

LIFE PRINCIPLES SERIES

RELATIONSHIP

Tonight we begin a new series called life principles. After we learned about the things in the kingdom of God and various principles, we need to understand some life principles because life principles sometimes are not taught in schools. Sometimes all we have is knowledge and skill and then we don't know how to relate to people. We don't know how to form friendship and relationship. So realize that every one of us has life principles. Life principles are the foundation of our life. They guide us whether in ministry or profession. They are the undercurrents of our decision-making. Without life principles we cannot succeed in life. If we apply the right life principles we will be able to achieve prosperity, success in the full measure that God wants His people to have. So we need to understand what some of these life principles are.

The first life principle that I consider important is relationship. See when we all partake of the Lord's Supper in a church service, usually the minister will stand up and read from I Cor. 11 and talk about how on the night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread and He broke it and said, 'Take this for this is My body which is broken' and the He took the cup after supper saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Drink this as often as you do in remembrance of Me.' So in the bread and in the fruit of the wine, we realize that there is a revelation of Jesus Christ in our Lord's Supper. But one thing we forget is that Christianity is not only a revelation of God. There are three realms of revelation.

One of them, I will call it an exposure. Before Jesus Christ came in the New Testament, a lot of the Old Testament saints did not know that their problems were caused by the devil. Even Job did not realize his problems were caused by the

devil. We read the book of Job; we will notice that it was the devil behind it all the time. But not for one moment did Job realize that it was the devil. So we have in the New Testament when Jesus came, He reveals that there is a devil that is causing a lot of problems. In fact we will use right word: Jesus came to expose the works of the devil. Suddenly we realize that there is a devil. Jesus exposed his works. When Jesus came on the scene, He casts out devil. He came in I John 3: 8 to destroy the works of the devil. It is also a revelation of spirit realm of the devil. But the other aspect of revelation that we want to consider tonight is that Christianity opens our eyes or grants us a revelation of our fellowmen where we would learn to love one another as Jesus had commanded us.

Now the commandment of Jesus to love one another as He loves us includes extending that love to those who do not know Him. He talks about loving our enemies in the Beatitudes that is the Sermon on the Mount. So tonight we want to see one life principle, how relationships are vitally important for us to develop our spiritual office, to develop our spiritual gifts for our prayers to be answered and also for all other areas. One of the tactics of the devil in these last days is to destroy families, break down homes and cause anguish among family members. But Jesus came to unite. He came to bring love into the home. You will be surprised that as society progresses, as civilization goes into technology and science, one of the most vital things that we need to bring is morality and a strong family foundation. Without that society will collapse. It's the responsibility of the church to establish strong homes.

Relationship is so important in the bible. In fact we must not forget that Jesus Christ did not only die for our sins. He came to restore us to God and to each other. The cross is both vertical and horizontal. He came to restore us to God and once we are restored to God, we are to be restored to one another. That's Jesus' goal. John the apostle understood the revelation. He said that if we walk in the light, which means that we are restored with God, then we have fellowship with one another. See restoration with God brings restoration to one another. Sometimes if we are not balanced, we stress just on restoration with God and we neglect the emphasis on the restoration with fellowman. When we talk about loving one another, when Jesus says, love thy neighbor as thyself, many of us will ask this question: Who is my neighbor? Not just the one who sits next to you but also the one you wake up every morning and see. It's easier to love somebody whom you

see once in a while because you don't see his or her weak points. But it's another thing to love those whom you see every day. Sometimes when you talk about loving our neighbor, some of us prefer to love our neighbor further down the road than the one staying in the same house. Neighbor is the people who are right with you.

Genesis 37, we want to see how the life of Joseph was. In the life of Joseph, he did not come from a good family relationship although he was very loved by the father. In Genesis 37: 2 *"This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors."*

It tells us here that there were two problems in the family. No. 1 the father showed favoritism. Now that was not of God. That was in the flesh. He loved Joseph because Joseph was born from the wife whom he intended to marry. In that family, we have this family problem where one child is loved more than the others. In you have only one child, there is no problem but if you have two or three children, it's vitally important that you love all equally. Otherwise you will be creating problems in your family. Later on you will reap what you sow. Part of the problem was Jacob.

Secondly, Joseph did not realize the value of right relationship. Joseph did not realize the importance of the relationship. You see he was the one who was loved most. He would just absorb all the carnal affection like a sponge and possibly became a spoilt brat. You may never have thought of Joseph as a spoilt brat but he possibly was. I mean he was the father's favorite. Every time he needs anything, his father would just give it to him. But for the others, it's different. Imagine growing up in a family like that. Joseph took advantage of that. His brothers were older than him, so his brothers went out to take care of the farm and take care of the animals and Joseph would just be the reporter. He was his father's secret spy, so he would go and see his brothers and then he would look around. The bible tells us he always came back and brought a bad report. He always talks about all the horrible things they did. All the wrong things they did. Joseph had a relationship

with the father but he did not see the importance of developing a relationship with his brothers. One day he would pay a price for that.

So in that kind of atmosphere, the gift of God operates in his life. He had two dreams and of all the things his dream exalted him more. You see his brothers already didn't like him. His brothers looked at him from the corner of their eyes. They didn't like him at all. He had no good relationship with his brothers and so his brothers are always eyeing him. Every time he comes around, they just didn't like him. One day, he had the gift of God operating in his life and he had this dream. The first thing he did, he ran to his brothers and said, "I had a dream." The same guy who talked bad about them, he said, in this dream, "All of you bowed down to me." That's just like putting a matchstick on petrol. They were already angry with him. Their hearts were harboring unforgiveness and anger and resentment at him. They already resented the way the father treated him above the others. Now on top of that Joseph brought a bad report about them. Besides that, here comes the dream. That dream says, every one is going to bow down to him. They exploded. There is no way his dream is going to be accepted by them.

Here we learn a lesson that when we have the gift of God in our lives, we must not neglect relationships. There are many who have gifts but they neglect their relationships. No matter how good your gifts are, if you don't have a good relationship, there will be no place for you to function in your gifts. See relationships and gifts must flow together. Relationship provides the room for your gifts to function in. Even if you have the best gift for healing, the best gift of prophesy and it's a genuine gift from God but you have a bad mouth, everybody knows you have a bad mouth, you have a flaw in your character and you have a bad relationship with everybody, with every church, with every person, there is going to be no place for you to function in the gift at all.

It's important for us to understand that in the bible the development of gifts come through an atmosphere of relationship. No relationship no development. That's the price we have to pay. To relate to people means that we have to change. Nobody can relate to another person properly without some sort of give and take. We must be prepared to change. Not just be the way we want to be. We should be

what God wants us to be. In this situation we want to see how in the bible especially in the New Testament that the forming of relationship is very important to the Lord Jesus Christ and also very important to the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes we could be very successful in our own field. For example, you could pass with flying colors all the way through your academic life and graduated from the university with honors and you come up in the professional life. You reach the top of the ladder and everything is well with your skill and knowledge. And yet you don't know how to make friends. You could be earning tons of money but still don't know how to make friends. You were not taught how to make friends. We are not taught how to relate to one another. This is where the church comes in.

There are many people who get away with the way they behave because of their qualification but they don't get away long. Which is why in our church we always encourage the people to go to home fellowship because the church is big and we cannot get to know everybody. For example in a meeting like this, you meet each other but you only know some people, you don't know many others. So all you get to do in a meeting like this or even in a church is to say, I love you with the love of the Lord. That's all. Your love last for about five seconds and that's all you do. In church, most of the time you say hi and then bye. Not much time to build a relationship. You may think in your mind, "I can be a Christian by just going to this seminar and that seminar." I mean our society is such that you could live in a flat all alone by yourself. All paid by yourself. You support yourself. You could go to a meeting all alone and there you attend the meeting. Receive God's Word. Get everything you want. Buy the books, buy the tapes and then drive home. Listen the tapes and read the books at home. A lone ranger and nobody knows you except a very few close friends. In fact all those close friends don't really know you either because you are very secluded. Even though you may be the most qualified person yet you have never known the art of making friends. You know you missed one of the most beautiful things in life to know other people. The most precious creature on earth is the soul of human beings. So that's your life. That's not good enough. You need to form relationship with a fellowship or a group. Attach yourself to that. Now if you are looking for a perfect church, you will never find it. There's no perfect church on this earth. If you are looking then keep looking.

We have to form relationship with people. That means those relationships

that we formed will have to be in a small group. If the church that you attend is large you need to get into a fellowship where you learn to fellowship with one another. There are many reasons. Let me give an illustration of what will happen if you live that kind of life. Lone ranger without Tonto, bachelor boy. This is what will happen. One day you fell in love and you want to get married. Supposing you are in my church. We give you a list of all the things to do; what to get, what to do and all those kind of things. Then we give you the responsibility of selecting your altar boy, your flower girl, your bridesmaid, your best man and all those things. Because it's your wedding, we want you to learn some organization. We put the responsibility on the bridegroom. Supposing the only people in the church you know are those you say hi and bye. This time is your happy occasion and we want to rejoice with you. There are very few people to rejoice with you. You are desperate now; at the end you have to go to the church looking for flower girls and altar boys. You see this kid and say, 'Come! Be my flower girl.' That kid takes one look at you and say, 'This uncle I don't know him.' And you try to approach people but nobody seems to know you. We could even take your name and pin it up on the notice board and write: Tan Ah Tee is getting married. Everybody looks at the notice board and says who is this Tan Ah Tee? Only one person knows you. So on your wedding day, you sent out your invitation cards to every Tom, Dick and Harry in the church. Everybody received a card and says who is this Tan Ah Tee? I don't know him. Is he related to Tan Ah Kow? Then you want to rejoice and on your wedding day you look around, the only people are your uncles and your aunties and no one else. It's a lonely life. When you want to rejoice there is nobody to rejoice with you. And then when something sad happens; for example Tan Ah Tee's grandma died. Nobody calls him up. Isn't it very sad? He could be the highest qualified person but has not learned to develop friendship with people. Supposing you got to know people and you are in fellowship. Something happens, whether good or bad, happy or sad. When something happen, we always tell the people, we want to rejoice with you. The bible says, rejoice with those who rejoice. When something sad we want to weep with you. But if nobody knows you how can we weep with you? When you look at the papers, if a sad thing happens and it's spread in the papers, or somebody you know, you will cry. But a lot of things are happening and its reported in the papers and you look at it, all those people are strangers. So you don't feel for them. But the moment you know somebody there, you began to feel for him or her. Why, because there is a relationship. So in the same way, we realize that relationship is important. We need to set close relationship and there is a price to pay. We need to know principles of relationship that the bible teaches us. I just want to highlight a few in the bible.

In Acts 12 we see here that when Peter was released from the prison, he went to a house. In chapter 12: 12 *“So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.”* Now as we read, it is interesting to see how Peter was released from prison and how the angel came, a prayer that was going on and so forth. But tonight we are interested to find out whose house because I know what it is to open your house to make it a public place. Mary the mother of John Mark opened the house and allowed the home to be used as a prayer meeting. I don't know whether it was a regular thing but I suspect as I read the scripture that it was a regular thing. They specially held it in Mary's house, which was quite frequently used. One of the things that we lose as we get civilized is our closeness with our neighbors. You noticed it. It's different from the village. Everybody in the village knows you but not everybody in the flats knows you. In fact you may not even know the name of the person who stay next door to you. Isn't it very funny? The more civilized you go the thicker the wall. Christianity does not teach us that. It teaches relationship. Love relationship.

Here in Acts 12 as we look at Mary's house that was used. We may read one sentence and think praise God it was used. If anyone who have opened their homes, whether to a minister, a foreigner or someone to stay with you, you would know what is involved. I know because I have taken guests around and they stayed with me before. First of all your privacy is invaded. Then your time is gone. And then sometimes you have to entertain them in the sense that you got to take them out for meals since they stay with you. I am sure they expected to be fed. You don't just put them in a room, let them eat and you just look. Sometimes there is something special and you may want to take them out. You may want to take them to a nice restaurant. You take them there and sometimes you don't expect them to order expensive food like lobster. When that happens you are saying in your heart that one week of your salary is gone. He/she is eating my one-week meal. I want you to know that it cost dollars and cents when you entertain somebody. For anyone who has opened their homes in a home fellowship in the house, you would know at the end of all the wonderful singing, wonderful prayers and everybody say good bye and leave, you go and look at the kitchen - there is pile of work to be done. It's a sacrifice to welcome people into your home in order to develop relationship with people. You see, its one thing to know each other in a public place but another thing to go into another person's home because you get to

know the person more. When you visit a person's home straight away you know the person's taste. You know whether that person has an expensive taste or reasonable taste. Or whether that person is just a survival kid. You sat on a sofa and it fell apart. So you know a person more definitely when you take a person to your home. You know a person more and there is a price to pay.

The reason I am sharing this is because people as they grow sometimes they have a fear of relationship. To love is to be willing to be rejected and to be hurt so that's the price you have to pay as you reach out. I will encourage each one of you to develop relationships. It is not enough to come and hear the Word and then go because part of Christianity and growing is developing strong relationships with others. Otherwise we have no opportunity to keep Jesus' commandment, which says, "*A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you.*"

One of the key developments in the New Testament is the opening of homes for prayer and fellowship. When John Mark's mother opened her home, John Mark's mother Mary would have less time for John. Not that she would neglect him but there's less time. Your time is occupied. I mean there's people always coming for counseling, coming and going for prayer meetings and so forth. I mean there's sacrifice involved. But out of the atmosphere John was brought up, he saw people pray, he heard people talking about the Lord and he must have seen the Lord answered the prayers and he grew up in that home. That is where we want to show. It is either the home atmosphere or the relationship that brought forth leaders or that John Mark's mother was a leader already and then she opened her home. But I want you to know that is the first. Most of the time we think that when a person is a leader in the church, then that person must open the home. We got it backwards. I Tim. 3 says one of the qualifications of a bishop is that he must be hospitable. That's before he assumes leadership and not after. As I study the Word, I began to read that it is the openness of people to others. You see, not a single one of us could say that we grew up to be where we are by ourselves. Surely along the way, there are people who have helped you or people who had encouraged you, perhaps a home atmosphere, a fellowship or close friend.

I remembered a few incidents in my life that I would never forget where

along the way in ministry there were the right people providing the right thing that bring forth your gifts in your life and the relationship that they were willing to have with you. I remembered the first time I went into the seminary, I was taken aback by some of the other seminarians. See I was new in a lot of things that were going on in the ministry. I thought that in the ministry everybody is very holy but I found out it was not quite so. I came from a freethinker and non-Christian background. When in the seminary, I will never forget the dear Baptist pastor who encouraged me. I was underage but he encouraged me and I will never forget him. He took extra efforts to write all those letters and invited me to stay with him. He gave me a good impression. He encouraged me and placed me in a position where my gifts could be developed. I remembered those people. I remembered when I first entered the seminary, I never thought that I would ever faced persecution from fellow Christians. I expected to receive misunderstanding and persecution from outside and I was ready for that. But suddenly while I was there, the arrow came from there. I was just eighteen and first time in the seminary. First thing I did was, there was one senior student who was there, and now he is in Singapore, so I called him and he was such a dear brother. I was saying, "I want to go home. I could stand if the persecution was from outside but I could not stand it when it's from inside. I was not expecting this." Tears were running down my eyes and I said, "I want to go home." I was down in the administration area and he was up in the dorm. So over the intercom, he said, "You just come up. I want to talk with you." So I walked all the way up, he opened the door. The first thing he did was he gave me a hug then he prayed. He held me in his arms and prayed. I felt very good because I have never been hugged before. I was brought up in a typical Chinese way and I have never heard my parents say, "I love you." In a typical Chinese upbringing, they never hug you. But you know they love you. They never tell you but you are supposed to know that. I felt good and after that I was encouraged and I stayed back. What would have happened if that brother did not have a relationship with me and encourage me?

I remembered when I first started the ministry in Penang, Malaysia. I was fresh and young in the faith, young in the Lord, just come from the Baptist church and we launched into this missionary society. I remembered how difficult it was and at times when we went out people invited us to eat. We did not want to go because we were not sure whether we have to pay or not. I remembered clearly one time when I was sitting at a coffee shop that sells noodles, they were ordering everything and everyone was just sitting there fellowshiping. They asked if I have

ordered anything, I said, "I will just have a drink." Actually I wanted some food. I remembered times like this when you only have enough bus fare to go home but not enough to come back. We started in faith at that level. There were less than ten of us. There were always these two dear sisters; they are both in the ministry today. One was a kindergarten teacher; you know she does not earn much. Another was a nurse. I rented one room and on the ground floor of a three-storey house, once in a while I would see the five dollars note on the door. I was wondering who dropped it there. One day, when I heard the five dollars drop, see why you need finances you are hearing it all the time, I quickly went near the door and peeped out and saw this kindergarten teacher walking away. I never forget the relationship that people has chosen.

There are three levels of relationship in Jesus' life. There is Jesus and the three disciples, Peter, James and John. Secondly, there is Jesus and the twelve disciples. Thirdly, there is Jesus and the crowds. Let's be realistic. We cannot know everybody personally because we have only one body and we are unipresent not omnipresent. If we are omnipresent we could know everybody intimately. But we are only unipresent, so we are limited to our circle. Everybody should have their Peter, James and John. Everybody should have their field of relationship. The marvel of this is through time, I remembered these were the two sisters that used to support me. It reminds me of Jesus and the women who supported Him in Luke 8. These were the dear sisters who faithfully supported and through time they went into the ministry and by the time my ministry was more established, I started supporting them. Many were the times when I received letters from them sharing with me that the support came just on time. Sometimes I sat there and marvel at the grace of God. Once they have helped me and now I am in a position to help them and I am still helping them. I will not stop until Jesus comes because I won't forget the good things people have done. I learnt to be grateful because of relationship. Imagine what will happen if there were no people who are willing to take the extra trouble to know you better and form closer relationship with you. There will be no development. It's so important for us to remember this. It's not enough to have you, your family and your dog. You need to extend your hand outward and pay the price to relate.

There were many people in the bible and you noticed one particular thing about them. Most of those leaders mentioned are people who have made sacrifices and

opened their homes. They are specially mentioned by name at the end of it, like Priscilla and Aquila in I Cor. Paul writes on how Aquila and Priscilla had a meeting in their homes. To the Romans he wrote at the ending, he talked about how Gaius was opening his house there. So we realized that there are these special things. Paul had special relationship with some people too who used to follow him and have established relationship with him.

Relationships are important. In fact in Acts 9, Paul was born again, but the people did not accept him. In verse 26, *“And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.”* Paul was rejected. But a man called Barnabas, he took time and effort, you see in order to get to know people we have to spend time. There’s no short cut for this. We have to sit and spend time with the people. Barnabas took Saul aside, talked with him, understood him and brought him to the apostles. So Paul met the apostles and they began to relate together. The story ends in Acts 9 after Paul was sent to his hometown and you never hear of Paul again in chapter 10. In fact for a period of nearly nine years, you never hear of Paul again. By the time you hear of Paul in Acts 11, which is already about nine years later. There was one relationship that Paul had formed with Barnabas. So one day Barnabas was called to minister in Antioch in Acts 11: 24 *“For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.”* Then it says, *“Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Paul.”* Nine years later Barnabas sought Saul. Why, because Barnabas remembered Saul. They had formed a relationship and out of that relationship grew a ministry and a gift of God.

Don’t underestimate the power of relationship. Jesus died on the cross of Calvary so that your relationship with your husband, your relationship with your wife, your relationship with your brothers and sisters, your relationship with your loved ones, your relationship with the church people, your relationship with every one, whether they are Christian or non Christian, that your relationship with them may be right. He went to the cross for that. Not just to give us a theological doctrine to believe but Jesus has died on the cross that He may unite God to man and man to man.

So here Barnabas went for Saul. He took Saul to the open door. Just because of one

man, Paul's ministry had an opening. We have a bible school and we train people in the ministry. We have special sessions, special courses. During the special sessions, we analyze every lecture that had gone on and answer any questions. There are different types of lecturers we invited, so we analyze any areas that have not covered in the course. During the special sessions, we also share with them the experiences of the ministry and all those things that you go through. One of the things that you will learn, especially if your new ministry is coming up, you are called to fivefold ministry is that relationship that plays about 90% of your ministry being established. Your own gifts plays only 10%. Of course relationship alone will not establish you if you don't have the gift. If your gift is not there, people put you in a position to function, you cannot function. But it's the relationship that open door.

We have many ministers from our church that are traveling. Some are in prophetic ministry. Some are evangelists and some are teachers. They travel all over the world. One of them is in Australia at the moment. I always tell them this: if you want open doors, it's important to establish relationship. For example, let me illustrate from the ministry side. When a place opens to you, you are an evangelist and you enter into a church and you minister. After you leave the church, don't just treat it as an organization, remember the people inside. Remember the pastor there. When you leave the place, don't forget to keep in touch with them. Because when you keep in touch with them, you keep on the relationship. See you are not just interested to be part of the program and then finish and run off. You are interested to be a friend to them. When you leave a place, remember to send a letter to them so that you keep an open door to them. So when that happens, supposing you are an evangelist, then when one door opens, many other doors start opening. It will always remain open. But if you don't know how to keep the doors open, every time you have only one door because you go through that door, the moment you leave, that door is slammed and they don't want you back again. Then you pray for another door to open. You go to that door, when you finished all your work, then you kick the dust off your feet and run off. You always have only one door. But when you have a door open and you maintain a relationship, once they know you, anytime when they have a need of an evangelist they may call you again. So when one door is opened, it remains open. So in the first year, you have only five doors, then you maintain that five doors. If every year you have five doors opened, then in two years you have ten doors. But if all the time you are only working on one door, after two years you still have only one door.

In the secular realm we use different word for that. For example, when you open your business, you are not just interested in selling your products. You are interested in establishing your clients. For example, if you open a sundry shop, you are interested not just with a one-time purchase because yours is a sundry shop; you want to establish a constant flow, so that when one client comes in, you have a relationship with that client. After you have won the client over, the client will know you. He/she will tell people, there is Joe's shop there, I always buy things from that shop because he is good to me. You see, there's an establishment. But suppose Joe is a couldn't care less guy, so you come into the shop to buy something. He just sits on the chair there. No service, nothing. All he is interested is the money. When you come in, he wonders how much money you will use to buy his goods. He is what I call a penny wise, pound-foolish guy. If all you want to buy is a five cents box of matches, Joe is not interested. He wants more profit than that. So he ignores you. But he forgot that once you like to buy things from that shop, even if you just buy a five cents box of matches this time but you may buy other things next time.

I remembered a university student who one time went to buy food from a canteen. Being a university student and still studying, every cent counts. So when he went to the canteen and bought food, he got the wrong change and it's just the difference of twenty or thirty cents. He insisted that he had it but the owner said; you are wrong, I am right. Because of this he never went back to the canteen again all because of the difference of twenty or thirty cents. There was a bad relationship. What the canteen owner forgot was that the student represents about three meals a day. Three hundreds and sixty days a year and he had three more years of university. How much if it times three. How much business he is losing. It's thousands of dollars involved. But all the owner could see was the twenty or thirty cents. You are not just interested in what is there; you are looking further than that. That's what relationship does. You never know the importance of establishing good relationship. Which is what I always tell people. If ever you have to leave any place, you leave the church, and then if you are launching out to something, make sure that the relationships are good and well established. Usually those who had trouble with relationship they will run. Remember this, we are not saying every place is perfect. The perfection or imperfection of a place is not a measure. But remember your heart and your relationship must be right because somewhere along the line you may need that relationship. Not only that, further down the line

in the eternity we have to meet that fellow in heaven. So we might as well have a good relationship now.

It's surprising that many times even pastors, especially if they are successful, they are not interested in relationship with others. I mean it is an easy thing if you have a large church to be self-dependent. You have to be any part of any association because you are large enough. Sometimes we forget that no man is an island. We are not called to build our kingdom. We are called to establish the body of Christ. So it's important for us to take note of this. Many times you noticed this, when you call for a pastor's fellowship, pastors from the huge churches are not interested. The pastors from the smaller churches will come. One day, the smaller one grows big, they also say bye bye. When God look down from heaven, He sees we all are like kids. We are not growing. We forget that we are not in this or in that just to see what we can get out of it, but we are in it because God placed us in it. We have an eternal responsibility to the whole body of Christ. The only reason that I am down here, I am taking the time to come here, getting away from my family and sacrificing the time for here is because I believe in the body of Christ and believe in doing God's will. That's nothing else in the world that can bring me. It's because we see the importance of our responsibility in the body of Christ, of building the body of Christ. That's the vision we all must have.

There are two areas we need to learn for our primary relationship. In a family, why are there relationships? Because relationship helps us to understand: No.1 authority. No.2 love. If you don't understand authority you will never be successful. Only those who understand authority, how to obey authority will be the people who will know how to use authority.

Lets look at Matthew 24. Why relationship? Because of two things. Relationship helps us to understand the two most important things that God wants us to have. Remember that all of us are like little bricks in God's house. As a little brick in God's house, you formed part of the temple of God. You have to know who is on your left and who is on your right, who is below you and who is above you. To know your position as a brick, unless you are all loose bricks in the pile; but if you have been taken by God and placed in your part in the kingdom, whether

the eye, the hand or the ear, we must find our place in the body and know where we stand. One of the hardest things for a person to learn because of sin nature is obedience and submission to authority. One of the keys to bringing up children is this: you would seek to break the child's will into a submissive child without breaking the child's spirit. That's difficult.

John Wesley's mother had a small little writing about bringing up children. It's quite a rare book today. I don't think that it is still in print. She wrote about bringing up children. She brought up John Wesley. She was so skillful at bringing up children that John Wesley asked her to write something about bringing up kids. This was what she said: *The moment a child is born, one of the first things you should seek to do is to break the child's will. Why, because the children do not want to yield. Sin nature is such that we partake of Adam's nature and we are rebellious.*" So she said the first thing is to break the child's will without breaking the spirit. There are two extreme on that. On one extreme is where the child runs wild and rebellious. You could look at children and see whether their will has been broken or not. If the children's will has not been broken, the father says 'come here'; the child will say, 'no, I don't want'. You will know this kid's will has not been broken. They do not understand authority. This is very important because authority is learned in the home. If you don't learn authority in the home, you will never be obedient in society. It is a fact that a tremendous high percentage of criminals are criminals because they are breaking authority and breaking the laws in society. It's due to their broken homes. Sometimes they come from good homes, but the good homes sometimes don't teach authority.

God Himself places among the Ten Commandments this commandment, *Thou shall honor thy father and mother.* Among the Ten Commandments, you wonder why God put that in; because it's in the home that we learn to yield our will. Then we learn to yield our will to God. Then we become obedient citizens. We become a blessing to the society. But people who do not understand authority in the home become rebellious in society. They don't understand how to respect their father, their mother, and their loved ones. They will never respect authority outside. If you don't believe me, you can take this principle and do a research on that. You will find out that the people who do wrong things outside are because at home they have not learned authority. Their wills have not been broken to submit to authority. It's one of the hardest things for a person to submit his/her will to

another authority. But if you learn to do that when you are small then you will be able to do it when you have grown up. Everyone has authority over them; every one of us has to answer to an authority. In various areas we have to yield to different authorities here and there. All has a responsibility and accountability to somebody. If we do not understand authority we will not be able to use authority correctly. On one extreme, there are children who are rebellious and whose wills have not been broken and they are not submissive. On the other extreme, where some children are just being abused, the parents are not really parents. I mean they are Pharaohs and need Moses to come. So they will beat their children and pressurized them. They not only break the child's will, they break the child's spirit as well. You look at those children, even though the children looked very quiet, don't make noise, don't run around, they also don't smile. They are in fear. They will grow up as people who are unproductive, uncreative, with a great inferiority complex. So that's being abused. We don't want that. We don't want that side either. We want to be balanced.

In Matthew 24, there is a story of a servant, verses 45-51, *"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begin to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Now notice what the evil servant did. The evil servant apparently did not learn authority. You can tell it here. See the moment the master goes off and delays his coming; the true nature of the servant comes up. At first the master is around and he was just like a mouse. I mean he looks very obedient. But his obedience to authority when the master was around was superficial. It was not from his nature. His nature was evil and rebellious. His obedience is as a mouse. But when the master leaves he turns out to be as rat. All the evils in him came out. He took authority and look at what he did with his authority. He beat the other servants. That's an abuse of the authority. He went beyond what he should do. His very nature is evil. So you notice here he began to sit and drink with the

drunkards. Darkness attracts to darkness. He was drawn to all these people. He began to waste. He did not appreciate what he had. He wasted everything. That is a servant who has not served with his heart. His heart was evil. There was no training in him. The other servant was called the faithful and wise. He says, when the master goes off, the servant still obey. See the test of your children's training is when your children are left alone at home, what will they do? If you had trained them up properly like the bible says, *Train the child up in the way of the Lord, when he grows up he will not depart from man*, the child will obey you. Perhaps you were on this angle here, you were tyrant in your home, and so your children looked very obedient but all are superficial. It's like the little kid who was sitting in the church and was making a lot of noise, standing on the pew and shouting and screaming away. The mother says, "Sit down." The child says, "No." The mother says, "If you don't sit down, I will whack you." So he sits down. Then he tells his mother, I am still standing on the inside. See they didn't win the obedience.

The bible says, obedience is better than sacrifice. One of the hardest things for us to learn when we first start off in life is to learn obedience and submission to authority. It's very difficult for people to submit if they don't do it in their home. Now it's easy to submit if someone is better, more intelligent, more talented, and cleverer than you. But if you think you are better, smarter, more talented, you will find it more difficult to submit. But yet Jesus set the example and showed us that the right way is to submit onto all things that are right. In the Gospel of Luke chapter 2, Jesus went to Jerusalem when He was twelve years old. Verse 46, *after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions*. His mother came, in verse 48 *"So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this to us?"* Now Jesus was perfect. Even though He was twelve years old, He was as much Son of God as He was when He was thirty-three. Jesus Christ was perfectly man and perfectly God. Jesus was sinless. Jesus was perfect. You can see how smart He was. He was sitting with the doctors of the law and He was asking questions and also answering them. What a tremendous mind He has! What wisdom He has! While He was sitting in the temple asking and answering questions and learning all these things, here comes the mother. You know when the mummy cannot find the kid for three days, how she could feel. Here comes the mother, now Mary, if she was a typical woman, she would not have said, O dear, we have been looking for you for three days, come now lets go. No, if she were a typical woman, she would have said those words differently. The most marvelous

thing was that the Lord Jesus who was smarter than the mother, smarter than Joseph, the bible says here in Luke 2: 51 *"Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."* If the mummy told Him to wash the dishes, He would say yes. He was smarter than them yet He could submit. That teaches us a lesson.

It's most important for us to let fruit in our life to take time to grow. There is a time and a season for every thing. Sometimes you think that you may know more than another person who is above you in authority. It doesn't mean that you understand and rebel and topple the person. That's wrong. If so, just be faithful, that's God's key. Be faithful and in due time God will grant that your gift will make room for you. But the thing is that people think it comes very fast. No, your gift will make room for you through a period of time for that gift to be shown and manifested and recognized. But the gift will make room. Most of the time because we have not learnt submission, we are impatient. I mean you know, if we were in Jesus' position, here you are called to be apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, five calls, you will be sitting in your house, shaking your legs and wondering when you can get out of this authority. That's what most people are. Jesus with five offices, some of us, all we have is just the gift of healing and perhaps your elder or your pastor says, "Don't do this at this moment." You say, "He doesn't know what he is saying." See, there is something wrong here. If you go and lay hands on the sick, I am not sure whether it works. People can rebel against authority and then suddenly go and function in their gift. Something is wrong. How can we on one hand running down this and running down that. So it's important for us to realize that your gift will make room for you. It did not say, you would make room for you. See, most of the time we are trying to make room for our own gift. Perhaps you have the gift of prophecy and you find that is not the time. I understand the things that are going on. I understand the realism that is there. That's where on the pastor's side there must be understanding and on the congregation there must be understanding as well. There will be a percentage that has to find their place, find their fellowship, and find the church, etc but generally if we all understand the ways of the Lord and let the gifts of God find their place. Like water finding its own level, then there will be very little strife. We just let growth come forth. So most of the time we are making room for ourselves. We have a gift and then we say, when can I do this. I can imagine as if the Lord Jesus Christ was all the time when He was twelve years old, He is always telling the Father, when, come on, I am dying to go out. By faith and patience we shall bear

much fruit. So we realize that on one side, understanding authority is where you don't make room for yourself, you die to self.

In fact there are four levels in progression of wisdom. The first level starts with fearing the Lord and obeying. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The first mark is obedience. The first step into the wisdom of God is learning to obey God. Learning to obey His Word. Learning to submit to authority. Now submission includes not only physical submission but it includes an attitude of submission. It includes also what I call submission of your mouth. In the bible if you say that you submit and then you go behind and say something else, that's not submission. That's conspiracy. That's one thing we have to learn not only within the church but also within society as a whole. We teach our people that it's wrong to speak evil of rulers of your nation. It's in the bible. It's common for the people in the stalls to do it. I am sure every country is the same. You have people out there criticize that, criticize this. We Christians should not join them. We are different and we don't do that but we pray. See submission, a lot of people out there don't understand submission because they don't read the bible. Bible's submission is these areas. If you pay your taxes and you grumble, you are not submitting very well.

The bible says, render taxes to whom taxes are due. Render honor where honor is due. If you submit and grumble is not bible's submission. It's only physical show of submission. Paul himself recognized it. Acts 23, when the Sanhedrin council captured him, remember that the Sanhedrin council in the New Testament had both legal authority to a certain extent under the Romans Empire as well as religious authority. So in Acts 23: 2 *"And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth."* Paul was also quite shortfused sometimes. So Paul scolded him and said, *"God will strike you, you whitewashed wall."* That is one time you see Paul was a little bit not quite perfect. *"For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?"* Now Paul's principle was right. But there is another principle involved. Another guy standing next to Paul said, who was not Paul's friend. He was one of Paul's captors. *"Verse 4, 'And those who stood by said, 'Do you revile God's high priest?'"* Then in verse 5, *"Then Paul said, 'I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest;'"* and then he quoted a scripture against himself. He said the bible says, *you shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people.*

Now it's important for us to understand this fact because in our church we teach the people the same thing. At one time in our country there was this thing going on and among a group of lawyers they wanted to do this; to go on strike and all this sort of thing. A member of my church, we have a whole group of lawyers, we got all kinds of profession in our church. She was one of the top lawyers and she asked me, "What do you think? We all are going to wear this armband." I told her this; I said from the scripture, as far as the scripture is concerned, we do not advocate this type of means. Whether we agree or disagree with whatever is done it is not right for us to use carnal means and carnal methods. So I said, "Even though you may be the odd guy out don't join. Why, because Christians must be different. I know in your heart and mind you may say, "Then we will be most easily bullied." "

Listen carefully, Jesus yielded and won because it's God's power. Jesus said, 'blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.' See the power is of God and not of man. So we need to understand the submission includes our mouth, our attitude and our action. So the next time you submit to a law, to a rule, whether in an organization, in a group, in the society, to your nation's laws, remember this, your submission must be three fold. If you really want to flow along with God, it must be three fold. The bible even goes as far as to say, though God appoints the laws and the rulers. It's in the book of Romans. So understand this fact and start to apply in your home. You can see the relationship now. If in the home, you don't learn to submit, you could see teenagers growing up, they may do something in front of their parents and another thing behind them. Then they may backbite and badmouth their parents. You watch those teenagers when they grow up as adults, they will do the same to other organization and other groups. Because we learn authority in the home, that's why we need relationship in the home. The relationship at home is usually the husband and wife. Let me just add this little bit here.

There are two most important things for wives to know about husband and two most important things for husbands to know about wife.

No.1 is to respect the husband. Included in respect is the word submission that is in the bible is never run down your husband in front of others. Never speak evil of your husband in front of others. So if you are a submissive wife, I did not say that you couldn't disagree privately or discuss privately. What you do privately in your discussion time is different. But in front of others you do not badmouth. You submit in the flesh. You submit in your attitude. You submit with your mouth. If you want to win your husband, this is one important thing you must remember. To respect. You know what is respect? To give honor. That is let him be the he-man. What involved in that is, you see there is no greater encourager for the husband than the wife. The husband may be the top executive and his boss may say he has done a good job. But there is nothing like his own wife saying you are a great man. Most ladies because they know their husbands' weak points find it very hard to say that. You could tell how long a couple has married by the way they walk. If they came together in the car, but either the husband comes in first or the wife comes in first and it's about ten feet's between them. Then they have been married quite long, possibly about five to ten years. If they are fresh couples they will come in together. The kids will also be with them. They changed through time as they get to know each other. You notice in the supermarket sometimes the wife in front and the husband at the back trailing. In the street, the husband leading, the wife trailing. During their first three months of marriage, it was different. Yes dear, be careful dear. So we realize that in the home it's important for the wife to say good things about the husband to encourage him. I read one very touching story of how one guy got bankrupted. Every creditor was after him. Everything was after him. The only person who believes in him still is the wife. That story was written in one of the business magazine. It was the wife who encouraged the husband to get back on his feet. He finally got everything back and re-established himself and became what I call a success story today. It's the words of the wife that hurts the man most. So ladies, you got the power you don't know of.

No.2 to the man your physical appearance is still important. You could tell many times ladies neglect that. Before married they dress very well. When you get up in the morning, you are there at the dressing table. Your husband is still waiting for his breakfast downstairs. He says, dear, when is my breakfast coming. You say, wait dear; I have to look beautiful for you. It takes about three hours. Most ladies tend to neglect that, especially in Asia. You look at them, before they marry; they dress well to please the man. After married all different. They will say, after all he knows me already. They don't take care of their appearance at all. Near my office,

there was this lady selling drinks. One day she got married. You could literally see it; before she got married, she was well dressed. Her hair was well combed even though she was serving drinks. After she got married, you could see her clothes all crumbled, her hair was not well combed. I did not know what happened until one day my wife talked to her and found out that she got married. Most women don't realize that. They are not as concerned to be prim and proper anymore.

For the man, the two most important things for the woman are: Man and woman doesn't think the same way. On her anniversary, you may buy her a refrigerator or a microwave. She is still not happy because she prefers the flowers. To the man's economic mind, a microwave and a refrigerator equal many flowers. But to the lady's mind, one flower is worth a thousand microwaves, especially from her beloved. See we are thinking on a different wavelength. Man don't ever forget this, that to ladies your little notes of love, your little gift even if its inexpensive, the little flowers that you continue to bring home means more to her than a house. That's no.1. Don't ever forget it. Most people after they were married for five to ten years, the flowers are reduced according to the years. Ladies are sentimental by nature. They love these things. They still look for the knight in the shining Armour. Second most important thing to the woman is that ladies want you to lead. They want you to lead in small things and in big things. They like you to do things for them. Be the leader and lead the way.

I remembered when I was entering into Australia, filling up all these cards and declaring the things. Usually my family travel with me and I fill all the cards for my family. Then I will give my wife to sign. I saw another couple, a French couple, an Indian French man and a French lady. The French man filled his own card and gave his wife the other card. The wife was carrying the baby and trying to fill the card. The wife said, "Please help me to declare." I heard the French man said, "You declare yourself. It's yours." I saw the frustration on the wife's face. These are the small things in life that mean big things. Ladies wants you to lead the way. They don't go for man who is little mice. They are ladies; they want you to lead in all things.

In the home we learn authority. In the home we learn acceptance. It's funny how when people are not accepted in their home and don't feel loved. Unless they

get it somewhere they will never be whole the rest of their life. They will keep trying to prove themselves and get accepted because every one of us wants to be loved. We were all born with a vacuum in our heart asking for love. That love in a perfect home was supposed to be received. But sometimes we don't receive that in our homes. As a result, we go through life with a vacuum of rejection. So the rejection is in our life all the time. The funny thing is that because you are rejected you can never accept others. People who relate to others easily accept others because they have been accepted. They have felt accepted. So because of the rejection that is in their life, they never felt a parent love, when they are thrust out into society, with their working colleagues, they are very withdrawn and fearful. Why, because they fear more rejection. Sometimes when people have the wrong type of love for them, its lust and not love, they think that is acceptance and they fall into the pit of immorality. Why, all the time they are not looking for lust. They were looking for love and acceptance. So people are drawn into wrong things. Why do people succumb to peer pressure? Why do young people succumb to wrong influence and bad elements in society and go for drugs and all the wrong activities? It is because they want to be like their friends and want to be accepted.

Even grown-ups have their own peer pressure. Even grown-ups do strange things, just to be among others. For example, when you travel among executives in the plane. If you are traveling in a business class, they will ask you whether you want wine, champagne, or coffee. You look around; all those businessmen are drinking wine. You say wine please. That's adult peer pressure. Why should we do that? We should just say, orange juice please. Why couldn't we stand? We are insecure. The home is supposed to be the place to bring security to us. There is no security unless you know you have been loved. If that is lacking in your life, there will be insecurity the rest of your life. An insecure person will never have secure relationship. A secure person is in advantage because the person can build correct relationship. People who are insecure get into all kinds of wrong relationship, either oppressive or domineering type of relationship. All these wrong relationships are because in the home security is not provided for. Thank God in Ephesians I it tells us that God has accepted us as the beloved. Thank God that whatever kind of home you come from, whatever brokenness that you have; God can bring the acceptance in. But if you observe this in the development of a person, I have got a series on wisdom that talks a little bit on this, that if people get accepted in the area which I call small little recognition, something happens to them in their life and they become achievers in society.

I grew up in a home that was typically Chinese. We don't express our love. Actually there was a vacuum of love. I don't blame my parents because they themselves did not receive love. But in that kind of home, we never hug and we never express our love as a family together. So I grew up in that kind of life. It took me a long time to overcome that. In the first four years of my ministry, I had to struggle with these two things that I am teaching tonight, authority and love. Because I never understood how to yield to authority for I was never trained properly in the way of the Lord. There were times in the early days of ministry when I will get into problems with the elders. Basically I was still a teenager, so I would have the knowledge in the bible. I would have zeal. I would have the gift of God. There would always be an elder sitting on the board saying, "I don't think the church is ready for this yet." Here am I on fire for the Lord. Lets have a prayer meeting for revival. I am not sure if it's acceptable yet. Lets ask the AGM about this. So I had a problem with that. This is what I found later I couldn't stand it. I left and I went to another place far away to a different church. Guess what happened? There was another elder there who didn't know the other elder, who had not communicated and this one was the chairman and he said, "I am not sure what the church thinks about prayer meetings. I am not sure about your overnight prayer meeting." I found out that you could never run away from problems because if you run away from one situation, you will run into another. If you don't overcome it, you will be going round and round the wilderness. You go to the next place, you face the same thing again. Until you look up to heaven and say, "God, what's happening? Why am I stuck on this?" And God will say, "Overcome it."

I learned to overcome. I learned to overcome and I learned to work with elderly people. The day I overcome that, I felt something grew in me. All the time there was some need to grow that didn't grow. Today I have more elderly people working together. Usually in any project, I always put the older people with the younger people because I observed older people have more caution. It is good to have them because sometimes they have made mistakes in their youth that the young ones have not made yet. So the young man want to do those things and the elder say, "Don't go that way. I have gone there before. Nothing is there." So this can avoid making some mistakes. We always have elderly people but then we need the young men because the young men are willing to do new things. Why, they are just starting here, nothing much to lose. So they are more vibrant. More daring and you need those people there. We always try to have a mixture of both. The

young has nothing to lose and they are willing to risk more. So you need a combination of both. I have learnt to work with both old and young. It's a good combination. So that was my problem. I found it hard to relate. In the end I had to overcome. Today even those who are much older than me, who are my elders, I could tap them on the shoulder. That's a respect. Like Paul says, "To those who are older treat like your father. To those who are older women, treat like your mother. To those that are younger than you, treat like your brothers and sisters." And there is a way to do it. I know some pastors who don't know how to treat their elderly folks. They talk to them, "Hi, you over there. That guy is over sixty years old." Don't talk to old man like that. Why, I suspect that pastor in his own home did not learn how to respect. See it's all from the home. When we learn to talk and learn to relate, it's going to go a long way. Let me repeat 90% of your ministry is relationship.

All the time there was the vacuum for love. It was slowly that God began to deal in my life and began to show me the revelation of the Father heart of God that I was healed on the inside. That was when I began to see things changing. I began to feel secure. Then I become secured in ministry. See you will no more like the insecure evangelist or insecure pastor or insecure church member because basically you are secured in the Lord. You know where you stand. If you were insecure you are opposite in two ways. You either trying to prove to everybody something or you are so afraid to launch forth and both are wrong. If you are secured in God you will be willing to do exactly what God tells you to do. If God didn't tell you wouldn't do. You are completely obedient because you are secured. You don't have anything to prove and you are not out to prove anything. You are only out to obey God. You are not out to please anybody. You are not out to prove anything. You are only interested to do what you feel is the right thing to do. It is when we over do, trying to prove ourselves then we become like king Saul in the bible.

King Saul did not learn authority. King Saul had an image problem. When Samuel chose him and met him, king Saul said, "I am the least of my father's tribe and my father's house. My father's house is the least." He had great insecurity. Something was wrong in his upbringing. When they were going to install him as king in I Samuel, everybody was ready but king Saul was hiding. See that tells you there is something wrong in him. If you put someone in authority in your church that has some flaw in that area, you are going to see problems later. King Saul

when he was placed as a king, it was not very long before he started doing things that he should not do. All that is in the bible. He sacrificed when he should not. He was told to kill the Amalekites and wipe out everything but he kept the goats and the sheep and the cattle. Why did he do that? It's all started in himself. No wonder in the bible, when you qualify church elder, the most important qualification, do you notice in all the qualifications it never mentioned about gifts? Gifts are important in its function but it mentioned qualities. All those qualities are based on relationship. Do you notice it says; have good reputation in the church and in the world? It mentioned in the qualification of bishops, elders and deacons then it mentioned also their home. Because there is where it starts.

Tonight God wants to deal with right relationship in our home. I sense in my spirit that there are a lot of areas in our lives that need to be dealt with. Because its not dealt with, some of you are wondering why are you struggling in the church here. If you examine your life, in your family you didn't have a right relationship. It begins in your home. I am saying it's going to be easy. At least now we know and have a goal to work at that. Almost every person who has a right home relationship, pastors you can test that out, you check all the members in your church; you will notice every one has good homes. But every one who has a problem in any place, in any fellowship, in any church, you check it out. In their home they have problems. It starts in the home. If you want to be leader and to be used by God in your gifts, it starts in the home right where you are. God will start there.