

Relationships in the Church

Rodney Nulph

The church of the New Testament is made up of relationships. One of the greatest joys of the Christian life is to have eternal relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ (Philippians 1:3). While these relationships are but a foretaste of Heaven itself, sometimes these relationships are not what they should be scripturally. Often, differing personalities are the root cause of problem relationships in the church. How should our relationships be as “fellow heirs” and “partakers of his promise” (Ephesians 3:6)? The Holy Spirit did not leave us to guess how we are to treat one another in the church.

Firstly, consider **inspiration’s instructions** on the matter. God was not silent about how our relationships should be in His family. In fact, the New Testament is inundated with “one another” passages. “Be at peace with one another” (Mark 9:50), “don’t grumble among one another” (John 6:43), “be like-minded one toward another” (Romans 15:5), don’t bite, devour, and consume one another (Galatians 5:15), be kind, tenderhearted, and forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32), “love one another” (John 13:34; 15:12, Romans 13:8). One cannot study the New Testament with an honest heart and miss the fact that inspiration’s instructions are clear about our treatment of one another. Healthy relationships in God’s family are propagated when each member is sincerely concerned about one another!

Secondly, consider the **divine demonstration** on the matter. There is no better example on healthy relationships than that of our Master, Jesus Christ! It was written of Jesus, “...having loved his own which were in the world, he loved unto the end” (John 13:1b). Even at the point when mankind cruelly nailed Jesus to the cross, He said, “...Father forgive them...” (Luke 23:34b). Jesus’ life centered around others and doing what was best for them. That is exactly what real love is! “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). If each Christian strives to be like Jesus (Hebrews 12:1), healthy relationships can be a reality!

Lastly, consider an **applied approach** on the matter. While it is clear that inspiration has clearly penned that we must be concerned with one another and treat one another properly, and while Jesus showed us this divine demonstration perfectly, how does that look each day in our lives? Consider the following very seriously.

Firstly, never miss an opportunity to **shut up!** I would guess that a loose tongue has lost more healthy relationships than by any other problem. Speaking of young widows specifically, Paul wrote, “And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not” (1 Timothy 5:13). While young widows were the subject here, this command certainly applies to men and women, widows and widowers, young and old (James 1:26)! Idle talk is **never** healthy!

Secondly, never miss an opportunity to **speak up!** As a Christian, I have the responsibility to speak up and discourage idle talk. Have you ever experienced someone who was “chewing your ear off” about another? What did you do? While it is certainly uncomfortable, Christians need to speak up and end such a rant. We become a partaker in this gossip and idle talk when we fail to

speak up. For more verses on gossip and idle talk, see 2 Corinthians 12:20, Ephesians 4:29, Exodus 23:1, James 1:26, James 4:11, Proverbs 10:19 and Proverbs 11:9, 13.

Lastly, never miss a good opportunity to **build up**! Healthy relationships are nourished when we build each other up! There is plenty in this sin-filled world to tear down, but God's family is busy building up and encouraging! When was the last time you built up one of your brothers or sisters in Christ? Are you a builder or a destroyer? Encouragement changes everything!

Our relationships in God's family, the church, are important. We must never be guilty of dividing relationships, but rather each one must work diligently to build and maintain healthy relationships. Healthy relationships are the result of each one heeding **inspiration's instructions**, by each one following the **divine demonstration** and by each one daily using the **applied approach**. May God bless us with healthy relationships that honor Him!