

## **445 REALationships Series# 2, They're Worth It!**

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**REAL-ationships: They're Worth It! (Philippians)**

### **Recap:**

#### **Philippians 2:5 (NIV)**

*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

#### **Intro:**

Let's be REAL! Although relationships can be tough and the temptation to isolate and withdraw can be real, leaning in and pursuing relationships and connection is worth the effort because:

1. We Were Designed for Relationship
2. Relationships are good for our health and well-being.
3. Healthy ones help you to be you.

#### **Context:**

Paul is writing this letter to the Philippians church around AD60 when Timothy was visiting him in prison. He had a special relationship with the Philippians.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Philippians 1:8**

*"God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus."*

But, even these best relationships can be tough and lead even the most resolute to wonder, "are there any better options?"

#### **Philippians 1:21-23**

*"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far..."*

Maybe taken some liberties with the text, but it's not that much of a stretch to say that sometimes you just wonder whether relationships are worth the hassle, even good ones. How much more when they aren't as good as Paul had it with the Philippians? What about in legit bad times?

<sup>1</sup> Brian Simmons. Letters From Heaven: Introduction to Philippians, Heaven's Joy. The Passion Translation, 62-63.

I think most people if you asked them about what the biggest problem was in their life it would have have a name, or a name closely associated with it. Paul named names in Philippi. He said you guys got a problem and their names are:

### **Philippians 4:2**

"I urge *Euodia* and *Syntyche* to iron out their differences and make up. God doesn't want his children holding grudges."

Science backs up what we theologically and intuitively know:

### **Sherrie Bourg Carter Psy.D. in *The Hidden Health Hazards of Toxic Relationships*.**

*"...many health-conscious people don't realize that the quality of their relationships can be just as toxic to their health as fast food or a toxic environment. In fact, unhealthy relationships may contribute to a toxic internal environment that can lead to stress, depression, anxiety, and even medical problems."*

*In a long-term study that followed more than 10,000 subjects for an average of 12.2 years, researchers discovered that subjects in negative relationships were at a greater risk for developing heart problems, including a fatal cardiac event, than counterparts whose close relationships were not negative."*<sup>2</sup>

Cant just isolate and withdraw. Equally damaging!

### **Harvard health Publishing - (Harvard Health School) The Health Benefits of Strong Relationships**

*"...a relative lack of social ties is associated with depression and later-life cognitive decline, as well as with increased mortality. One study, which examined data from more than 309,000 people, found that lack of strong relationships increased the risk of premature death from all causes by 50% — an effect on mortality risk roughly comparable to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, and greater than obesity and physical inactivity."*<sup>3</sup>

So we need relationships. We can't live without them, and we have to find a way to navigate them. Pastor Karl's "Jesus Mindset"

<sup>2</sup> Sherrie Bourg Carter Psy.D. in *The Hidden Health Hazards of Toxic Relationships*. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/high-octane-women/201108/the-hidden-health-hazards-toxic-relationships>. Accessed Feb. 20, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter\\_article/the-health-benefits-of-strong-relationships](https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/the-health-benefits-of-strong-relationships).

### **Philippians 2:6-11**

*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!*

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

### **Healthy Relationships Happen:**

1. When You Let Go "...but emptied himself,"  
Completely yielded to the Father.
2. When You Go Low "...taking the form of a servant,"  
Complete Identification.
3. When You Do More "...count others more significant than yourselves."  
Complete Humility.
4. When You Say Lord  
"...highly exalted Him ...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,"  
Complete exaltation!!!

### **Jesus Is Your Source!**

Acceptance    Identity    Security    Purpose  
Only God meets these deepest needs in your life.  
Then you can serve others!

When you approach relationships with the right mindset, you'll find that a lot of the difficulties are resolved simply by a change of mind or attitude towards them and by adjusting your expectations.

*Embracing the "Jesus Mindset" in relationships and leaning into them rather than running from them is worth it because:*

### **1. We Were Designed for Relationship:**

Daniel Goleman in his book "Social Intelligence" writes about the emerging new discoveries in neuroscience. He says, "the most fundamental revelation of this new discipline: we are wired to connect...To a surprising extent, then, our relationships mold not just our experience but our biology..." (p.4).

To truly see ourselves we have to look to God. And when we do, we see that he is immensely relational. Think of personhood not as isolated individuals as islands to themselves, but let the Trinity shape your perception of personhood.

Relationship is so fundamental to God, it's who he is and what he is all about. And relationship is what we are all about as those made in His image.

It is for this reason that trying to work for God, trying to serve Him, trying to accomplish His will in your life or even advance His Kingdom, if you attempt these things as tasks to be completed, assignments to be carried out, functions to be performed, rather than as a beautiful invitation to know and walk with the Lover of your soul, you won't get it done. And whatever you do do, it will be disconnected from God's heart and being. It will look like "do do."

### **Philippians 3:7-11**

*"...everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung. I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him. I didn't want some petty, inferior brand of righteousness that comes from keeping a list of rules when I could get the robust kind that comes from trusting Christ—God's righteousness. I gave up all that inferior stuff so I could know Christ personally..."*

When relationship becomes your basic orientation in life not achievement nor works nor service, not only will you prioritize connection with God, but also with people. You can't love people you won't relate to:

### **1 John 4:20 - 21**

*Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.*

To not prioritize relationship is to deny a vital aspect of who you are.

## 2. Relations are good for your health and wellbeing.

The link between physical illness and toxic emotions and thoughts is more and more pronounced. Having the right people in your life can actually reverse the negative, and produce positive health outcomes.

### Daniel Goleman

*"Our social interactions even have a role in reshaping our brain, through neuroplasticity....These new discoveries reveal that our relationships have subtle, yet powerful, lifelong impacts on us. That news may be unwelcome for someone whose relationships tend towards the negative. But the same finding also points to reparative possibilities from our personal connections at any point in life."*<sup>4</sup>

Example of restorative impact of a relationship preserved. Paul talks about the anxiety, the grief and distress that he and the Philippians had over the sickness experienced by Epaphroditus and just the thought of having to do life and ministry without him.

### Philippians 2:27

*And he certainly was ill; in fact, he almost died. But God had mercy on him—and also on me, so that I would not have one sorrow after another.*

Paul had one sorrow after another, yet Epaphroditus's presence in his life made him stronger and more resilient, to the point where to remove Epaphroditus was to remove health, strength, and well being from Paul and the Philippians church.

I think God has an Epaphroditus for each of us...the kind of people who when they are in your life you feel better. Your spirit, your mood, your attitude and approach to life is elevated by their presence in your world. You got to get some of these people. ***The best way to do that is to be that to someone one else first.***

The Epaphroditus effect, it happens in relationship and in your openness to them. It's reciprocal: you can't check out of relationships, or try to numb or insulate yourself from the vulnerability and pain they have the potential to produce, and then still reap the positive benefits of them.

*"We cannot selectively numb emotion. If we numb the dark, we numb the light. If we take the edge off pain and discomfort, we are, by default, taking*

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Goldman, *Social Intelligence: The Revolutionary New Science of Human Relationships*. (New York: Bantam Books, 2007), 11.

*the edge off joy, love, belonging, and the other emotions that give meaning to our lives.” – Brene Brown in “Dare to Lead”*

### **3. Relationships bring out the real you.**

In our culture there are no shortages of forces out there that are attempting to shape and mold you into something other than the person that God made you to be. Relationships can have this affect too, for better or worse.

#### **Bob Blakley VP and Research Director, Burton Group:<sup>5</sup>**

*“thinking of identity as an artifact all by itself is unsatisfactory because we can talk about an identity and the attributes of an identity leaves out important details about how identities are created and how they evolve...relationships are the landscapes in which identities exist.”*

Think about it: your identity as a child of God only has meaning because of the relationship you have with the Father. I have an identity as one who is loved, because of the One who loves me.

This can go horribly wrong and or wonderfully right.

#### **Philippians 3:2-3**

*Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—*

We all need Pauls in our lives. Those who can help us, fight for us, remind us of who we are, and through the love and care and affection of Christ for us, fight against, tear down, warn and chase off those voices that attempt to distort us, and mutilate our true identity and our real worth.

#### **Summary:**

Relationships can be tough. Let be REAL! But let’s lean into them, not run from them.

We were made for relationship, it’s wired into us and part of who we are. They make us healthy, and it’s in relationships that we fully embrace who we are in Christ and who he made us to be!

<sup>5</sup> Bob Blakley, VP and Research Director, Burton Group quoted from a podcast on an article called *Identities Are Created Through Relationships*, on a website Emergent Chaos. Accessed Feb. 22, 2020. <https://www.emergentchaos.com/archives/2009/02/identities-are-created-through-relationships.html>.

Lean in, don't run from - they're worth it!