

The Risk of Relying

Whether it's friends, neighbors, coworkers, spouses or anyone else, God calls us to healthy, balanced relationships, and it's important that both our hearts and minds are in the right place. Let's talk about five relationship dynamics that, when navigated well, will help us develop healthy relationships with one another.



INTRODUCTION

To rely upon someone or something is to depend upon with full trust and confidence. To be dependent upon another person and to allow others to depend upon us takes some risk. However, healthy reliance upon others can produce beautiful and rewarding outcomes. It is important for us to understand what healthy reliance looks like so that we can glorify God in our relationships with others.

STARTER QUESTION

Humility characterizes Jesus: "With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2 ESV). Jesus showed us the way to build relationships. Are you approaching life waiting to be rewarded, or are you looking for an opportunity to reward others? Who relies upon you? Upon whom do you rely?

INTO THE WORD

1. Do you ever feel like you're tired of relying on other people, sometimes only to be let down? For some of us it happens time and time again. So, why should we keep trying to rely on others? Refer to Ecclesiastes 4:8-12 and let's turn to Solomon for some ancient wisdom on this subject!
2. The conclusion of the sermon "The Risk of Relying" encourages us to trust. We should not forget to trust the One we can rely on the most – God! Believing Jesus' death, burial and resurrection is crucial, but actually relying on Him every day is a whole new level of minding our hearts. Read John 1:12. What level is your current faith: belief or belief + action?
3. Philippians 2:5 says that we should have the same mindset as Jesus in our relationships with others. Verses 6 and 7 say that Jesus humbled Himself as a servant for us. We hear a lot about servant leadership these days; however, Jesus set the ultimate example as a servant leader. Read Matthew 20:25-28 and discuss Jesus's approach to others. What other examples do we see in God's Word where God in the Old Testament or Christ Jesus in the New Testament led by humility. What current examples have you seen of people leading by humility? What are the results of leading with a humble spirit?

APPLICATION

4. Pastor David shared four aspects of meeting each other's relational needs: Speaking the truth in love, encouraging one another, I need you and you need me, and sacrificing for others. What are the benefits of meeting each other's needs? (Refer back to *Ephesians 4:15-16* and *Proverbs 27:5-6*). What are some examples of encouraging others? (Refer back to *Hebrews 10:24*, *Prov. 27:17*). Who needs you in their lives? (Refer back to *Ecclesiastes 4:9-10*). What are some ways we can sacrifice for others? (Refer back to *John 15:12-13*).
5. God tells us that we are all one body but different parts that make up that body. He says we are all essential. What are some possible consequences of not meeting one another's needs?

6. Review the 5 needs of Men and Women (see "Focus on the Family" list from the sermon notes below). Which ONE is most important to your spouse or significant other? Maybe a friend or colleague at work? This week, have a conversation about it. Are they able to rely on you in this area? Which one do you have the most need for at this time?

Women

1. Conversation
2. Honesty & openness
3. Encouragement & affection
4. Spiritual intimacy
5. Emotional intimacy

Men

1. Companionship
2. Love & acceptance
3. Admiration & affirmation
4. Spiritual intimacy
5. Sexual intimacy

PRAYER

Lord, we know you through Your Word. We trust You because You love us and You've never been wrong or broken a promise to us. We rely on You because without Jesus there is no other way for us to have a relationship with You, and You made that way. We commit to You because Your ways are wonderful and work together for our good. Please touch our hearts with a servant attitude and present us with opportunities to help others for the benefit of Your kingdom! In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:

QUESTION 1: Read Ecclesiastes 4:8-12. In *Dr. David Jeremiah's Bible Study Series: Philippians*; page 37-38) Dr. Jeremiah writes:

"Paul's teaching on the power of unity is a principal that goes back to Old Testament times. Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, expounded on this same idea in the book of Ecclesiastes. His words remind us that two working together are truly better than one working alone.

Two Are Better Than One (Ecclesiastes 4:8-12)

8) There is one alone, without companion:

He has neither son nor brother.

Yet there is no end to all his labors,

Nor is his eye satisfied with riches.

But he never asks,

'For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?'

This also is vanity and a grave misfortune.

9) Two are better than one,

Because they have a good reward for their labor.

10) For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.

But woe to him who is alone when he falls,

For he has no one to help him up.

11) Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm;

But how can one be warm alone?

12) Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him.

And a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

QUESTION 2: In *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee (Matthew through Romans; page 373-374)* Dr. McGee writes:

"'But as many as received him, to them gave he power.' The word *power* is not *dunamis* power like dynamite, physical power, but *exousian* power which is delegated power, authority.

Notice that this is for "them that *believe* on his name." And always with the word "believe" there is a preposition. You see, faith, as the Bible uses it, is not just head knowledge. Many people ask, 'You mean all that I have to do is say I believe?' Yes, that is all you have to do, but let's see what that implies. With the verb 'to believe' there is always a preposition - sometimes *en* (in), sometimes *eis* (into) or sometimes *epi* (upon). You must believe into or upon Jesus Christ. Let me illustrate with a chair. I am standing beside a chair and I believe it will hold me up, but it is not holding me up. Why? Because I have only a head knowledge. I just say, 'Yes, it will hold me up.' Now suppose I believe into the chair by sitting in it. See what I mean? I am committing my entire weight to it and it is holding me up. Is Christ holding you up? Is He your Savior? It is not a question of standing to the side and saying, 'Oh, yes, I believe Jesus is the Son of God.' The question is have you trusted Him, have you believed into Him, are you resting in Him? This chair is holding me up completely. And at this moment Christ is my complete Savior. I am depending on Him; I am resting in Him."

QUESTION 4: Speaking the truth in love enhances the spiritual maturity of both people. The person being "corrected" grows and learns, even though it can be painful and uncomfortable. The person who is speaking the truth must understand the correct way to approach the person, so they are not speaking truth without love (which promotes legalism) or speaking love without truth (which promotes sin). – Ephesians 4:15-16 (paraphrased commentary from bibleref.com). We bring joy and honor to God by putting the needs of other above ourselves. - Philippians 2:1-4; Hebrews 13:16.

QUESTION 5: If we say we believe in God, but our lives do not reflect it, do we really have a faith that will save us? While works do not save us, faith without works is dead. - James 2:14-26 (with paraphrased commentary from bibleref.com)

Our actions have the ability to draw people to God, but also to push people away. We are called by God to meet the needs of others; failing to do so has the potential of pushing them away from God - 2 Corinthians 6:3.