

BACK ON TRACK

TALK IT OVER

Back On Track With My Relationships

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If you would like to watch the weekend message, visit <https://saddleback.com/watch>

Open your group in prayer and remember that this is only a guide. Feel free to discuss each of the provided questions or simply dive deeper into just one. Before you close with prayer, take a few minutes to look over the Three Essential Questions toward the end of the document.

Scriptures

Genesis 1:26 (ESV), 1 John 4:7-21 (NIV), John 10:7-10 (NIV), Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV), Romans 12:18 (NIV), Romans 12:12 (NIV), 1 Corinthians 13:6-7 (NIV), 2 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV), Psalm 30:5 (NLT), 1 Peter 5:10 (NIV), Lamentations 3:22 (CSB), Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

Questions

1. This week we are looking at how we can honor Jesus with our relationships. God made us for relationships! As Genesis 1:26 (ESV) says, *"Let us make man in our image."* What does Genesis 1:26 say with regard to God and our design? The relational Trinity created us to experience the same kind of loving union God has as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! In what ways do you need to change the way you treat other people due to whose image they bear? Read 1 John 4:7-21 aloud in your group. According to the passages above, where might we begin in order to get back on track with our relationships?
2. It's so easy for our relationships to get off track! God created us for perfect relationships like the Trinity, but sin disrupts them. Jesus came to restore us through a whole new paradigm for relationships empowered by the Holy Spirit! According to Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV), *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."* Jesus said in John 10:10, *"I came that you might have life and have it to the full."* How does what's above reflect God's desire for us to experience a fulfilling life beyond mere existence? Discuss the primary reason relationships get off track—and the means God provides to get them back on track!

3. How does God lead believers in Christ to love others as God loves us? God will not hold you accountable for another person; rather, God will hold you accountable for yourself. Romans 12:18 (NIV) says, *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."* What does Scripture command with regard to peace with others? You cannot change another person—but you can focus on your own growth in Christ and in the Holy Spirit! In light of the above, discuss what God expects of us—and doesn't expect of us—when it comes to getting our relationships back on track.
4. Romans 12:12 (NIV) calls us to, *"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."* According to John Piper, "Hope is the soil where joy grows. When life is hard, you can either give up on joy or you can get it from hope." According to 1 Corinthians 13:6-7 (NIV), *"Love... always hopes."* Rather than allow a dysfunctional relationship to turn hope into cynicism, God calls us to anchor our souls in Christ—who can take even hearts of stone and replace them with hearts of flesh! Psalm 30:5 (NLT) says, *"Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning."* 2 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV) says, *"Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."* Discuss how knowing we can always *"be joyful in hope"*—because we have an anchor for our soul in Jesus Christ—can help us get back on track in our relationships.
5. In addition to being *"joyful in hope,"* Romans 12:12 calls us to be *"patient in affliction."* As we do, then 1 Peter 5:10 (NIV) promises that, *"the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."* What hope does 1 Peter 5:10 offer us in our suffering? A recent Cornell University study estimates that nearly 27% of American adults are currently estranged from a close family member—meaning "no-contact" or "low-contact" with a parent, child, sibling, or other close relative—our most core relationships! We're not going to experience Christ's promise of life to the full by cutting off core relationships—that comes at a cost to our own identity. When we're unwilling to do the hard work of setting proper boundaries, we lose out on God's gifts of intimacy and connectedness. Discuss how sharing in a small group, with others who are also navigating relationship issues, can help you to *"be patient in affliction,"* and get back on track in your relationships.
6. Romans 12:12 culminates with the call to be *"faithful in prayer."* Praying for relationships has a powerful effect—both on changing circumstances—and in sustaining ourselves! If you want to get your relationships back on track, being *"faithful in prayer"* is essential. The greatest battle in prayer is persistence when your prayers seem to have no effect. How can we have confidence in our hope—and keep asking, keep knocking, and keep seeking? Philippians 1:6 (NIV) encourages us with the promise, *"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* Share with your group some practical steps you can take, as Romans 12:12 (NIV) says, to be *"joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer"* in your relationships this week.

Personal Principles I've Learned in Relationships

1. Prioritize intentional time together. Put it on the calendar. Full attention. Eye contact.
2. A gentle answer turns away wrath.
3. Timing is crucial.
4. Have shared interests/hobbies.
5. Physical affection is comforting.
6. Have five positive interactions to every one negative interaction.
7. Clear up conflict quickly. If not immediately, set a time to talk within 24 hours.
8. Strike a balance between honestly communicating what bothers you and allowing love to cover a multitude of sins.
9. Keep a list of things you love about the other person. Review it often.
10. Speak (to yourself, to them, and to others) life/blessing over your relationship, not death/curses.
11. Put the problem in the center of the table. You are not the problem. We have a problem.
12. Stay at the table. Persevere in hard conversations. Don't run away (physically or emotionally).
13. Show genuine interest in the other person's work/interests.
14. Take full ownership for mistakes. Sincerely apologize and ask for forgiveness.
15. Have sacred times/spaces with no devices allowed. Car time. Meal time. Family all-together time. Vacation.
16. Spend the money to make the memory.
17. The Fruit of the Spirit is my rubric for how to interact with other people.
18. Prayer for the relationship has a powerful effect—both on changing circumstances and in sustaining me.
19. Don't quit. Don't give up. Persevere longer than you think you can.
20. Be the first to step towards connection.
21. Out-serve everyone around you. And do it with a joyful heart.
22. Remember that my problem could be someone else's blessing. (How many widows would love to hear their husband's snore? How many barren women would love to clean up after her children?)
23. Smile often.
24. Praise them privately, in front of others, and through encouraging texts/cards.
25. Live today in a way that you won't regret tomorrow. 25 years from now, how will I wish I had handled this moment?

Three Essential Questions

The following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they and what they, or the group, can do as a result of hearing the message.

1. **What did you hear?** *What point in this message was most impactful for you?*
2. **What do you think?** *How did this message challenge, change, or affirm your thinking?*
3. **What will you do?** *How will you or your group put into practice what you've learned today?*

Small Group Action Steps

1. Consider taking the Group Health Assessment in your small group. This assessment will help you see how your small group is balancing the five purposes and will give you suggested next steps for each purpose. Click here to take the Group Health Assessment:
<https://saddleback.com/connect/smallgroups#spiritualCheckup>
2. Did you know that Saddleback produces many new small group studies each year? Visit <https://saddleback.com/studies> to check out Saddleback's ever-growing library of small group curricula.