

## House On The Rock Life Group Study outline 2023

### February: Winning Relationships

#### Outlines for the month

Week 1: God's recipe for Healthy Communication ✓

Week 2: The priority of Love

Week 3: Resolving conflicts

#### Introduction

Two old ladies who shared a home were sitting on their front porch one warm summer evening. One was listening to the sound of the crickets chirping. The other was listening to a choir singing in a church just down the road. The woman listening to the choir said to the other woman, "My, isn't that heavenly music?" "Yes," replied the first. "And I understand they do it by rubbing their legs together."

These ladies had a problem in communication. The words they used were understandable enough. But the meaning behind those words was misunderstood. They approached the words from totally different perspectives, and thus did not communicate.

While the communication breakdown between these two old ladies is humorous, it's not always so funny when it occurs in relationships. Communication problems are always a major factor when relationships fail.

#### Pilot text

***1 Pet 3:8-12 [TPT] 8Now, this is the goal: to live in harmony with one another and demonstrate affectionate love, sympathy, and kindness toward other believers. Let humility describe who you are as you dearly love one another. 9Never retaliate when someone treats you wrongly, nor insult those who insult you, but instead, respond by speaking a blessing over them—because a blessing is what God promised to give you. 10For the Scriptures tell us: Whoever wants to embrace true life and find beauty in each day 11must stop speaking evil, hurtful words and never deceive in what they say. Always turn from what is wrong and cultivate what is good; eagerly pursue peace in every relationship, making it your prize. 12For the eyes of the Lord Yahweh rest upon the godly, and his heart responds to their prayers. But he turns his back on those who practice evil.***

- Looking at the pilot scriptures, what are the key ingredients of God's recipe for healthy communication?
  - Demonstrating love, sympathy and kindness towards others
  - Not retaliating when verbally abused
  - Not speak evil, hurtful words; or set out to deceive others in order to gain an advantage over them

- Blessing others with words that build up
- Make peace your prize at the end of every communication
- For more reading on the subject, see [here \(provided by bible.org\)](#).
- Questions for discussion:
  1. Agree/disagree (with your reasons): “Selfishness is the root of most communication problems”
  2. Is there a place in Christian communication for “a good argument”? Why/why not?
  3. Is excessive verbal abuse grounds for marital separation or divorce? Defend your answer biblically.
  4. How should a Christian deal with their spouse’s abusive speech to their children?

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A little girl stayed for dinner at the home of her first grade friend. The vegetable was buttered broccoli and the mother asked if she liked it. The child politely replied, "Oh, yes, I love it!" But when the broccoli was passed she declined to take any. The hostess said, "I thought you said you loved broccoli." The girl replied sweetly, "Oh, yes ma'am, I do, but not enough to eat it."

Do you love your fellow Christians in this church? "Oh, yes," you say, "the Lord commanded us to love one another. I love the Lord's people!" Well, then, why are you and that brother not on speaking terms? "Him? He ripped me off in a business deal. And he calls himself a Christian!" I see. Why are there hard feelings between you and that sister over there? "Her? She's a gossip. Do you know what she said about me behind my back? The Lord knows that I've tried to be nice to her, but there has to be a limit on how much you do for someone like her." Okay.

Yes, we love broccoli, but not enough to eat it. We love the brethren, but not enough to work out our differences. We love humanity; it's people we can't stand!

Today, Christians who get their feelings hurt just move on to another church. Why go through the effort, the bother, and the pain of working through relational problems? Just go to another church where the people are more loving. And when you get hurt there, don't worry—there are dozens more churches in town. You can go for years without ever needing to work through hurt feelings and damaged relationships. All the while you can smile politely and say, "I love broccoli, but not enough to eat it."

But if that's the way you choose to deal with relational problems, you'll never learn the reality of practical Christian love. The truth is, we're a lot like porcupines. As long as we keep our distance, everything is fine. But when we start getting close to one another, someone's going to get stuck! If every time you get stuck you move on, you'll never know the joy of true Christian love and the testimony of the Lord's church will suffer.

#### Pilot text

**[Col 3:13-14 \[TPT\] 13Tolerate the weaknesses of those in the family of faith, forgiving one another in the same way you have been graciously forgiven by Jesus Christ. If](#)**

***you find fault with someone, release this same gift of forgiveness to them. 14For love is supreme and must flow through each of these virtues. Love becomes the mark of true maturity.***

- What does biblical love mean?
  - The core of biblical love is not emotion, but commitment. It's not a commitment to make the other person immediately happy, but rather to seek the person's highest good. Glorifying God is the highest good for every person. Thus, sometimes love has to gently confront the other person, seeking to help him or her grow to be more like Christ.
- Is love alone sufficient to ensure a successful relationship?
  - Jerome, the fourth century Bible scholar, says that when the apostle John was in his extreme old age, he was so weak that he had to be carried into the church meetings. This was the man who, with his brother, was so hotheaded that Jesus nicknamed them, "the sons of thunder." But as he grew in Christ, he became known as "the apostle of love.". At the end of the church meetings, the old apostle would be helped to his feet to give a word of exhortation to the church. He would always say, "Little children, love one another." After many weeks of this same message given over and over, the church grew weary of hearing it. It was as if the old man's brain had stuck on this one thing. So they asked him why he constantly repeated the same message. The wise apostle said, "Because it is the commandment of the Lord and the observation of it alone is sufficient." (Cited in Clarke's Commentary [Abingdon-Cokesbury Press], 1:628.)
  - For more reading on the subject, see [here \(provided by bible.org\)](#).
- Questions for discussion:
  1. Some Christians emphasize unity above sound doctrine. Yet to deny essential doctrine is to deny the faith. Where is the biblical balance?
  2. How has our cultural idea of love hindered or affected our obedience to biblical love?
  3. Does loving my brother mean that I must like him and want to spend a lot of time with him? Does love require being good friends?
  4. How can you love someone who has deeply hurt you? What does that look like? Is it always possible (see Rom. 12:18)?

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Whenever a new friendship, partnership, or love relationship begins, it's full of hope and optimism. Everything seems to go so well, perfectly even – no one puts a foot wrong.

But at some point, the problems start. They begin to discover that they are not as compatible as they had thought. Conflicts grow more intense and frequent. They finally conclude that the relationship was a mistake and go their separate ways, hoping to find someone the next time around who will be more compatible.

But the problem is rarely a lack of compatibility--no two people are compatible. The problem is not knowing how to solve conflicts God's way, or not being willing to go God's way. Any two people who live or walk closely together in any context are going to have conflicts--even "spiritual Christians!" A good relationship isn't one where compatible people never have conflicts; it is one where self-willed people have learned to submit to Christ and to work out their differences in Christian love. You will have a satisfying friendship, partnership or marriage to the degree that you learn to solve your conflicts God's way. Often, you will find that you don't need to find someone more compatible as much as you need to learn how to become more compatible.

#### Pilot text

***[Eph 4:21-23 \[TPT\]](#) 21If you have really experienced the Anointed One, and heard his truth, it will be seen in your life; for we know that the ultimate reality is embodied in Jesus! 22And he has taught you to let go of the lifestyle of the ancient man, the old self-life, which was corrupted by sinful and deceitful desires that spring from delusions. 23Now it's time to be made new by every revelation that's been given to you. 24And to be transformed as you embrace the glorious Christ-within as your new life and live in union with him! For God has re-created you all over again in his perfect righteousness, and you now belong to him in the realm of true holiness. 25So discard every form of dishonesty and lying so that you will be known as one who always speaks the truth, for we all belong to one another.***

- Where do conflicts come from?
  - The main source of conflicts is our old man (old nature; 4:22). A number of other factors also, when coupled with our sin nature, lead to conflicts: We come from

different backgrounds and experiences (type of family, where we're from, income levels, etc.); we have different habit patterns; different convictions and values; different perspectives and ways of thinking; different goals; etc. But with all these factors, the underlying reason for conflicts is our "old man" which is self-seeking, living to gratify its own desires.

- How should we deal with conflict?
  - Replace falsehood with the truth (4:25)
  - Don't let anger control you (4:26-27)
  - Replace selfishness with giving (4:28)
  - Don't let ugly or hateful words come from your mouth (4:29)
  - Be kind and learn to forgive (4:31-32)
  - Always be conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit (4:30)
  - For more reading on the subject, see [here \(provided by bible.org\)](#).
- Questions for discussion:
  1. How can we know how honest to be? Should we share every secret thought?
  2. How can we determine whether our anger is sinful or righteous?
  3. How can we know when to confront and when to let something go?
  4. How can a Christian who has been deeply hurt truly forgive?