



Parkway Fellowship

Love Handles: Get a Grip on Your Relationships • It's Not You, It's Me •

John 10:10; Romans 12:1-2; Mark 1:35 • 02/10/2019

Main Point

God will change our relationships when we allow Him to first change us.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Name one way you've changed since you were a teenager.

Do you expect to continue changing, or do you believe "you are what you are" at this point and you'll stay that way? Explain.

Have you ever been in a relationship with someone who worked very hard to change you? Was that a positive or a negative thing in your relationship? Explain.

In relationships, when we focus our attention on everything the other person is doing wrong and needs to change, we spin our wheels in constant frustration and remain unsatisfied. The truth of Scripture points us to a different way: let God draw you near to Him and change your heart, instead.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read John 10:10.

How seriously do you take Satan's desire to steal, kill, and destroy your relationships? Why? What are some ways he goes about accomplishing that goal?

Based on this verse, what does Jesus want for your relationships?

Our heavenly Father loves us, and He takes pleasure in giving us life in Him. That life manifests itself in practical ways, as in earthly relationships that are healthy and pure. Colossians 1:16 assures us "All things were created by Him and for Him." This includes your relationships with other people. As such, the best way to handle those relationships is to concentrate primarily on your relationship with Jesus, who is the Source of life.

In the message this week, the point was made that "I am most alive when I am in an active relationship with Jesus." How does this relate to your earthly relationships? What does "life" in a relationship look like? What part does Jesus play in the health of your earthly relationships?

| Ask a volunteer to read Romans 12:1-2.

What did Paul plead for his fellow believers? What is the basis of his plea?

What did Paul say to give up, and why should they give it up?

What does it look like practically to offer yourselves as a living sacrifice each day? How does this impact your earthly relationships?

Paul pleaded to his fellow believers to give their bodies to God. The reason that Paul gave for this action was that God had done so much for them. Their response should be giving themselves completely to God in everything.

Why is it easy to conform to the behavior of the world in the way we handle our relationships with other people? In what ways are you most tempted to do that?

Did Paul think that people can transform on their own? Why or why not? How does this help explain why relationship struggles abound, even among believers? What are we to do about it?

It was put this way in this week's message: Die to self by asking God to change me first. Living transformed in our relationships comes from God and His changing of our minds and hearts from the old self into a new being who gives everything for Him.

| Ask a volunteer to read Mark 1:35.

After a hectic day of helping others (vv. 29-34), Jesus needed some time to be alone and pray. What do you think He prayed for?

**Why is time alone with God vital if we're going to handle our earthly relationships rightly?
How have you experienced this in your own life?**

This week's "Love Handle" is this: Make time for God daily. This is the example Jesus gave us. Throughout His earthly ministry, He was concerned about focusing on God's mission for Him. Focusing on God's mission for Him enabled Him to relate in the best possible way to other people. We must do the same, and the way to do that is by spending time alone with Him.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Agree or disagree: There should be evidence in your relationships that you are being transformed by God. Explain your answer.

Of the three points from this week's message—I'm most alive when I'm in an active relationship with Jesus. Die to self by asking God to change me first. Make time for God daily.—which one did you need to hear the most? Why?

Practically speaking and in addition to making time for God daily, what can you do to focus more on your own transformation than on the transformation of others this week?

Pray

Thank God for Jesus' promise of abundant life when we draw near to Him and His example of how to do that. Ask God to constantly transform you and your group, that our relationships might be a light in the world and in our lives.

Commentary

| John 10:10

In addition to guarding sheep, the Good Shepherd provides for them—unlike thieves who steal and kill and destroy. Throwing aside metaphor to reveal spiritual truth, Jesus told the sheep that he had come to give life so they might live it to the full. False shepherds intend to injure the sheep, but that is never the behavior of the true shepherd. We need to watch carefully the flow between metaphor and spiritual reality here. In verse 9 Jesus is clearly talking about people as spiritual sheep, while verse 10 falls back into the metaphor at the beginning and then talks about spiritual life.

| Romans 12:1-2

12:1. Paul urged all believers to present themselves as a “living sacrifice.” Such language must have clashed immediately in the minds of many. The common understanding was that only the first and best animals were fit to be offered as sacrifices. The sacrifice Paul had in mind was radically different. Jesus had given Himself as the once-and-for-all Sacrifice for sin on the cross. Believers thus were to live in light of Jesus’ all-sufficient sacrifice, bringing glory to God. The idea of Christians’ presenting their “bodies” as a living sacrifice harked back to the discussion of the body being dead to sin because of the life-giving presence of the Spirit (see 8:10). To live by the Spirit is to offer oneself completely and daily as a “holy and pleasing sacrifice.”

Paul further explained that living as a holy, pleasing sacrifice was a believer’s “spiritual worship.” The word rendered spiritual also can be understood as meaning logical or reasonable. The Greek word translated worship often was used to refer to carrying out religious duties or services. Thus Paul taught that in light of God’s gracious redemption (by the mercies of God), living as a sacrifice was the logical and pleasing way for Christians to serve God.

12:2. As Christians, we’re also to please God with our minds. The temptation is to go along with the dominant attitudes of the “age,” to adopt the prevailing cultural worldview characterized by self-worship (sin). The apostle urged his readers to reject worldliness and “to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.”

The phrase be transformed in the Greek is a present passive imperative form. This form suggests three important truths. First, the present tense describes a continuing action. Transformation of our thinking and attitudes is an ongoing, lifelong endeavor. Second, the passive voice indicates that the indwelling Spirit is the Source of our transformation. We can’t transform ourselves but rather must be transformed. Third, however, is the truth suggested by the imperative that we must consciously place ourselves at the Spirit’s disposal for transformation to happen. The Spirit will not transform us against our will.

The result of having our minds renewed by the Spirit is to grow in our ability “to discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.” The word translated “discern” literally means to prove by testing. Christian living is not about emptying the mind—as some religions claim—but rather about thinking intelligently and logically in accordance with God’s ways. God wants His people to know what pleases Him because by living according to His ways we will experience the most abundant life possible (see John 10:10).

| Mark 1:35

The word translated “solitary place” is the same that is translated “desert” in 1:3, 4,12,13 and perhaps suggests the same kind of spiritual testing described in the last two. There was no desert near Capernaum, and obviously Jesus wanted to find a secluded place apart from the crowds and even the disciples. The imperfect tense suggests prolonged prayer. In only two other places did Mark indicate that Jesus prayed, in

6:46 after walking on the water and in 14:32-42 in Gethsemane. All three were times of crisis when Jesus was tempted to take an easy way rather than that of suffering and death.