

SCBC Prayer & Fasting Guide 2019

TWENTY-ONE DAYS OF FASTING AND PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL AND DEEP CHANGE

“BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES”

January 7 - 27, 2019



Rev. B. J. Stancel, Elder | Rev. Dr. Geoffrey V. Guns, Senior Pastor

www.secondcalvary.org



Compiled by Sister Delydia Williams
and Edited by Rev. Roma Hall

Table of Contents

Connecting with the Second Calvary Baptist Church Prayer Line	4
Members of the Ministry of Congregational Spirituality.....	4
Church Theme 2019 – Pastor Guns	5
The Power of Prayer and Fasting.....	9
Four Types of Fasts for January.....	9
How to Do the Daniel Fast.....	10
Using and Following the Prayer and Fasting Guide.....	12
Twenty-One Days of Prayer and Fasting – Ministry of Congregational Spirituality	13

Week One – Relating in Brokenness and Restoration

Day 1: Monday, January 7, 2019 (Psalm 34:11).....	15
Day 2: Tuesday, January 8, 2019 (Galatians 6:1).....	16
Day 3: Wednesday, January 9, 2019 (John 1:29)	17
Day 4: Thursday, January 10, 2019 (Matthew 21:29)	18
Day 5: Friday, January 11, 2019 (Matthew 18:5).....	19
Day 6: Saturday, January 12, 2019 (Genesis 27:41-45)	20
Day 7: Sunday, January 13, 2019 (Genesis 1:26-27).....	21

Week Two – Relating in His Image — Agape Style

Day 8: Monday, January 14, 2019 (Genesis 33:10).....	22
Day 9: Tuesday, January 15, 2019 (Ephesians 6:4).....	23
Day 10: Wednesday, January 16, 2019 (Matthew 20:26).....	24
Day 11: Thursday, January 17, 2019 (James 3:10).....	25
Day 12: Friday, January 18, 2019 (1 Corinthians 13:13).....	26

Day 13: Saturday, January 19, 2019 (Ephesians 5:21)	27
Day 14: Sunday, January 20, 2019 (Hosea 1:2).....	28

Week Three - Relating in His Likeness

Day 15: Monday, January 21, 2019 (Psalm 45:2-4)	29
Day 16: Tuesday, January 22, 2019 (Proverbs 31:10-11).....	30
Day 17: Wednesday, January 23, 2019 (Isaiah 55:6)	31
Day 18: Thursday, January 24, 2019 (Job 1:5)	32
Day 19: Friday, January 25, 2019 (Proverbs 22:6)	33
Day 20: Saturday, January 26, 2019 (Genesis 4:9).....	34
Day 21: Sunday, January 27, 2019 (Matthew 5:24)	35
Conclusion/Reflection.....	36
Devotional Outlines and Website References.....	37
Endnotes and Other Resources	39
Closing Prayer.....	40
Prayer List.....	40

Connecting with the **Second Calvary Baptist Church Prayer Line**

We invite you to participate in our daily online prayer and devotion.

Call the Second Calvary Baptist Church Prayer Line:

Telephone: 712-775-8891

Conference Code: 580995

Time: 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Daily

Share Your Experience Online

Use the hashtag #SCBCNorfolk

Members of the Ministry of Congregational Spirituality

Reverend B. J. Stancel, **Elder**

Reverend Roma Hall, **Chaplain**

Sister Delydia Williams, **Secretary**

Deaconess Bantha Alston

Sister Shawn Ware-Avant

Reverend Elaine Calloway

Deacon John Smaw, Jr.

Brother Anthony Williams, Sr.

NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, all selected devotionals are from today.reframemedia.com/devotionals. Please see links to the devotionals beginning on Page 37 of this guide.

Church Theme for 2019: **Building Healthy Families**

By
Rev. Dr. Geoffrey V. Guns, Senior Pastor

Our church theme for 2019 is “**Building Healthy Families.**” Throughout the year, we will study, explore and discover some sound biblical and practical principles that we can use to strengthen our families. The family is the foundational building block for society. If the foundation is weak, then the whole of society has the potential for failing. Our focus will center on the teachings of the Old and New Testament and what Scripture teaches about the family, marriage, child rearing and what it takes to build a healthy family life.

I will define a few terms and state how they are being used. *Building* refers to the process of putting things or materials together for the purpose of creating something. *Healthy* is used as an adjective and it describes a condition of wellness, fit, wholesome, and possessing the quality of wholeness. *Family* is defined as parents, guardians, grandparents, and children living together. Families come in all shapes and sizes; no one model describes every family.

Our theme will focus on three fundamental aspects of family life: Spirituality, Relationships, and Finances. First, we explore how to strengthen families spiritually. We will look at biblical passages that focus on spiritual growth and how to overcome the lures and temptations of worldliness. Second, we will examine ways to help strengthen families relationally. What do we learn from the Scriptures that will empower our families to build more meaningful connections and communication?

Throughout the year we will focus on various aspects of family life and look for principles, strategies and ways to strengthen the fabric of family life. We will also look at the things that are wrong with families with the goal of helping families to see the problems and then find real solutions. We will offer a variety of seminars, workshops, conferences, small group settings, courses, and opportunities for you to strengthen the fabric of your marriage and family. Please plan to join this exciting and rewarding journey as we seek to build healthy families.

The next section is a brief exposition of the biblical passage that serves as our theme Scripture.

We can learn about Abraham's early life in Genesis 1:26-31 (NASB).

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

29 Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given every green plant for food*"; and it was so.

31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

First, Adam was a created being.

Theologically and biblically, the very first affirmation the Bible makes about man is that he is a creature. Do not think of this word creature in a negative way; it is used to define that which is created. The word man (adam—aw—dawn) is used in a way that it captures the totality of human sexual identity. He created them male and female.

God created humans with special intellectual capacities that place us above the animal world. We can reason, think, and make rational decisions. We were given authority to rule over the other creatures. Adam was given the right to name all of the other animals.

God created humans to be relational and emotional. We need other human beings. Thus, we are male and female, different, yet dependent upon the other for self-fulfillment. Eve complemented Adam; she was not his tool or sex slave. We need other human beings to realize our potential in life.

Less I become too theological and bogged down in the theoretical, let's look at the implications of man being a creature.

As creature, man is not the center of the universe. We are not independent of God, thus we can never free ourselves from the limitations and finiteness of creatureliness. We are transitory, like grass fading in the sun and like the steam from a coffee pot. We rise up today, but are soon cut down. We have a time to be born and a time to die.

Furthermore, we cannot claim for ourselves that which is not and has never been ours to own. We are mere stewards of the manifold blessings of God. We are dependent upon God for life, health, breath, and strength. We cannot survive without God. We sing a hymn from time to time entitled, *“This is My Father’s World:”*

This is my Father’s world, And to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings, the music of the spheres
This is my Father’s world, I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas, His hand the wonders wrought.

Second, God blessed Adam and Eve.

God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” The Hebrew word for bless is “barak.” The primary rule of interpretation when seeking to understand the meaning of a biblical word is not to look in Webster’s Dictionary. We look at its context, the words and verses around it. We see how the word is used in other places in the Bible. Context is everything. And so we begin to understand blessing in the context of the Old Testament. This is the first time that the word appears in Scripture.

Bless, *barak* -- means “to endue with power for success, prosperity, longevity, fruitfulness.” This is exactly what we see in this passage. Notice several aspects of this blessing. God blessed them. It was not a just a blessing for Adam and then a separate blessing for Eve. It was them. God gave them instructions about what to do. He wished them well. The world is upside down because of the inequality that we see. Some people do not believe in sharing the bounty of God’s creation.

Notice also, that they were to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. All three words describe a state or condition of prosperity beyond description. Adam and Eve were given everything they needed to live, thrive, prosper, and succeed. They had the complete run and control of everything. God withheld nothing from them.

Third, Adam was put here to reflect the image and likeness of God.

Adam did not make himself; God fashioned him into His very image. God took a rib out of Adam and created Eve to be Adam's companion and helper. Scholars and believers across the ages have tried to come to terms with what this image of God really means. The image of God is not a physical image, because God is Spirit. He is not flesh and blood. The concept of the image of God has never been clearly defined by the Scriptures or by those who have sought to define what it entails.

However, when we compare the Scriptures we find the Psalmist reminds us of the glory and dignity that God has attached to man.

Psalm 8:4-8 (NASB)

- 4** What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?
5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty!
6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet,
7 All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field,
8 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

Because we are created in the image of God, we are inextricably bound to God in a way that we cannot escape. We live and move by the very breath of God's spirit of life—His breath. The Psalmist cried out, "Where can I go to get away from your presence O, God..." We can run but we cannot escape. We are created in the image of God. We are created to be earthly regents of a heavenly King.

Our primary purpose for being is to reflect the very image of God in the world. We are not free to distance ourselves from the Creator. We are not free to disown the Creator. It is He who has made us and not we ourselves. We reflect His life, love, longing to save men and women who are lost. We are the means by which the life of Christ, who is the express image of the invisible God, is made manifest in the world.

The Power of Prayer and Fasting

January is a special month for the Second Calvary Baptist Church Family. Not only is it the beginning of the New Year, it is also the start of our period of spiritual cleansing and consecration. We have set this month aside as a time to pull away from our every-day pre-occupations and focus attention on drawing closer to the Lord God Almighty. Fasting is deliberately not eating food and in some cases not drinking water for the purpose of reaching a spiritual goal or achieving a spiritual purpose. The priority is not to be on food intake, but rather to submit our wills to God and allow Him to draw us into a place of heightened spiritual awareness.

Fasting is deliberately not eating and, in some cases, not drinking water for the purpose of reaching a spiritual goal or achieving a spiritual purpose. The priority is to submit our wills to God and allow Him to draw us into a place of heightened spiritual awareness. Sincere fasting cleanses the heart.

Four Types of Fasts for January

Fasting is reducing the amount of food or liquids consumed over a specified period of time. One does this either for medical reasons or for spiritual reasons. When one abstains from eating for medical reasons this is referred to as detoxification of the body through the limiting of food.

Fasting is one of the means by which we develop a deeper life and faith in God. During the period in which one is fasting, time is set aside for prayer, reading Scripture, and meditation. Sometimes persons will engage in doing good works as a part of their time of consecration.

There are many different fasts that believers will follow during the course of quest for spiritual renewal and deep inner cleansing.

There are several types of fasting. The one you choose is between you and God. He will honor your best sacrifice:

The **first** type is a **Full Fast**. Drink only liquids. This is a normal fast, in which one may abstain from eating food although one may drink liquids over a specific time period.

The **second** type is a **Partial Fast** from 6:00 am to 12:00 pm, or from sun up to sundown. A partial fast is when one limits the amount of food or liquids for a specific period of time.

The **third** type is an **Absolute Fast** where one ceases to eat or drink for a specified period of time. You should consult your family physician before beginning a fast. If there are severe medical reasons that will limit your ability to fast from food or water, you should not attempt to do this. Rather, look for other ways that you can fast or participate, such as limiting how much time you spend watching television or surfing the Internet.

The **fourth** type is **The Daniel Fast**. Eat fruits and vegetables; drink water and juice. **NO** meat, sweets and or bread. The website <https://draxe.com/daniel-fast/> provides information about the benefits of implementing aspects, if not all, of The Daniel Fast during our time of prayer and fasting. Additional references are cited in the End Notes and the Resource section of this guide. May you go forth with Joy and be led by His Peace during our time of Spiritual Renewal.

How to Do the Daniel Fast

There are two references in the book of Daniel from which the "Daniel Fast" is drawn. Daniel, Chapter 1, describes how Daniel and his three friends ate only vegetables and drank only water. At the end of a 10-day trial period, Daniel and his friends appeared healthier than their peers who ate the rich foods from the royal table.

In Daniel, Chapter 10, Daniel fasts, abstaining from "pleasant food," meat, and wine. You too can gain a healthier body and clearer mind by following this fast in moderation.

Tips

- Engage in lots of prayer; we need God's strength and guidance.
- Keep your diet simple. Avoid highly processed foods in favor of simply prepared or raw vegetables.
- If for any reason you eat something you should not have during the fast, it is better to ask for forgiveness and continue, than it is to stop the fast.
- If you are experiencing weakness or headaches, drink at least 8 glasses of water each day. Often, we do not understand just how much our body needs water, especially when fasting.
- Set a goal for how long you will fast. Ultimately, you may want to continue the Daniel Fast longer than first intended.

- Have a healthy stash of nuts at work to avoid those co-workers who always want to feed you.
- You may want to supplement your diet with a multi-vitamin.
- Be careful not to drink too much water, however; too much liquid can be as bad as not enough.

Warnings

- During the time of fasting, you will face temptations; resist them in the name of Jesus Christ.
- When you have finished fasting, eat light meals and slowly build up to your normal diet.

Things You Will Need

- A Bible
- A place and time(s) to pray
- A good variety of fruits and vegetables

Scripture References for Fasting:

- *Matthew 6:16-18; Matthew 9:14-15; Luke 18:9-14*

Relation to Prayer and Reading of the Word:

- *1 Samuel 1:6-8, 17-18; Nehemiah 1:4; Daniel 9:3, 20; Joel 2:12; Luke 2:37; Acts 10:30; Acts 13:2*

Corporate Fasting:

- *1 Samuel 7:5-6; Ezra 8:21-23; Nehemiah 9:1-3; Joel 2:15-16; Jonah 3:5-10; Acts 27:33-37*

Remember that it is the attitude of a heart sincerely seeking Him to which God responds with a blessing (Isaiah 58; Jeremiah 14:12; 1 Corinthians 8:8).

Timing for Praying & Fasting

Two time periods are suggested for your period of fasting and prayer:

First is a partial fast of six hours (6 a.m.–12 noon).

Second is a full day fast of twelve hours (6:00 a.m.– 6:00 p.m.).

You can decide which fast works for you. Feel free to modify your fast according to your spiritual, health, and physical needs.

Fasting will begin on Monday, January 7th.

Regular meals may resume on Sunday, January 27th after 6 pm.

Using and Following the Prayer and Fasting Guide

Many people spend a great deal of their lives complaining and looking for reasons why other people are not what we believe they should be. Deep inner personal change is one of the most difficult things to do, yet if we are willing to embark upon the journey, our lives, families, marriages, professions, and ministries will become so much more vibrant.

During the next twenty-one days, we will embark together on a journey of spiritual renewal and growth. Here are the steps to follow to get the most out of this period:

1. Resolve to follow the plan for the full twenty-one days, even when it looks like you cannot fulfill it. **Try not to miss a single day.**
2. Read the daily reading and take notes or write down your observations from what you glean.
3. Resolve to participate in one of the daily fasts – 6 or 12 hours. If you cannot fast every day, resolve to fast every other day or every third day. Establish how you will proceed. Consider the Daniel Fast, which is a partial fast that consists of fruit, vegetables, and water only; eliminates all meat, dairy and sugar products from the diet. Good results are guaranteed.

Twenty-One Days of Prayer and Fasting: Building Healthy Families

We continue to press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus—*Building Healthy Families*. In 2018, we were encouraged to build a foundation for our family. First, we must have a healthy relationship with God. Second, relationships do matter to the Lord. We strive to reflect the image of the spiritual family of God within the family paradigm. Third, we wanted to build a family legacy. We are called to pass our spiritual heritage to the next generation. But how do we maintain strong family connections if we have fractured or broken relationships? As we begin our journey in 2019, our theme continues in Genesis 1:26-28, acknowledging that our image was and is created in the likeness of God. The first Adam has suffered a broken fellowship with his Creator because of one act of disobedience. Do you see the immediate negative impact on their marital relationship? Both Adam and Eve are out of fellowship with God. Where are the respect, honor and submission? Where's is the love? No one wants to be held accountable, but somebody has to take the blame. As the Body of Christ, we embrace the gift of salvation, but do we embrace the ministry of reconciliation? The lost suffered in the Garden of Eden had a far more reaching impact than just on Adam and Eve. Forty and two generations will struggle with unhealthy relationships because of a broken fellowship with God. But glory to God for the second Adam, the redeemed of the Lord doesn't have to.

“Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore, get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding.” In week one, let us consider Proverbs 4:7 (KJV). The wisdom to establish our relationships begin with a healthy fear or reverence for the Lord, our God. As we read further in the book of Genesis, the image of a fallen man appears. Sin has tainted Adam and Eve's relationship with their Creator and with each other. “Lord, help us to know wisdom and demonstrate the principals of respect, honor and submission.” I call to your remembrance the exhortation to meditate on God's unfailing love; to seek the aid of the Holy Spirit in mirroring the love of our Savior.

In week two, we will commune together in I Corinthians 13. Come let us practice the spiritual discipline of Meditation. There is no greater love than the love of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus stated, “... He who has seen me, has seen the Father”; John 14:9 (KJV). During his ministry, Jesus shows us what a healthy relationship with the Father looks like. The Apostle Paul teaches the family at Corinth about exercising godly love among its many members concerning the use of spiritual gifts. How do we emulate His love that expresses the image of Christ in our relationships among our members? Perhaps, the question should not be what love is, but what love is not.

In this final stretch of exploring the theme of **Building Healthy Families**, let us look at the design of marriage and the parallel relationship as a member of the bride of Christ.

An image of a healthy relationship is best exemplified by our Lord Jesus Christ. A sacrificial love of a husband was demonstrated when Christ gave his life for the church, His bride. Jesus knew the Father's unfailing love and providential care. And yet he did not think it robbery to be equal to God (Philippians 2:5) but yield to the Father in reverence. He, who is the head of the church, exhibits humility through submission in the role of His bride. The Father sanctifies the Son; The Son sanctifies his bride, the wife. And in sweet communion of the Holy Spirit we, His holy people, are in covenant with him and with one another.

Whether you come married or single, male or female, blood related or adopted; prayerfully, all of us have come by the blood of the Lamb. The Ministry of Congregational Spirituality stands in intercession on behalf of the household of faith, and our congregational families. We believe that one's heavenly relationship should directly impact our relationships with each other at home, at church, and in our community.

Twenty-one devotionals have been prayerfully selected and placed in an order to guide our congregation on a spiritual journey toward "**Building Healthy Families**"—a journey which the participants will exercise the spiritual disciplines of study, meditation, prayer, and fasting.

The Ministry of Congregational Spirituality hopes these devotionals will illuminate and encourage our SCBC family to water the seed of the Word of God and to cultivate the hearts and minds of each member to seek to be formed in the image of Christ, to bear the fruit of the Spirit, and to multiply HIS likeness within in the family that the Lord has blessed us with.

Ministry of Congregational Spirituality

Day 1: Monday—January 7, 2019

Psalm 34:11—“Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD”.

Father Respect by Rob Jansons

Study: Psalm 34:8-11

Proverbs 9:10 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” The Hebrew word for “fear” in this expression refers to a loving reverence and awe of God, coupled with a willingness to obey him, knowing that he always wants what is best for us.

Our relationship with the Lord is built not on terror but on appropriate respect and awe for our Father. A healthy respect and understanding of God as a loving Creator, faithful Lord, and righteous Judge is the foundation of wisdom. (See also Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7.)

Meditate:

People who lack reverence for God are like children who do not honor their parents. They throw a tantrum to try to manipulate God into giving them what they want. When that fails, they storm off defiantly to do their own thing, ignoring the wisdom and authority of their Father God. Of course, we are all inclined toward such childish rebellion.

On the cross Jesus paid for our sin of dishonoring God. And when we accept the gift of his death for our sin, we enter into a new and intimate relationship with the Father. But God is not our pal. He cannot be outsmarted, used, or tricked. God is the Creator of the universe, infinite, eternal, and all-knowing. The very essence of his being, though, is love (1 John 4:8).

Pray:

Help us, Father, to grow in our appreciation and honor of You. May we never lose respect for You as our Lord. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Are you growing to know your loving Father? We pray that our heart will be filled with love for all.

Day 2: Tuesday, January 8, 2019

Galatians 6:1—*“If someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.”*

Restoring Yet Respecting by George Vink

Study: Galatians 6:1-5

English poet John Donne wrote, “No man is an island.” We need to realize we are all members of a larger community. No believer in Christ should think she is totally independent of others. No Christian should ever think he is on his own.

Meditate:

As in a family, relationships in the body of Christ—the church—function best when there’s a deep-felt awareness and concern for others, even while maintaining healthy boundaries. The common good requires our working to restore relationships that are broken by sin— and doing so with a spirit of gentleness and self-awareness. Whatever sin a person is guilty of, we must not boast, “That would never happen to me!” Such pride is the first step toward a mighty fall.

A humble, gentle inquiry such as “How may I help?” or “How may I pray for you?” can be the beginning toward gaining someone’s confidence without interfering. People need privacy, even when being helped in a sinful situation. Gentle restoration demands respecting the person as one of God’s image bearers and allowing personal privacy. Different people have different needs in terms of their personal space. Healthy relationships allow for various needs. After all, each one of us is unique, and we all have burdens to bear.

Pray:

Jesus, thank You for the example of compassion You showed as You touched people’s lives. Help me to respect others also as creatures made in Your image. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Healthy relationships allow for various needs. After all, each one of us is unique. And we all have burdens to bear.

Day 3: Wednesday, January 9, 2019

John 1:29—*“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”*

The Blame Game by Julie Ackerman Link

Study: Leviticus 16:5-22

I’ve been blamed for a lot of things, and rightly so. My sin, failure, and incompetence have caused grief, anxiety, and inconvenience for friends and family (and probably even for strangers). I’ve also been blamed for things that were not my fault, things I was powerless to change.

But I have stood on the other side of the fence hurling accusations at others. If they had just done something different, I tell myself, I would not be in the mess I’m in. Blame hurts. So whether guilty or not, we waste lots of time and mental energy trying to find someone else to carry it for us.

Meditate:

Jesus offers us a better way to deal with blame. Even though He was blameless, He took upon Himself the sin of the world and carried it away (John 1:29). We often refer to Jesus as the sacrificial lamb, but He was also the final scapegoat for everything that is wrong with the world (Lev. 16:10).

Once we acknowledge our sin and accept Christ’s offer to take it away, we no longer have to carry the weight of our guilt. We can stop looking for someone to blame for what’s wrong with us, and we can stop accepting blame from others trying to do the same.

Thanks to Jesus, we can stop playing the blame game.

Pray:

Help me, Lord, to be honest when I am at fault and to confess that to You—instead of looking for someone else to blame. Thank You for taking my blame on Yourself. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Honesty about our sin brings forgiveness.

Day 4: Thursday, January 10, 2019

Matthew 21:29—“*I will not,*’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.”

Shame and Honor Reversed by Dean Deppe

Study: Matthew 21:28-32

Every culture has its particular views of honor and shame. Eastern cultures have strong codes of honor and shame about speaking to family members. In Jewish circles it was notoriously shameful to look your father in the eye and declare, “I will not.” And yet that’s what the first son in this parable does.

Meditate:

In Western society today that would also be disrespectful. But if my son refused me with such a response, I would probably reply, “Well, let’s talk about this”—and I would explain to him why he needed to obey as well as to respect his father. But in first-century Palestine the father would have slapped that son across the face.

On the other hand, the second son in the parable says, politely, “I will, sir”—but then does not obey. The father would have been impressed with the show of respect, but not with the result. This son does not truly honor his father.

Jesus tells this parable to challenge the definitions of honor and shame in Israel. Honor demands both respect and obedience.

What needs to be challenged in our culture today? Is the pursuit of possessions or status more respected than the pursuit of godly living? Do we live by a code of ethics that needs to be shifted by Jesus?

Pray:

Lord, turn us upside down till we become right side up. Teach us to follow Your ways faithfully. For Your sake, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

What reversals of thinking and living are necessary as we try to apply this parable to our lives?

Day 5: Friday, January 11, 2019

Matthew 18:5—*"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you."*

Tough Love by Jerry Dykstra

Study: Matthew 18:15-20

It's much easier to talk about someone who has offended you than to talk to that person about the offense. It's easier to run down someone's reputation than to confront in a loving way.

Meditate:

Members of the body of Christ are called to love and serve each other, and when one person offends another, those two persons are responsible to work out their differences. It is not for others to judge or interfere. The first responsibility is with the people involved. Such conversations are seldom easy, but they are necessary for the body of Christ to be vital and healthy. Only if differences cannot be resolved may others be asked to participate in the reconciliation process.

Often in our attempts to avoid confrontation we prevent conversations between members of Christ's body that will restore relationships. Fear of what might happen prevents reconciliation. God understands that reconciliation comes with a price—and he paid the ultimate price that brings about reconciliation with his children. God sent his Son to the cross to make redemption a reality in the lives of his people.

Pray:

Father, give us courage and wisdom as we seek to restore broken relationships in our lives. May we bring Christ's redemptive power into the lives of everyone around us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Restoring relationships is not easy. Reconciliation is hard, painful work. But followers of Christ, filled with His Spirit, will make the effort to bring peace and love into a world of conflict and hatred.

Day 6: Saturday, January 12, 2019

Peter 3:10-11—*“Whoever would love life and see good days must . . . turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.”*

Escaping Conflict by David Zandstra

Study: Genesis 27:41-45

One of the wrong ways to handle conflict is to try to run away from it, hoping the problem will disappear. Jacob cheated his brother, Esau, and deceived his father, Isaac, to gain the family inheritance. His mother, Rebecca, then urged him to run for his life from the consequences.

Meditate:

Responding to conflict by escaping may include changing jobs, breaking up a marriage, moving away, leaving home, or changing churches. In extreme situations it may involve taking one’s own life to avoid dealing with a serious problem.

But running away from conflict only postpones dealing with the problem. Sometimes when our personal safety is threatened we need to get some distance away. It may be helpful to call a time out to calm down, pray, and think about the next action we need to take. But a temporary break should be followed by earnest efforts to seek help and to work to resolve the issue.

Many years later, Jacob returned to face the conflict he had caused by his earlier deception. But first the Lord met him face to face to humble and convict him. When he reunited with his family, Jacob was a changed man, trusting God instead of relying on his cheating schemes (see Genesis 32).

Pray:

God of salvation, I have denied and avoided conflicts that I should have faced. Give me courage and wisdom to work on past problems as well as any that I am now involved in. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Grant me the courage and wisdom to work on past problems as well as any that I am now involved in.

Day 7: Sunday, January 13, 2019

Genesis 1:26-27— “*God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: . . . male and female he created them.’*”

Going Back to the Beginning by Henry Kranenburg

Study: Genesis 1:27-2:3

Many people today go to great lengths to trace their family tree. They want to trace their family name and discover the history that helped shape them. A recent trip to the country of my parents' birth stirred that interest in me. That trip stimulated a strong desire to know my heritage and the role it has played in my life.

Though I haven't yet been able to trace my immediate family roots very far, I can easily go back to the very beginning of my human heritage. Those roots take me back not just to Adam and Eve but to the God who made us in His image, in His own likeness.

Meditate:

Have you noted the use of the plural here? God refers to himself as "us" and "our" and says that we humans are created male and female. Being human has to do with being made to connect with others. I am not human as God intended if I am simply an island by myself; I am fully human when I am in relationship. My identity is determined not just by who came before me; it's also about whoever I connect with.

This is a good time to reflect on who you are too. How is God's image reflected in your relationships? What kinds of connections do you have?

Pray:

O God, who made us, help me to know who You are and what it means that I have been made in Your image. Help me to know myself by my connection to You and others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Today is Sunday, a day to consider our roots in God and what it means to be human.
Have you thought about your heritage lately?

Day 8: Monday, January 14, 2019

Genesis 33:10—“For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably.”

Love Keeps No Record of Wrongs (1) by Richard Williams

Study: 1 Corinthians 13:5d; Genesis 33:1-11

The story of Jacob and Esau is a magnificent account of how God’s love melts resentment and moves us to forgive. Jacob received Esau’s birthright by exploiting his hunger ([Genesis 25:29-34](#)). Sometime later, their mother Rebekah schemed to get the father’s blessing for her favorite son Jacob, a blessing that should have gone instead to Esau. When Esau realized what had happened, he “held a grudge against Jacob” and vowed in his heart to kill his brother after the death of their father Isaac ([Genesis 27:41](#)).

Meditate:

Acting on the urgent advice of his mother, Jacob fled to Haran to stay temporarily with his Uncle Laban until Esau got over his anger. After living with his uncle for about twenty-one years, Jacob returned home with his large family and great wealth. Fearing Esau, Jacob sent a generous bribe ahead to appease his brother. And he fervently prayed for deliverance from Esau. God answered his prayer in a marvelous way by removing Esau’s resentment, and filling his heart with love. Moved by gratitude to God for his brother’s forgiveness, Jacob said to Esau: “to see your face is like seeing the face of God.”

Pray:

Father, I see the horrendous harm resentment causes among people. Pour out Your love in the hearts of people that we may be reconciled to one another in love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Maybe you are holding a grudge against someone, or you know of someone who is holding a grudge against you. Ask the Lord to take away the grudge, and to fill you and the person with His love.

Day 9: Tuesday, January 15, 2019

Ephesians 6:4—*“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”*

Love Is Not Easily Angered (1) by Richard Williams

Study: 1 Corinthians 13:5c; Ephesians 6:1-4.

Anger is a God-given emotion, a natural response to disappointment, betrayal, or injustice. Anger is not a sin, but to be easily angered is a disorder of the human spirit.

Meditate:

Some people are born with a tendency to be easily angered. And others have socially acquired an irritable spirit, due in part to prolonged dysfunctional parenting.

The apostle Paul says, “[Parents], do not exasperate your children.” To exasperate means “to irritate, enrage, provoke to anger.” Parents can exasperate their children by constantly criticizing them; making negative comparisons (why can't you get A's like your sister); arguing, fighting, cursing in their presence; not taking time out to listen to them; abandoning them; or establishing rules in the home that are far too rigid.

In urban Chicago where I live, far too many homes, schools, communities, mental institutions, and jails deal with persons full of a rage that can often be traced back to dysfunctional parenting. This deep-seated rage often results in serious depression, explosive temper tantrums, disrespect for persons in authority, and deadly violence.

Parents can avoid exasperating their children by “bringing them up in the training and instruction of the Lord,” a process that tends to nurture their tender spirit in faith, hope and a love that is not easily angered.

Pray:

O God, forgive parents who have abused their children. Please pour Your love into the hearts of abused persons, that they may be healed of their deep-seated anger. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil. 1 Corinthians 3:5c (KJV)

Day 10: Wednesday, January 16, 2019

Matthew 20:26—“*Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.*”

Love Is Not Self-Seeking (I) by Richard Williams

Study: 1 Corinthians 13:5b; Matthew 20:20-28

The mother of James and John was looking out for the best interest of her sons when she approached Jesus. Convinced that Jesus would soon be to establishing an earthly kingdom, she made the first bid on two of the better positions of power in Jesus’ kingdom. James and John, who fully supported their mother’s request, assured Jesus that they were wholeheartedly willing and ready to fight for, and even die for the establishment of his kingdom. When the other ten disciples heard about this self-seeking request, they were furious. Why? The two brothers had beaten them to the punch!

Meditate:

This power struggle, if allowed to continue, threatened to destroy Jesus’ inner circle. So, Jesus acted quickly and decisively to restore order, while teaching them an important lesson on how one achieves greatness in God’s kingdom.

Jesus reminded them that far too many rulers of this world use their power to manipulate, dominate, and oppress people. These tyrannical rulers are all self-seekers. But in God’s kingdom, anyone who aspires to positions of power must be a servant. Like Jesus, they must be willing and ready to use their power to help people become all that God wants them to be.

The love God pours out into our hearts is not self-seeking. It empowers us to “look not only to [our] own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4).

Pray:

Heavenly Father, increase Your love in my heart, so that I may be willing and ready to serve others, like Jesus did. I ask this in His name. Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 1 Corinthians 3:5b (KJV)

Day 11: Thursday, January 17, 2019

James 3:10—“*Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.*”

Love Is Not Rude (2) by Richard Williams

Study: 1 Corinthians 13:5a; James 3:1-12

The apostle Paul says to Christians, “do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29). Rudeness is certainly one forbidden form of unwholesome talk.

Meditate:

Jesus paid the price for our adoption, giving us the right to be children of God (John 1:12). We are not born naturally into this relationship; it is a spiritual rebirth. Jesus calls it being “born again,” “born of the Spirit” (John 3:3, 8). We are inclined to be rude to people because, according to the apostle James, we have a tongue problem! James says, “with the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing” (James 3:9-10). Our insulting, demeaning, rude talk can and does damage people’s sense of self-worth, resulting in tremendous emotional damage, sometimes for a lifetime. We are deceiving ourselves if we think we can praise God, and, at the same time, hurt with our talk men, women, and children whom he has created in his image. Put another way, “anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20).

So, what are we to do with our tongue problem? We must acknowledge that no human being can tame the tongue, but “nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 1:37). Once we confess Jesus as our Savior, God pours out his love into our hearts. Slowly and often painfully, his love enables us to put away unwholesome talk (like rudeness), and speak only “what is helpful for building others up.”

Pray:

O God, tame my tongue, so that I may only speak what builds others up in faith, hope, and love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.
1 Corinthians 3:5a (KJV)

Day 12: Friday, January 18, 2019

1 Corinthians 13:13—*“Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.”*

The Holy Spirit and Love by Kurt Selles

Study: 1 Corinthians 13:4-13

The four-letter English word love packs a lot of meaning. It can refer to family love, friendship, romantic love, and sexual love. The Greek text of the New Testament uses a variety of words to express different types of love. The most important “love” word in the Bible, agape, expresses the highest form of love, the selfless love of God for human beings.

Meditate:

The apostle Paul, in this “love chapter,” offers one of the most beautiful and profound descriptions of love (agape) in all of literature. Genuine love (agape), he writes, is self-giving, patient, kind, forgiving, generous, and humble. This kind of love, says Paul, never fails.

In the demands, frustrations, and annoyances of everyday life, don’t you wish you could have even a fraction of this kind of love? Try as I might, I often fail to show selfless love for the people around me: family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and others. Selfless love, though, is a fruit of the Spirit, a love that the Holy Spirit plants in our hearts when He comes to dwell in us. By continuing to ask Him to work in our hearts, we can grow in self-giving love.

Pray:

Dear Jesus, thank You so much for Your selfless love that makes us right with God. Please send the Spirit to work in our hearts so that we can love as You do. In Your name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

When you struggle with showing selfless love, remember that the Holy Spirit is working in you, bearing fruit. Ask Him to help you produce the greatest kind of love, the love that God has for us all.

Day 13: Saturday, January 19, 2019

Ephesians 5:21—“*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*”

Loving Means Submitting by George Vink

Study: Matthew 20:20-28

In a sermon I asked, “What is the best way to teach children?” And the congregation answered enthusiastically, “By example!” As a pastor, I had often quoted Albert Schweitzer, saying, “Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.”

Jesus taught by example what he expects from us. Facing the cross, he illustrated submission and leadership at the last supper with his disciples when he washed their feet and said they should now serve one another (John 13:3-17).

Meditate:

The concept of submission is often misunderstood. It isn’t a matter of allowing others to walk all over us. As Paul applies it to marriage in Ephesians 5, submitting means that both the husband and wife seek their partner’s well-being. It’s not a hierarchy! It’s not about authority but about serving one another—and doing so “out of reverence for Christ,” who gave up his very life for us.

When the mother of James and John asked for places of authority for her sons in Jesus’ kingdom, Jesus explained that lording it over others is not the way of the kingdom. He urged them to follow his example: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Pray:

Lord Jesus, You call us to live in relationship with one another, but sometimes it’s so difficult. Help us see how we can serve and build up one another out of love for You. In Your name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Whom can you serve and build up, for Jesus’ sake, today?

Day 14: Sunday, January 20, 2019

Hosea 1:2—“*The Lord said to [Hosea], “Go, marry a promiscuous woman”*”

A Match Made in Heaven by Peter Hoytema

Study: Hosea 1:1-9

Sometimes a husband and wife are so right for each other that we say their marriage is “made in heaven.” But people probably wouldn’t have said that about Hosea and Gomer. They could not have been more wrong for each other. Hosea was a prophet, and Gomer was a prostitute. Now, for some people this might bring another saying to mind—that “opposites attract.” But the only reason Hosea married Gomer was because God told him to. If ever there was a match made in heaven, it was this one.

Meditate:

The purpose of this arranged marriage was to demonstrate an important spiritual point. Just as Gomer was an unfaithful wife, so the people of Israel had been unfaithful in their relationship to God.

Our relationship with God is also like a marriage. The New Testament calls Christ the “husband” of God’s people, the church (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:21-33), and the church is His “bride” (Revelation 21:2).

Like Israel, we too are unfaithful to God. But the gospel announces that Jesus is the faithful one who forgives our wandering ways and restores our broken relationship with God. This is why the celebration at the end of history is appropriately called “the wedding of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:7).

Pray:

Lord, how wonderful it will be to serve You perfectly in heaven one day. Until then, help us to obey You joyfully and love You faithfully. For Jesus’ namesake, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Our life with Jesus is not only a match made in heaven. It’s a marriage that will last forever!

Day 15: Monday, January 21, 2019

Psalm 45:2-4—“*God has blessed you forever. . . . Ride forth victoriously in the cause of truth, humility and justice*”

Marriage Reflecting God’s Character by John Kuperus

Study: Psalm 45:1-7

Marriages today are so easily ended. Divorce has become routine. Breaking relationships designed to last a lifetime results in many broken hearts and homes.

Meditate:

Psalm 45 is written as a wedding song for a king. The first several verses describe a king who rules with integrity and justice, reflecting God’s character.

This mighty ruler is clothed with splendor and majesty. He is called “the most excellent of men.” His lips are “anointed with grace,” meaning that his speech is life-giving, gentle, and kind. God is the commander of this man’s life; he recognizes God’s anointing of grace and of joy. He loves righteousness and hates wickedness, revealing his heart to be in tune with God’s heart. He seeks truth, humility, and justice.

I want to challenge the men who are reading these words to take note that God and His Word must be central in our lives. If anything is out of line, we must be truthful and humble to seek God’s direction in setting it right. Have we dropped our guard and allowed anything unwholesome to intrude? If we are married, are we giving up the fight and deserting our wives and families?

Pray:

Father, thank You for all your blessings, and guide us to live for You in truth, humility, and justice. If we have fallen short, forgive us and restore us, in Christ, to live for You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Let’s look to the Lord for guidance in our relationships especially in marriage and family relationships. He alone can help us.

Day 16: Tuesday, January 22, 2018

Proverbs 31:10-11—“*A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her*”

Noble Character, Reflecting Wisdom by John Kuperus

Study: Proverbs 31:10-31

As we reflect on marriage again today, let’s consider the way of wisdom described in Proverbs. Proverbs 31 famously summarizes many virtues and blessings of godly Wisdom, personified as a woman earlier in the book (Proverbs 1:20-23; 8:1-9:12) and contrasted with another woman named Folly (Proverbs 9:13-18).

Meditate:

In Proverbs 31, Wisdom is personified as a “wife of noble character,” but, as another writer has put it, “this chapter is not dictating how godly mothers and wives are supposed to act.” Instead, it shows how all God’s people can practice wisdom in their daily lives.

The life of wisdom and noble character is indeed busy! Creative in business and agriculture, using the resources God provides, considering opportunities for growth and improvement, sharing with the poor and needy, diligently working toward the future with the sure hope of blessing—this life honors God not only with hard work but also with “faithful instruction,” so that others may see the way of wisdom and God may be praised.

Men and women who seek to honor God are guided by wisdom, one of God’s great gifts for living. If they are married, a wife and husband should work together to glorify and serve God. And we all, whether married or single, are to blossom into all God created us to be.

Pray:

Father, help us all to faithfully reflect Your love and design for our lives. In Jesus, our perfect example of wise living, we pray. Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Men and women who seek to honor God are guided by wisdom, one of God’s great gifts for living.

Day 17: Wednesday, January 23, 2018

Isaiah 55:6—“*Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.*”

How to Get Close to God: Communicate by Arthur Schoonveld

Study: Isaiah 55:6-11

In a made-for-TV documentary on marriage a wife says to her husband, "We live together, eat together, and sleep together, but we have nothing to say to each other. We've become intimate strangers." Of course, without meaningful communication there can be no closeness.

Meditate:

What is true in our relationship with our spouse or other family members is even more true in our relationship with God. One of the reasons some of us don't feel close to God is that we're not communicating with God on a personal level. We need to learn how to communicate with Him. We need to take time to listen to what God is saying to us through the Bible.

We have to listen to God as he speaks to us through circumstances and things that happen to us. We have to learn to ask, "What is God saying to me through what happened, and what is God saying to me through my spouse, my parents, my children, my friends, and other Christians?"

After we have listened, we have to talk with God in prayer. We can't expect to feel God's closeness unless we talk to him. Make sure you come to God and listen to him. Make sure you take the time each day to talk with him. Otherwise God will seem like a stranger.

Pray:

Lord, help us to care for one another and demonstrate Your love in our world today. Help us to allow others to help. Let us be a community that reflects Your love.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Imitate the Lord Jesus, who spent time alone every day to communicate with his Father.

Day 18: Thursday, January 24, 2018

Job 1:5— “*Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for them*”

Having Regular Customs by George Vink

Study: Job 1:1-5

Job’s priestly parenting has sometimes been questioned. Can parents pray and present offerings for their children’s sins? Does God accept my sacrifice for someone else? Vicarious atonement is the term we use to describe Christ as the one who becomes our substitute to accomplish the saving work in our relationship with God. Yet Christ’s atoning work still calls us to receive Jesus and his redeeming work with a believing heart.

Meditate:

Without answering all the questions about “Job’s regular custom,” we can learn from his example that it’s worthwhile to nurture some family traditions. We can assume that Job’s children knew that their father sacrificed for them. The father who seeks to please God and is concerned that his children “may have sinned” is the kind of parent who takes time to teach them God’s Word and to pray for them regularly

Healthy churches, healthy families, and healthy relationships enjoy customs that call for times of celebration and other memory-making moments. A church’s annual Christmas Eve candlelight service is an example. Bringing Easter lilies to church neighbors could be another. Praying daily for our children—a form of offering sacrifice—should be one.

Pray:

Father, thank You for faithfully keeping us in Your care and for people in the family of Christ who pray for us. Help us to do the same for others.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

A God’s daily command for the sun to rise is a good custom. How about you? Do you have any good habits?

Day 19: Friday, January 25, 2018

Proverbs 22:6—“*Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.*”

Example, Example, Example! by George Vink

Study: Proverbs 22:1-6

Both children and parents learn obedience to God best by being obedient in everyday, ordinary life. Then, if an extraordinary expectation comes their way, the pattern of obedience is in place. As God’s Son, Jesus often taught and showed how to do his Father’s will.

Meditate:

Most of the adults and children in churches I have served have learned the words of Proverbs 22:6 and have aimed to live by them. Parents take this proverb to heart, trying to teach godly living by “Example, Example, Example!” After all, what does it mean if parents can say, “I’ve provided food, clothing, recreation, education, and more,” but they have not taught their children about the Lord?

Generally, the character and virtues of godly parents are picked up by their children, but we must remember that Proverbs 22:6 is a proverb, not a promise. To their parents’ sorrow, some children turn away from the Lord, and this calls for much prayer.

Wise parents know they can’t “do it all” on their own. They join a church where God’s Word is the basis for all teaching. They make friends with other parents for whom God’s Word is truth. If possible, they also find a school that supports them in raising their children to honor God. Working together and with God, shall we not all aim to show that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7)?

Pray:

Father, thank You for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Help us follow His example of obedient living so that we also can be good examples for others. In His name, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Both children and parents learn obedience to God best by being obedient in everyday, ordinary life. Then, if an extraordinary expectation comes their way, the pattern of obedience is in place.

Day 20: Saturday, January 26, 2018

Genesis 4:9—“*The Lord said ... "Where is your brother ... ?" ... [Cain] replied, "Am I my brother's keeper?"*”

A Question for Each of Us by Julius Medenblik

Study: Genesis 4:2-12

What causes breakdown in conversations? Blame and shame entered this world through Adam and Eve's sin. Breakdown within the family continued with their children, Cain and Abel. What should have brought two brothers together—their worship of God—became a setting for comparison and jealousy.

Meditate:

The smallness of Cain's heart for God contrasted starkly with Abel's devotion in his gift to God. Instead of looking to God for redirection, Cain looked to settle the score with Abel. Taking matters into his own hands, Cain killed Abel, and his blood cried out to God. Comparison and jealousy still exist as root causes of family breakdowns today. Maybe you know of someone who is part of your family but is currently "in exile." How did it all begin? How will it end?

There's a moment in God's conversation with Cain that makes us wonder if there could have been a different ending to this story. Could forgiveness have won out over exile? God asked a question for which he already knew the answer, and instead of coming out of the shadows of death, Cain shrouded himself with the defense that he was not now—and would not be—his brother's keeper. The conversation turned from the potential for confession to the pronouncement of judgment.

Pray:

Merciful Father, help us to know that loving You and loving one another are the most important things in life. In the name of our Brother, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Prayer Focus:

Are you a brother's or sister's keeper?

Day 21: Sunday, January 27, 2018

Matthew 5:24—“*Go and be reconciled . . .*”

The Tough Trail by Shawn Brix

Study: Proverbs 6:16-19

Estranged relationships grieve the Lord deeply. “There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him,” says our reading for today. The climax of that list is “dissension in the community.” Of all the things that God finds abominable, dissension or discord is one of the worst. God created us to be in relationship first with Him and secondly with one another. As a result, when our bond with someone is bruised or broken, we stand outside of the relationship of peace that the Lord wants for us.

Meditate:

Just before the apostle Paul described the fruit of the Spirit in his letter to the Galatians, he cited a number of attitudes and actions that come from our sinful nature. Among them are “discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy” (Galatians 5:20-21). Rather than creating peace, these habits and patterns of our old nature threaten to alienate us from our friends, our co-workers, and even our family.

Acting in humility, seeking forgiveness, burying pride, and reaching out to people who have hurt us is no easy task. Philip Keller wrote, “The path of peace . . . is a tough trail tramped out with humble heart and lowly spirit.” But that path is possible when we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in cultivating peace within us and in all our actions as an expression of God’s love.

Pray:

By Your Spirit, Lord, help us to walk the often difficult path of peace. May we be agents of Your grace in the lives of the people around us for Jesus’ name sake, Amen.

Prayer Focus:

When our bond with someone is bruised or broken, we stand outside of the relationship of peace that the Lord wants for us.

Devotional Outline and Website References

Unless otherwise noted, selected devotionals are from Today.Reframemedia.com/devotionals
© 1950–2018 ReFrame Media. All rights reserved

Day 1 - Father Respect by Rob Jansons

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/father-respect>

Day 2 - Restoring Yet Respecting by George Vink

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/restoring-yet-respecting-2009-10-21>

Day 3 - The Blame Game by Julie Ackerman

<https://odb.org/2015/05/31/the-blame-game-3/>

Day 4 - Shame and Honor Reversed by Dean Deppe

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/shame-and-honor-reversed-2012-10-17>

Day 5 - Tough Love by Jerry Dykstra

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/tough-love-2007-06-21>

Day 6 - Escaping Conflict by David Zandstra

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/escaping-conflict-2012-06-10>

Day 7 - Going Back to the Beginning by Henry Kranenburg

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/going-back-to-the-beginning-2007-07-01>

Day 8 - Love Keeps No Record of Wrongs (1) by Richard Williams

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/love-keeps-no-record-of-wrongs-1-2005-08-18>

Day 9 - Love Is Not Easily Angered (1) by Richard Williams

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/love-is-not-easily-angered-1-2005-08-16>

Day 10 - Love Is Not Self-Seeking (1) by Richard Williams

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/love-is-not-self-seeking-1-2005-08-14>

Day 11 - Love Is Not Rude (2) by Richard Williams

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/love-is-not-rude-2-2005-08-13>

Day 12 - The Holy Spirit and Love by Kurt Selles

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/the-holy-spirit-and-love>

Day 13 - Loving Means Submitting by George Vink

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/loving-means-submitting>

Day 14 - A Match Made in Heaven by Peter Hoytema

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/a-match-made-in-heaven-2010-03-04>

Day 15 - Marriage Reflecting God's Character by John Kuperus

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/marriage-reflecting-gods-character>

Day 16 - Noble Character, Reflecting Wisdom by John Kuperus

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/noble-character-reflecting-wisdom>

Day 17- How to Get Close to God: Communicate by Arthur Schoonveld

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/how-to-get-close-to-god-communicate-2006-01-08>

Day 18 - Having Regular Customs by George Vink

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/having-regular-customs-2009-10-15>

Day 19 - Example, Example, Example! by George Vink

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/example-example-example>

Day 20 - A Question for Each of Us by Julius Medenblik

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/a-question-for-each-of-us-2006-08-03>

Day 21- The Tough Trail by Shawn Brix

<https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/the-tough-trail-2009-07-13>

Endnotes and Additional Resources

For additional study material about the Daniel Fast cited in this guide, please refer to the following websites and resources:

1. <http://draxe.com/daniel-fast>
2. Honoring God Through The Daniel Fast by Terrance Day, published in 2009.
<http://www.danielfast.net>
3. Daniel Fast 21 Days of Prayer & Fasting, New Life Worship Center, www.newlifealtoona.org

Tips for Family Resources Fasting: How do I include my young children and teens?

1. <http://www.crosswalk.com/family/parenting/fasting-as-a-family.html>
2. <https://danielfast.wordpress.com/2008/08/11/teens-on-the-daniel-fast/>
3. <https://danielplan.com/faith/>
4. <https://danielfast.wordpress.com/2007/12/27/youth-special-diets-and-the-daniel-fast/>

Additional Resources for your spiritual growth and edification on *Building Healthy Families*:

Building Godly Families by Dr. Paul Chappell

<https://www.dailyintheword.org/content/building-godly-families>

DAILY IN THE WORD IS A MINISTRY OF LANCASTER BAPTIST CHURCH

lancasterbaptist.org // wbc.edu // strivingtogether.com //

paulchappell.com // terriechappell.com // ministry127.com //

spiritual leadership conference

God's Design for the Family (Colossians 3:18-21)

<https://bible.org/seriespage/14-god-s-design-family-colossians-318-21> by Gregory Brown,

<https://bible.org/users/gregory-brown>

© 2018 Bible.org All Rights Reserved

Made in the Image of God: Relationship and Responsibility

<https://www.bloggingtheologically.com/2009/05/28/made-in-the-image-of-god-relationship-responsibility>

<https://www.bloggingtheologically.com/about/> Aaron Armstrong / July 11, 2018

Copyright © 2018 · Digital Pro on Genesis Framework · WordPress ·

Lesson 17: Reconciled Relationships (Ephesians 2:14-18)

<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-17-reconciled-relat> Steve Cornell is senior pastor at Millersville Bible Church in Millersville, Pennsylvania. [relationships-ephesians-214-18](https://bible.org/seriespage/relationships-ephesians-214-18)

