



GROW. PRAY. STUDY.

The Church of the Resurrection – Weekly Guide

May 28, 2017 *The Birds and the Bees* “Marriage Enrichment”

Scripture: Romans 12:9-16

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.

Building relationships on a strong foundation

MONDAY 5.29.17 Matthew 7:24-27

Jesus wrapped up his Sermon on the Mount with this image of two builders. They both built houses during the dry season, when the *wadis* of Palestine, like arroyos in the American Southwest, looked safe and harmless. When the storms came, they washed the house built on sand away. The wise person thought ahead, and built a house on a foundation that would endure.

- Some marriages (or other relationships) look fine. Then something (illness, job loss, a poor choice) shakes the foundation, and shatters the relationship, at times beyond repair. Whether you're married, dating or single, it will rain in your life sooner or later. What are you doing daily to grow the solid character you need to weather life's storms?
- “Some other Jewish teachers told a similar parable, with a major difference: In their story, the foundational rock in their parables was the Torah, God's law (*Abot de Rabbi Nathan* 24A). Here Jesus' teaching holds the same role as God's message in the traditional parable.” * Jesus implicitly made his teaching central to knowing God (teaching “with authority”—Matthew 7:29). How did that reshape how his followers read portions of the Bible that did not align with Jesus' teaching about God's character?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me durably, dependably, forever. Guide me in building my life on the principles of your kingdom, so that my life and relationships can withstand any earthly storm. Amen.

* HarperCollins Christian Publishing. *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook: *Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (Kindle Locations 219378-219380). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Judgment and contempt: guaranteed relationship destroyers

TUESDAY 5.30.17 Matthew 7:1-6

Jesus clearly spoke to our religious thoughts and acts (see Pastor Hamilton's *When Christians Get It Wrong* for a fuller study). But if one person regularly judges another as "inferior" or "wrong," that hurts friendships. So how much more damage can that do to closer relationships? It is healing to address why we feel a need to criticize and judge, and "First take the log out of your eye"! (Verse 6 made it clear that Jesus was not calling anyone to be a naïve victim in a negative relationship.)

- It's not what you have in common with your mate, date or friends that causes conflict. It's the differences. What differences particularly "get your goat"? Do you have a balanced view of the other person, seeing their strengths as well as flaws? If you've fallen into what many counselors call "negative focus" (only seeing the flaws), what steps can you take to get the relationship back on track?
- Jesus used a hyperbolic image (the log in your eye) to remind his hearers that "we all have faults, and so we all need mercy. Recognizing our own failings makes us more forgiving toward others." * How can honest self-evaluation, and openness to hearing what bothers your partner or friend, help build relationships that make both of you stronger, rather than tearing each other down?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, keep me healthily aware of my strengths while still being able to "take the log out of [my] eye" before trying to correct or "improve" my partner and friends. Amen.

* Eugene Eung-Chun Park and Joel B. Green, study note on Matthew 7:3-5 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 17 NT.

Dealing honestly (and healingly) with anger

WEDNESDAY 5.31.17 Ephesians 4:25-27, Hebrews 12:12-15

The apostle Paul quoted Psalm 4:4 from the Greek translation of the Old Testament (called the Septuagint). Then, as though he realized that "be angry without sinning" might be a little hard to apply in real life ("How do I do that?"), he added his timeless personal advice: "Don't let the sun set on your anger." *The Message* put it in more modern English: "Don't go to bed angry."

- Anger is one of four basic human emotions. Ephesians linked teaching about honesty with its call to "be angry without sinning." If we haven't learned to deal with angry feelings honestly within ourselves, we often try to hide them ("grrr—no, I'm not angry"). When have you seen a failure to honestly face anger be harmful to a relationship? How do you see the difference between "I feel angry because..." and "You always make me mad by...?"
- Anger becomes dangerous, to us and our relationships, when we let it fester. Hebrews warned readers to see "that no root of bitterness grows up." One counselor said, "Bitterness is anger grown stale." Ephesians 4 knew that "anger is natural... because people hurt each other in various ways.... Paul wants them to deal with it right away so that no one sins against another by feeding on that anger and doing further damage." * What is helping you grow in recognizing your anger, and then promptly dealing positively with it?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, anger, in me or in others, can be scary. Give me the courage to recognize and deal with it in a healing way whenever it happens. Amen.

* Timothy Gombis, study note on Ephesians 4:26 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 369 NT.

The qualities that build enduring love

THURSDAY 6.1.17 Ephesians 4:29-32

This passage listed keys that can move God's people toward being better partners in relationships. Treating one another in un-Christlike ways ("bitterness, losing your temper, anger, shouting, and slander, along with every other evil") is bad for relationships. Inviting Christ to change your life from the inside out opens you to bearing fruits like kindness, compassion and a heart able to forgive. God's gift of such qualities empowers us to build durable relationships.

- Scholar N. T. Wright said, "You should behave as those on whom God's Holy Spirit has placed God's mark. The word Paul uses could refer to the 'seal' or official stamp on a document.... The mark indicates who it belongs to and what it's for.... People who are enslaved to anger and malice may think they are 'free' to 'be themselves', but they are in bondage. If we are marked out by the Spirit's personal presence living in us, think how sad it makes that Spirit if we behave in ways which don't reflect the life and love of God." * How would your interactions be different if, before speaking or texting, you asked, "Does this give grace? Does it build up? Can I picture Jesus saying or sending this?"

Prayer: Dear God, give me the courage to speak truth in love, the humility to say I'm sorry when I'm wrong and the heart to forgive others who admit a wrong. Amen.

^{*} N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, p. 56)

God's barrier-busting love, preparing the way for Jesus

FRIDAY 6.2.17 Ruth 4:1-17, Matthew 1:5

Ruth and Boaz, once they found each other, loved for a lifetime. Their Old Testament story and Matthew's genealogy of Jesus pointed to their lifelong connection by tracing their descendants back to both of them. Boaz's legal and financial dealings to become Ruth's husband may seem confusing to us, and not very "romantic." But taken on its own terms, the story's tale of early attraction and lifelong loyalty matched any we could tell today. (If you can, take time to read all four chapters of this ancient love story.)

- Even without understanding all the customs of their time, we can see that Boaz took risks and worked diligently to gain the right to marry Ruth. Her interest in him delighted him (see [Ruth 3:10-13](#)). When have you seen a well-thought-through decision to marry create the conditions for a lifelong love?
- The book of Ruth wasn't just a simple love story, however. [Deuteronomy 23:3-4](#) said no Moabite could belong to the Lord's assembly. Yet this little book told its Israelite audience that no less a figure than David, Israel's greatest king, descended from a Moabite woman. How did Boaz and Rachel's marriage give Israel insight into their God's far-reaching, barrier-breaking love?

Prayer: Lord God, you worked through the life-long love of even unlikely couples like Ruth and Boaz to sustain and nurture the human family into which Jesus was born. Please work through me to break down barriers and nurture love in your world. Amen.

God calls us to live out God's triumphant love

SATURDAY 6.3.17 Romans 8:35-39, 1 John 4:7-8

The apostle Paul sent the Romans quite a list of things that might separate them from God's love: "trouble, or distress, or harassment, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword." He'd faced all of those, but he wrote the list to say, "In all these things we win a sweeping victory through the one who loved us" (verse 37). That sweeping victory empowers us to love other people with the same tireless love which John said is God's very essence.

- The Greek word translated "sweeping victory" was *hupernikaō*. "*Huper*" was a superlative, the origin of the English "hyper." The "*nik*" in the middle of the word came from the Greek word for "victory," a word we know better than we may realize—"nikē"! Paul asked two forceful questions: "If God is for us, who is against us?" and "Who will separate us from Christ's love?" He phrased both in a way that assumed the answer was "Nobody and nothing!" Our relationships can be so grace-filled that they win a sweeping victory over all life challenges. Ask God to grow you into the kind of person capable of such relationships.

If fitting, pray with your partner, asking God to fill your lives with God's unconquerable love.

Prayer: All powerful God, whatever comes my way, hold me close in the shelter of your love. Thank you that, through you, I and those I love can win a sweeping victory in "all these things." Amen.

Family Activity: Purchase some seeds of a favorite flower or plant that can grow indoors. Plant the seeds in a container and place it where your family can watch it grow. Read the directions about caring for the plant and follow them carefully. Celebrate the plant's growth. As this all is going on, discuss how just as we need to be patient as the seeds grow, we need patience to grow as God's children. Talk about the importance of listening to one another, sharing thoughts and feelings, having fun together and supporting and encouraging each other. As you have committed to helping the plant grow, also commit to helping your relationships grow. Celebrate your family and ask God to help you grow together.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer

Prayers for Peace & Comfort for:

- Evan Ridgway and family on the death of his mother Elna Ridgway, 5/21
- George Melling and family on the death of his aunt Marjorie Melling, 5/21
- Barbara McKee and family on the death of her husband William "Bill" McKee, 5/20
- Mark McKee and family on the death of his father William "Bill" McKee, 5/20
- Lisa Davidson and family on the death of her father Charles "Mac" McGranahan, 5/20
- Sheryl Gulley and family on the death of her father Bob Chaney, 5/20
- Paul Leahy and family on the death of his brother Scott Leahy, 5/17
- Scott Beadleston and family on the death of his father David Warriner, 5/17
- Jim Gould and family on the death of his brother Lee Gould, 5/14