Relationships

The Basic Relationships

by
George Creach, MA., L.P.C
Hillery M. Motsinger, Ed.D., L.P.C.

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"If any person be in Christ, he is a new creature..."
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

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The Basic Relationships

This unit will look at relationships. Lesson 1 will look at the basic human relationship of the family. Lessons two and three will look at the **Christ-Oriented Behavior Model**.

Before continuing, please write three or four sentences describing how you think the family relationship should function. **Write your thoughts on the enclosed** Response Sheet **and then put it out of your sight until the end of this lesson.** Next, we recommend that you read the entire lesson through once without looking up any of the scriptures. Finally, go back for a more in-depth study before completing the Response Sheet.

I. Introduction

The family is more than a social organization. It did not just develop over the years because of evolutionary need. God created it. In Genesis 1:28, God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. The family is the second most important relationship in our lives. Only our relationship with God should come before it.

As we read stories of the people in Genesis, we see both healthy and unhealthy families. The story of Judah and Tamar, Genesis 38, gives us an account of a man's trying to avoid his God ordained family obligations.

Judah had three sons, Er, Onan, and Shelah. Er, the oldest, married Tamar. He was an evil person, and God killed him for his sins. According to their custom, the next oldest brother, Onan, was supposed to marry Tamar. Their first child would be considered Er's. Onan married Tamar but refused to have any children with her. Because he violated this important family obligation, God killed him, also.

Judah was afraid if he allowed his third son, Shelah, to marry Tamar that he also would die. So, Judah put her off and told her that as soon as Shelah was old enough, they would be married. Judah had no intentions of keeping his promise to Tamar.

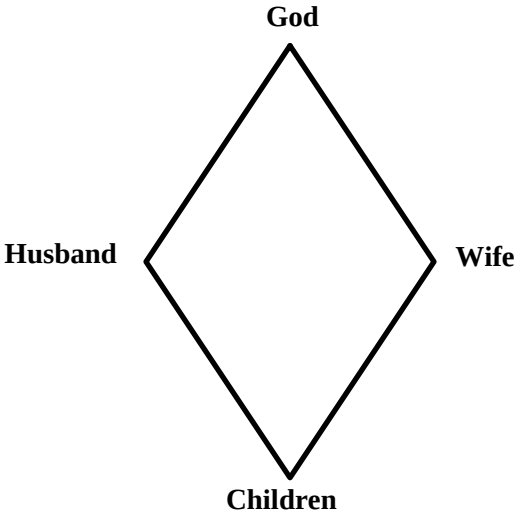
When Tamar discovered that Judah lied to her, she disguised herself as a temple prostitute and tricked Judah into sleeping with her. When Judah heard that she was pregnant, he was going to kill her for being an adulteress. She proved that he was the child's father and that he had failed in his family obligations by not allowing Shelah to marry her. He declared that she was righteous and that he had wronged her.

As we look at this story, we see several unhealthy actions that occurred in Judah's family. The first was that he married a Canaanite, an unbeliever. Second, he did not train his sons to be obedient to God. Third, he married Er to an unbeliever. Fourth, he made a

promise to Tamar without any intentions of keeping it. Fifth, he committed adultery with Tamar. Last, in phony righteous indignation, he tries to kill Tamar for committing adultery.

Think of all the sin, pain, and suffering this family would have avoided if Judah had been a God-fearing husband and father. When Judah decided that he knew more about what makes a family than God, he doomed his family. We can have a healthy relationship with members of our family only if we have a healthy relationship with God.

II. The Diamond-Shaped Relationship



A. <u>God</u>

Our relationship with God should always be the most important one we have. All our other relationships are nothing more than a reflection of our relationship with God. Jesus brings this out in Matthew 22:37-39, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is similar, Love your neighbor as yourself."

When we make God the center of our life, we can become complete, mature people. We fulfill the potential that God created in each of us.

B. <u>Husband and Wife Relationship</u>

The husband and wife are the sides of the diamond-shaped relationship. They form the basic human relationship. Although the husband is head of the wife, it is not a

domineering, master/slave relationship. Paul in Ephesians 5:21-33 describes the husband/wife relationship as similar to Christ's relationship to the church. It is one of love. It is one in which the wife voluntarily defers to her husband. It is one in which the husband views his wife as his own body. He will love and care for her. He will not knowingly hurt or dishonor her. They stand side by side as companions, helpers, and lovers as the stresses and dangers of life beat upon them.

C. Children

Children form the lower point of the diamond-shaped relationship. This is not because they are unimportant or unloved. It is because they are immature and dependent upon their parents. Children stand in the same relationship to their parents as the parents do to God. Children are to be loved, taught, and cared for. Their parents' goal is to help them develop a loving relationship with God and to become mature, complete people. Children, in turn, have obligations to their parents. They are to honor and obey them. (Deuteronomy 6:3-14; Ephesians 6:1-4).

III. Levels of Relationships

Relationships do not just happen. We *make* them work. They can be either shallow or intimate. Guy Greenfield says there are eight levels of relationships.

A. Level One: The Avoidance Level

There are two ways we avoid people. One is the way we treat people we know. For some reason we do not want to be around them. The other way is to avoid meeting or knowing them. These are people we see on the street, in stores, or other places where there are large numbers of people.

B. Level Two: The Greeting Level

At this level we view the person as someone we recognize and acknowledge. This can be anything from a nod to a polite greeting. It is a very shallow relationship but does not ignore people as is done at the avoidance level.

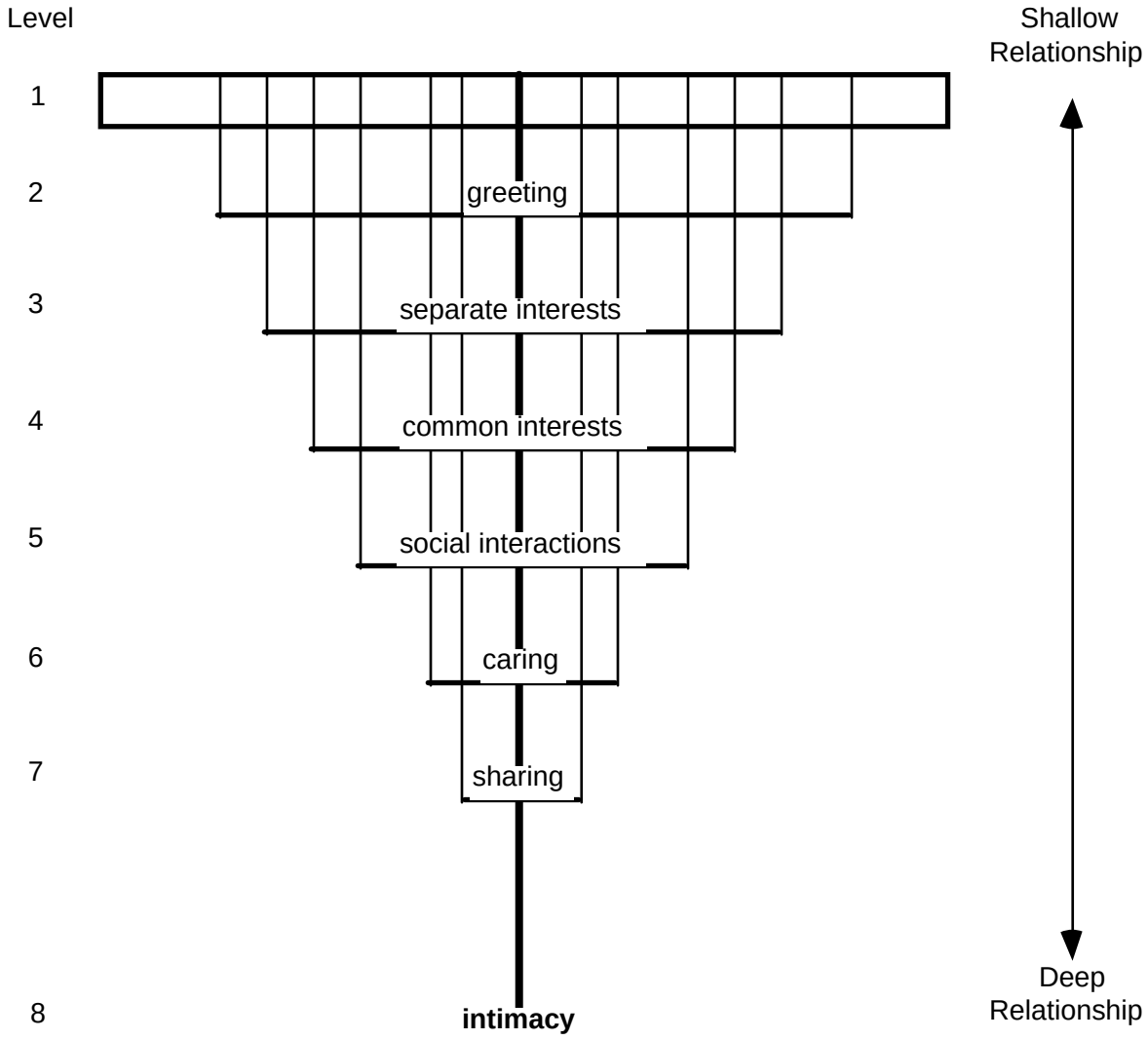
C. Level Three: The Separate Interest Level

At this level two people are searching for some reason to develop a closer relationship. In it we associate with each other over time, looking for a common interest. Normally, if a common interest is not found, the relationship will end.

D. Level Four: Common Interest Level.

A common interest can be anything from attending the same school, same hobbies, children of similar age, same hometown, etc. Once common interests are discovered, there is a chance that a deeper relationship can develop. This is not an emotional relationship but one of conversation.

Quality of Relationships



(Reprinted from "We Need Each Other")

E. Level Five: The Social Interaction Level

Common interests draw people together. They begin to spend time with each other. Common interests could be church, sports, or community activities. At this level, we decide whether we want to keep the relationship as it is, end it, or move on to a higher level.

F. Level Six: The Caring Level

This is the level in which we start to express our care for the other member of the relationship. Here we become directly involved in each other's lives. Caring can be expressed through encouragement, affirmation, or financial/material support.

G. Level Seven: The Sharing Level

At this level people begin to be genuinely open and honest with each other. People begin to take risks with each other and allow themselves to become vulnerable. In a lifetime, we normally reach this level with only about six people.

H. Level Eight: Intimacy

This is the deepest level of relationships. According to Greenfield it is a "level of relating in a nonverbal, nonphysical, emotional and psychic experience." The number of people with whom we reach this level of relationship is extremely small.

IV. Relationship Responsibilities

A. Husband and Wife Relationship

Relationships are complicated and interwoven. The Bible teaches that the husband and wife become one. They are, however, still two separate, independent people.

Also, their joint relationship affects and is influenced by their individual relationships with God. God does not judge us as a husband/wife team. He judges us individually based on how we have acted as a husband or a wife.

This does not mean if both husband and wife are Christians, that they cannot support and encourage each other in their personal walks with God. They will.

In the beginnings of Christianity, large numbers of people left Judaism and paganism while their spouses did not. Peter and Paul tell these Christian husbands and wives to remain with their spouses and try to bring them to Christ. They are to model

Christianity in such a pure and holy way that their spouses will want to become Christians.

Next to a person's relationship with God, the husband and wife relationship is the most important. It is the only human relationship in which God says that the two become one. In Amos 3:3 God says, "Do two men walk together unless they have made an agreement?" Although this is not a verse on marriage, the principle is the same. A husband and wife make an agreement to walk together for the rest of their lives. The agreement to walk together is more than just working together. It is to develop an intimate relationship. They can communicate on a nonverbal, nonphysical, emotional and psychic level. The side effect of a husband and wife's being close to God and intimate with each other is that their children will learn to be close to God and their parents.

Even if one member rejects God, the other still has an obligation to maintain a strong, active relationship with God and with his or her spouse. Does this affect the marriage? *Yes*, but it does not absolve the husband or wife from having and fulfilling their obligations to each other. They are still one flesh. They are still responsible to each other and to God for keeping their marriage strong and secure.

B. <u>Parent and Child Relationship</u>

God's plan was that a child would have two parents, a mother and a father. One of the tragedies of modern America is the breakup of the family and the large number of children born out of wedlock.

Children raised in a home with only one parent are missing an essential part of their development. Regardless of what social engineers say, little boys and little girls need both parents as models of Christian men and women. Parents should have two goals in their relationship with their children. One is to teach them the ways of the Lord. The other is to protect them when they are young and to help them develop into mature, Christian adults.

According to Walter Byrd and Paul Warren, the father has four key functions in his relationship with his children. He is a provider, protector, spiritual leader, and pacesetter. The mother's relationship is to affect their ability to "appropriately meet his or her emotional needs throughout life."

As their functions are different, the parents express two basic different types of love. The mother provides nurturing love; the father provides enduring love. When we

combine a mother's and father's love for their children, we see that it is similar to the love God has for us (Jeremiah 31:3; Deuteronomy 33:3, 12).

The parents have a special different relationship with each of their children. It is impossible for parents to have the same type of relationship with each child. Each child's personality is uniquely different. Therefore, the way he or she is treated will be different. This does not mean parents love one child more than another. It means that they recognize the difference in each child and try to meet his or her special needs.
Not only do the parents as a unit have a relationship with each child, each parent will have a special and different relationship with each child.

The family functions as a unit. It has a personality. It has relationships with those outside the family. The closeness of a family depends on the self-esteem of each member. This closeness in turn creates a higher self-esteem in each member. It is a cycle. As it turns, the family and its individual members become stronger.

The members of a strong, healthy family will know how to behave appropriately in different social settings. Because of this, they will form many relationships outside the family.

V. Conclusion

The goal of the family is to develop strong, healthy God-centered people. When we look at Jesus' earthly family, we see that Joseph and Mary helped Jesus develop “in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and men.” (Luke 2:52)

The Christian does not want to be self-actualized. He wants to be Christ-actualized (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:5, 4:12-13).

Now, please start over and study the lesson and the related scriptures. **When you finish your in-depth study, return to the enclosed Response Sheet and write your answers to the study questions about this lesson.**