

Study 1: Desiring God's glory in all our relationships**I. Introductory materials:**

God is the initiator in all healthy relationships and He desires intimacy with us. Ever since the beginning when He first went looking for Adam and Eve in the garden after the fall to sin, he has been pursuing us and making a way for us to know Him personally. Our love for God is shown in our obedience to him and is often expressed in our care and pursuit of healthy relationships with all the people around us. The fall caused alienation and separation between us and God but also between us and other humans. Only in The Incarnation - the death of Christ for us on the cross and in the coming of the Holy Spirit are we able to reverse that separation and alienation. If we are developing genuine intimacy with God on his terms we will also learn to love each other more and more. We will pursue healthy Biblical relationships.

The Apostle John puts it this way in 1 John 4:20; "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."

Out of a healthy vertical relationship with God flow healthy horizontal relationships with each other. This series will focus on working out those horizontal relationships, in the church, with our families, in our neighborhoods and in the work place. "We are praying and asking God to transform us into a people of deep unity and rich community."

II. Large Group Teaching Notes:

The Incarnation, (the loving work of Christ becoming a man, dying on the cross for our sins – which is the message of the gospel of peace) gives us the model (how to) and the motivation (why to) for seeking healthy relationships with each other. Very often in the Bible we are encouraged to treat others the way Christ has treated us. Not as we deserve. Jesus is our model and our motivation. He sought God's will and glory above everything else. He said, "...I seek not to please myself but him who sent me" (John 5:30). He prayed for our unity and our oneness, "that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17:22-23)

So where do we start? In all our relationships it is key that we desire and long for God's glory and will above our own will and glory. Jesus again sets the example praying, "not my will but yours be done!" (Matthew 26:39) Wanting God's will and glory above all other may sound lofty or just theoretical. Especially when we are dealing with difficult people or are caught up in a conflict over an issue. This first study will seek to bring this "lofty ideal" into focus and seek to offer some very practical steps that we can take in order to please God in all of our relationships, not just the fun or easy ones.

How do we seek to please and honor God in all our relationships?

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

– 1 Corinthians 10:31 (our January memory verse)

This will begin to take place as we set aside our own rights, demands and old ways of dealing with others

and begin to develop a very Biblical approach to our relationships with others.

By God's grace in our relationships we seek to honor and please him...

1. By changing our focus away from ourselves and on to Christ – Colossians 3:1-2; Matthew 6:33
2. By placing our trust in the Sovereignty and justice of God – 1 Peter 2:21-23; Proverbs 3:5-6
3. By living in obedient surrender to the express will of God – Matthew 26:42; John 14:15
4. By deciding to act like Christ while longing to become more like him – Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 Peter 2:21-23
5. By relying on Christ; giving him the credit, leaving the results to him – John 15:5; Romans 12:18
6. By asking God for the desire and power to love and serve others – Colossians 3:23-24;
7. By desiring to be an example and a witness to a watching world – Matthew 5:13-16; John 17:22-23
8. By ultimately longing for his praise and commendation over all other – Matthew 25:21;

III. Small Group Discussion Notes: (Use the teaching and the passages cited above to discuss and wrestle with the following questions in your small groups)

A. *Developing a Christ-ward focus*

Where are we usually focused when it comes to our relationships? How can we become more Christ focused?

In what ways is Christ's example helpful? Maybe overwhelming?

How is Christ our model and our motivation?

B. Developing an others focus

In 1 Corinthians 10:24 Paul writes, “Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.” In Philippians 2:3 & 4 he adds, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Putting these two passages together how do we obey and honor God as we seek healthy Biblical relationships with each other?

C. Identifying and addressing at least one real life example(share in your group as you feel comfortable)

Who are you struggling to love or get along with right now and what is the nature of your differences?

What steps can you take starting right now to “seek to honor God and bring glory to him” as you work on this relationship?

What would victory look like from God’s perspective in this relationship?

Decision and Action Time: Commit to pray about and begin to pray for God’s glory and the other parties good in this situation.

Begin to memorize 1 Corinthians 10:31