learn to love in relationships, we cannot love in a vacuum. We receive love and this teaches us how to love. 1 John 4:19 Loving people are loving, because they have been loved, and they have followed that example. As we relate to others in the body of Christ we learn how unloving we really are. They tell us, we apologize, receive forgiveness and then try to do better. Through the process of failure, forgiveness and growth we find out the areas where we need to change, and God is then able to change us.

2. WHERE DO WE FIND THE SAFE PEOPLE?

2.1. **The place where we would expect to find safe people, does not always have them.** Reality is that even in church, amongst the believers there are unsafe people. We find judgement, pride, self-centeredness, manipulation, abandonment, abuse, control, perfectionism domination and every kind of relational sin known to man! We desire to find safety, security, love and complete acceptance in the church, but often our hopes are dashed. In our natural families we had no choice, but in the church we can choose who we are going to trust and get close to. However we are often not so discerning, we want everybody to be "safe" - and then they are not. Many do find healing, nurture, love and acceptance in the body of Christ.

2.2. **Reality according to the Bible.** Our ideals for the church are not reflected in the Bible, which says that there are wolves as well as sheep in the church. There are weeds as well as good grain according to Matt 13:24-30 and they will grow together till the harvest. There may be people doing the right things, but they are not truly His sheep. Matt 7:22-23. Even amongst the true believers there is a mixture.

Matt 13: 19-23.

2.3. **Wisdom and character.** The church is full of safe people, unsafe people and hurtful lingerers. There is no perfect family this side of heaven.

- So the Bible tells us we need to be discerning.
- We need to make informed choices, and to be careful.
- We need to work to find safe people using our wisdom, discernment and character.
 - We get wisdom and discernment through knowledge and experience.
 - But our own character problems can get in the way of using that knowledge and experience and we will still make poor choices.
 - So we need to face the weaknesses inside of us, dealing with them and becoming the people of character that can make the right choices.
 - Get the log out of our own eye first, then we will be able to get the splinter out of our brother's eye.

3. SOME OPTIONS:

- Some churches/fellowships have a safe character as a group:**
 - Grace is preached from the pulpit and is the foundation of how people are treated
 - Truth is preached without compromise, but without a spirit of law and judgement
 - Leaders are aware of their own weaknesses and their need to grow; are open about their own hurt, pain, failures, humanity. Instead of "having it all together" and being

insulated from confrontation and change, they are in a process of healing and opening up to their people for support and accountability

□ They use small groups to touch people's lives, messages focus on community in the body of Christ as well as doctrine. The culture of one of forgiven sinners, not self-righteous religious Pharisees

□ Instead of being a self-contained unit and thinking it has all the answers, it networks into the community, using resources from other groups and organisations

□ The teaching has a relational emphasis as well as a vertical one. Relationships between people is seen as part of spirituality as well as relationship with God

□ The teaching sees brokenness, struggle and inability as normal parts of the sanctification process

□ There are opportunities to serve through various ministries.

□ **Restorative friendships.**

□ We value friendships as one of the most powerful tools that God uses to change and heal character. □ We are healed in relationship with others and our characters are

changed, sanctification takes place. □ Friends give us what we need in the area of acceptance, support, discipline, modelling and many other relational ingredients that produce change.

How to choose good friendships:

* Acceptance and grace

* Acceptance and grace

* Mutual struggles, although they do not have to be the same ones

* Loving confrontation

* Both parties need other support systems as well to avoid the same kind of toxic dependency on each other that led to the problems

* familiarity with the growth process where both parties have “entered in” and have some knowledge of the process so as to avoid the blind leading the blind

* Mutual interest and chemistry, a genuine liking

* An absence of a “one-up, one-down” dynamics

* both parties in a relationship with the Lord

* Honesty and reality instead of “over-spiritualizing”
* an absence of controlling behaviour

Support groups.

- Groups are an extremely powerful tool for spiritual and emotional growth.
- The dynamics of the group is absent in one-on-one relationships.
- Members realize that everybody has pain and are not tempted to judge one another.
- There are many different kinds of groups, but they need a good, trained leader

otherwise they can recreate the problems that the persons are trying to get help with.

Individual therapy.

When people have been really badly hurt and have too many things to deal with, individual therapy is a powerful, proven method to deal with deep issues and developmental problems.

- Choose carefully, so you do not get the wrong kind of therapist.

4. HOW DO WE LEARN TO BE SAFE?

Are we “safe people” for others? What do we do with safe people, after we find them? We are used to “doing” so we need to learn about the dynamics of closeness.

4.1. **Learn to ask for help:** Word “ask” appears almost 800 times in the Bible. We are not only to ask from the Lord, but also from people. Why is it important to ask?

4.1.1. We develop humility. This destroys the illusion of self-sufficiency, reminds us that we are needy, so opens the door to God and to others to give to us

4.1.2. We own our needs. We ask from the other person, leaving them free to give without obligation. We admit that our needs are our responsibility, but ask because the other person has something to offer. We do not demand. When we demand love we destroy it

4.1.3. We are taking initiative. Helps us to get out of the trap of passivity hoping that somehow someone will know what we need and come to our aid

4.1.4. We develop a grateful character. Those who have been helped are grateful and help others; those who have been loved, can love others. Luke 7:47

4.1.5. Increases the odds that we will get something. Easy to ask for functional help, but many have a problem to ask for their relational needs to be met. Jesus asked His disciples to be with Him in his greatest need. Mark 14:34. Asking in this way is difficult:

- I don’t ask well, but I’d like to start connecting with you
- I’m in a spiritual and emotional place in my life now where I would like to start making attachments and I’d like that with you
- I need you
- You’re important to me, and I’d like to spend time learning how to be close
- If you’re interested, I’d like to deepen our relationship

4.2. **Learn to need:** Many people are so emotionally detached that they have lost their ability to connect with the outside world. Life is only a series of thoughts and actions, without a genuine sense of rich connection with others. Our needs are asleep within us, they have been buried. We may have been hurt, deprived, disconnected from relationships for so long that the need simply “died”, so we have no experience of “wanting” connection with people. Yet God created us for connection, to long for relationship, so we can regain our sense of neediness.

4.2.1. Confess the inability to need. Tell your safe people how hard it is for you to rely on, depend on or want others to be close. Slowly learn to trust again, instead of shrinking back.

4.2.2. Don’t fake it. Do not pretend that you are closer or needier than you feel. It will take time to feel these needs, but safe people will allow you the time to develop this

4.2.3. Keep your boundaries. You still need to be a “separate” person, so don’t spend so much time with people till you feel resentful and overwhelmed.

4.2.4. Confess the need that you cannot experience. Let people know what you are asking for, even if they know you are not “feeling” it yet. State that: I need ...

- My relationship with you

- To know that I matter to you
- To know that my imperfections don't push you away from me
- To know that, as far as you are able, you are not going to leave me
- To know that you understand me
- To know that you love me

You may not be able to feel these truths, but that does not make them less true.

Stating them paves the way for you to experience them.

4.2.5. Pay attention to what evokes your hunger. An empathetic statement from someone? They did not criticize you when you spoke about a problem? They identify with your pain? Something happens inside and you begin to feel a little love, your eyes become misty, you feel warm inside, you feel closer to your friend and look forward to being with them again. Identify what it was that drew your response and tell your friend this, how it helps you and that you desire more of that

4.3. **Work through resistances:** Resistance is our tendency to avoid growth, to keep the spiritual and emotional "status quo", move away from God's provision for our spiritual growth. Rom 7:15 Most of the things that drive us to choose unsafe people or avoid people, are resistances. We are full of ways to keep us away from safe, loving, supportive people. We often (crazily) spend our lives avoiding those who could fill our emotional tanks! Those who think they have no resistance to intimacy, should beware!

1 Cor 10:12

How do we deal with the resistances?

4.3.1. Identify them. Denial is our worst enemy. With the feedback of friends, make a list of the ways we shrink from safe people, this is the road map to understanding ourselves and our needs

4.3.2. Bring these into the relationship. It takes humility to ask others to help you work through our perfectionism, guilt or merger wishes. Yet those very things will start melting as we connect

4.3.3. Meet the underlying needs. These resistances are designed to protect us from hurt, obsolete guardians of our souls, like Adam and Eve's fig leaves. When the underlying needs for connection, truth, forgiveness are met, they will lose their power

4.3.4. Do the opposite of what the resistances tell us. When in need the internal resistance may say:

- Only go to God with this
- Handle it yourself
- Ignore this need - you're feeling sorry for yourself
- It's your moral failure
- Stand up - don't be weak!
- Find someone to criticize you
- Find someone to take care of you

We need to rebel against these unbiblical resistances! They will tell us to seek critical, irresponsible, abandoning people, or not to seek at all. Instead we should seek out the loving, responsible and faithful ones

4.4. **Invite the truth about ourselves:** We have so many blind spots and areas where we are unaware of our destructive ways, that we need to ask others to tell us the truth. As David asked God in Ps 139:23,24.

We often do not know how we affect others, so we need to learn about love, limits, goodness and badness.

How to ask for feedback:

- What do I do that pushes you away from me?
- What do I do that draws you towards me?

When we say these (difficult!) words to people, we are saying:

- I value how you feel about me
- I want you to be a very important part of my life
- I respect what you observe in me
- I don't want to hurt you or our relationship
- I trust you with the most vulnerable part of myself

Many are terrified at the feedback they may receive, we may have heard so many hurtful or untrue things about ourselves from critical persons, or we may feel we are a sham, others are waiting to pounce on us and expose all our badness to the world. However safe people are not like that.

They want us to know the truth because:

- The truth increases love. People who are honest are free to love each other, because the fear of attachment is gone and there is no fear in love. 1 John 4:18
- Truth is always our friend. When we understand how we turn people off, helps us to increase the quality of our lives and relationships. The truth sets us free. John 8:32

We may hear insights, perceptions, emotions we had never expected. When people are free to tell the truth they tend to be quite honest, but also quite loving. Some of the truths we may find:

- ± How people feel when you withdraw from them
- ± How much they miss you when you detach
- ± How they would like you to be more open about your losses
- ± How it hurts them when you don't respect their boundaries
- ± How your imperfections draw them closer
- ± How much your own journey is helping them to connect with the Lord and with others

These are the sum and substance of life itself, because relationships are what life is all about. Value and cherish these truths from your safe people. The more rigorous we are with our own self examination, the better. The more we minimize our weaknesses, failings, the harder the safe people have to work to share the truth with us.

4.5. **Enter into forgiveness:** Safe people lead us into a life of forgiveness. The answer to failure is always forgiveness. Safe people have given up the demands that they, or anyone else be perfect in this life. They expect failure and disappointment from those they love, it is a normal part of life. They do not fight the losses and sins of this life by becoming bitter or angry because they know that we are living in a fallen world. They know that loving is more important than holding onto the past as long as the past has been worked through and resolved. There are two sides to forgiveness:

1. Learn to **receive** forgiveness: Being forgiven for our sins, badness, weaknesses, imperfections means reconciliation. Someone else knows and does not condemn us. As we experience someone else who accepts us as we are, we can also accept the reality of our own imperfections. We accept that we are both good and bad as people. Skills of receiving

forgiveness:

- % Learn to apologize
- % Learn to feel empathy for the pain you caused the other, rather than guilt
- % Learn to admit our faults without rationalizing or making excuses
- % Learn to ask “Will you forgive me for hurting you?”
- % Learn to accept forgiveness without trying to make up for our faults, or pay for our

mistakes

- % Learn to accept the love that knows we are frail and yet still loves us.

2. Learn to **give** forgiveness: Forgiven people, become forgiving people When someone forgives us, the relief is tremendous. Forgiveness is not really about the person who hurt us, for even if they are unrepentant, in denial or dead, the one who is set free is ourself. When we learn to cancel emotional debts we become free from the past. The other does not need to apologize before we can get on with life. Jesus said: Matt 6:15 if we do not forgive, God will not forgive us. This is a spiritual reality, for if we hold on to the hurts of others, we cannot be forgiven ourselves. Some things that will help us to forgive:

- % Confess the hurts we have caused others
- % Confess the hurts we have received from them
- % Feel our negative emotions such as sadness, hurt, anger, shame caused by the injury
- % Get from your safe people, the things you needed before from those who hurt you
- % Work through your desire for revenge and instant justice
- % Grieve over what cannot be and accept the reality

Your safe people will stand with you in this process, which is difficult but essential for spiritual growth.

4.6. **Give something back:** The preceding points have spoken of ways in which we are helped to become mature, be repaired, conformed to the image of Christ. But when we have taken in all that goodness, we become grateful and we desire to give something back. We can only give what we have received. There will be needs in our safe people that we can meet, but we need not become anxious in trying to think what to give!

4.6.1. Understand what we have gained: Put it into words:

- = we have learned how to be honest;
- = how to trust;
- = that it is okay to have needs;
- = to admit when we withdraw. Say these things to our safe people.

4.6.2. Learn to read the “need signals” of our friends:

- = As we become closer to people we can learn to read the cues.
- = They become quiet, or busy, overwhelmed, or have distressing emotions.

4.6.3. Offer to help.

= “You have meant a lot to me. Help me to know what you need, and how I may be able to help you”

= That is an invitation to a safe person to give you some good information

4.6.4. Be there. We do not only “do things” for the other person, but need to listen to their pain and losses. = Find out what hurts them deeply, and tell them that we care about them.

- = Let them depend on us for support.
- = Accept their weaknesses and failings.

4.6.5. Tell the truth.

- Your safe people will have their own blind spots.
- Tell them truthfully when they are hurting you, themselves or others.
- Confront in humility, don't be parental, but telling them will help them stay away from harm

4.6.6. Go into the world.

- Get out of your "safety zone"
- Find opportunities to help those who have nothing to give you in return and become a safe person for them.
- Having received safety, give it over and over again.

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