

HOLY LIVING IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

KEY VERSE:

Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32).

- Jude 20.** But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on you most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,
21. Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.
22. And of some have compassion, making a difference:
23. And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.
24. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,
25. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

- Philippians 2:14.** Do all things without murmurings and disputings:
15. That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;
16. Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

- Romans 12:9.** Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.
10. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;
11. Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
12. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.
13. Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Background Scriptures
Romans 12:14-21; Ephesians 4:24-32;
1 Peter 3:1-12

Devotional Reading
Romans 12:1-8

Central Truth:
Being filled with the Holy Spirit makes a difference in a Christian's attitudes.



THE LESSON EXPOSITION

BACKGROUND

When Mr. Wesley was struggling to become established in his spiritual relationship to God and his intellectual understanding of God's Word, he sought counsel of a more mature Christian about monastic life. The more mature and intelligent saint is reported to have told the young Mr. Wesley, "Son, God knows nothing of a solitary religion." The Bible is very clear that Christians are not to hide their lights under a bushel, but to expose the light of the gospel by good works so that the Father might be glorified. As salt of the earth, Christians are also to emit a preserving and purging influence upon the moral tone of society.

Light has its greatest beneficent effect when plunged into the most intense darkness. Salt is most needed where corruption is worst. Saints are most needed where sin and evil are most prominent. God does not want Christians to abandon hope and effort to evangelize and reform corrupt society by Pharisaic isolation from society. His desire is that saints, filled with divine love and the Holy Spirit, be active agents in society. Whatever offices and occupations are needed for the maintenance of society should be occupied by Spirit-filled Christians. The grace of God and consecration to God will enable one to be an exemplary servant in society.



I. RELATIONSHIP TOWARD SELF (Jude 20-25)

Jude 20. Building up yourselves ... praying in the Holy Ghost. If Christians are to serve God and society effectively, they must take heed to themselves (1 Tim. 4:16). One's own spiritual state is not subject to arbitrary decrees or to accidental deeds, but to purposeful, personal determination and appropriation of divine means of grace. Personal spiritual upbuilding is dependent upon praying in the Holy Ghost with faith. God cannot build up the Christian without his cooperation.

21. Keep yourselves in the love of God. Eternal life is strictly a gift of divine mercy, and it cannot be earned by even the best and most saintly. But just as surely, one may not benefit eternally from the grace of Jesus Christ without the cooperation of his will in keeping himself in the love of God. John declared, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (1 John 5:3).

22, 23. And of some have compassion ... hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Verse 22 says **have compassion, making a difference.** It may not be the intended meaning of the verse, but it will surely make a difference if one has compassion in his attempt to save others and pull them out of the fire. Christians should surely try to help the lost to find the Lord by being kind to them. But in the endeavour to help the needy, the Christian worker must be careful that he is not polluted or corrupted by the sins of the sinful.

24. Keep you from falling, and ...present you faultless. To carry out God's will in seeking to save and snatch from the fire those whose garments (or lives) are besmirched with sin is to put oneself in danger of becoming likewise affected by those same corruptions. But there is the assurance that the will of God will not take one where the grace of God cannot keep him. He is able to keep one from falling providing one desires to be kept. For God to keep one, he must keep himself in the love of God and keep his will submitted and committed to God's will.

25. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory. Since God is the one who redeems the sinner, sanctifies the believer, and keeps the tempted from falling, He alone is deserving of the glory and honour for the great salvation He provides.



II. RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD (*Phil. 2:14-16*)

Philippians 2:14. Do all things without murmurings and disputings. In the preceding verse the Philippians were reminded that God was at work in them, causing them to will and enabling them to do what greatly pleased Him. In this verse they were admonished against murmuring and complaining against His divine providence. God will cause and enable Christians to stand against sin and evil, and He will help them not to be censorious faultfinders. It is no compliment to a child of God that he can only censor and condemn, and never render "tribute to whom tribute is due ... honour to whom honour" is due (*Rom. 13:7*).

15. That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God. It is reported that Mr. Wesley and a friend, while dining, were being served by a young waitress whose hand was quite laden with jewellery. The friend somewhat scathingly asked Mr. Wesley, "What do you think of that?" Mr. Wesley replied, "That is a most beautiful hand." Mr. Wesley was not seeking to condone the worldly conduct of the waitress, but to save her from chagrin and embarrassment. Christians who are careless of the feelings of others are not **blameless and harmless. Among whom ye shine as lights in the world.** It is better to be a light than merely to condemn and curse the darkness. Nothing shows up the awfulness and ugliness of sin so much as radiant, winsome, victorious holy living.

16. Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice. "Lilies that fester smell worse than weeds." There is a mode of presenting the Word of God that betrays the God of the Word. Dr. Harold Hoyt admonished a class of young preachers, "Gentlemen, you can fight the devil in such a devilish way as to become a devil yourself." Paul urged the Philippians to hold onto and hold out to others the Word that blessed both the herald and the hearer. This practice would produce rejoicing on the part of all when Jesus comes.



III. RELATIONSHIP TO BELIEVERS (*Rom. 12:9-13*)

Romans 12:9-13. Let love be without dissimulation. The world today is characterized by imitations and substitutes. There is an imitation or substitute for almost everything. There are some imitations which are better than that which is imitated. But when it comes to Christian love, substitutes are simply unacceptable. J.B. Phillips renders the verse: "Let us have no imitation Christian love." There follow several fruits of real Christian love:

1. A genuine break with evil and real devotion to good.
2. Real warm affection for one another, as between brothers.
3. A willingness to let the other man have the credit - endeavouring to outdo one another in showing honour.
4. Not being lazy, but enthusiastic in God's work.
5. Keeping the fires of the Spirit burning.
6. Basing one's hope in Christ.
7. Patiently enduring trials and tribulations.
8. Getting into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner. "Never grudging a meal or bed to those who need them" (Phillips).

There should be such affection and caring among saints that sinners are caused to desire to become Christians. Many sinners are turned away from Christ and salvation by the carelessness and cruelty of Christians toward one another. John admonished Christians, "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." The admonition is not against vocal expression of love, but that such expressions be put into action.



"KEY" COMMENTS

Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (*Eph. 4:32*).

Holy religion is the practical, everyday kind. The Pharisees had a ceremonial holiness which set them apart from their fellows, but it did not make them of any practical use to the community. They stood as signposts by life's wayside, pointing to the law and making heavy demands for outward conformity, but understanding little of its spirit. Theirs was a religion of imbalance, extremely strict in some areas, ultraliberal in others. There was no kindness or compassion for sinners, only disdain and disgust.

True holiness sets one in a right relationship with God, himself, other believers and the world. Christians are not of the world, but most certainly they are in it and have a responsibility to it. The influence they wield makes the world better or worse. There is much evidence of the need for much more good influence.

Kindness costs so little, yet gives so much. Like leaven, it tends to permeate the whole lump. There is often more talk of kindness than practice of it. It is seeing an opportunity to do good and improving upon it.

(Remember the Good Samaritan?) Just a kind word or other deed, and a life which is otherwise bleak may be much enriched. A business man had a boy to shine his shoes. Later he noticed that the boy desired to seek his presence and to be near him. Upon asking the reason, the boy told him that it was because he had called him "my boy," and until then he had been nobody's boy. "Take time to be holy" is advice of great merit; equally meritorious is this, "Take time to be kind." For remove kindness from holiness, and all you have left is a bigoted Pharisee.

The text today is addressed primarily toward personal relationships within the Church. If holiness does anything at all (and it does), it causes God's children to love each other – and to act like it. Merely acting the part does not suffice, but genuine love shows through in the life. The effective witness of holiness has been lost in many communities because of wrangling factions within the church, or a personal quarrel between individuals of the membership. It matters not who may win, for in the end all are losers – including those observers who might have become believers. Unkindness and unforgiveness are two of Satan's most efficient tools in his soul-damning kit.

Jesus laid down this rule: To be forgiven, forgive. Where does this leave the offended brother or sister who harbours a grudge, a "hurt" feeling, a poor-abused-me attitude? It is as blessed to forgive as to be forgiven. Forgiveness requires humility, perhaps a forfeiture of rights. He who does not forgive must be sure that he never trespasses.

When Paul first entered Europe, he found at Philippi a ladies' prayer group gathered by the riverside. Years later he wrote to the Philippian church. In that letter, he besought Euodias and Syntyche "that they be of the same mind in the Lord." Possibly these ladies were members of that earlier prayer group. The devil delights to bring division between old friends and even prayer partners if he can. Wisely, Paul did not take sides, but sought for a healing of the breach. For a church to be strong, there must be both a strong Godward reach and a good interpersonal relationship among the members.

Closing thought: If you treated God like you treat others, would He know that you love Him?



EXPOSITION

DOCTRINAL DISCUSSION

It is a mistake to think that a pure heart will automatically change personality aberrations into acceptable social behaviour. In fact, our personality is constantly being worked on all our lives. Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The Greek word in "be ye transformed" will support the idea that we are being transformed. Since this is in the passive voice, it would indicate that the part we have in this transformation is yielding to the Spirit as He brings to our attention the areas of our personality and our lives that need to be worked upon. This should help us to realize that our relationships with others will constantly be developing to a higher degree.

Beginning with **Romans 12:9**, a number of things are listed that will help us in our relationships.

The first one is an exhortation to keep "dissimulation" (hypocrisy or play acting) out of our lives. This is the meaning of the word "dissimulation." At first glance that would seem to be no problem to holy people, but think just a little on some of the problems we face. Suppose that you are asked a direct question about the behaviour of a certain person. You know that the person is very sold in this individual. What do you answer? Whatever your solution is, you must be completely sincere and have no hypocrisy in your answer. That is not an easy situation, and it may be that we will miss somewhat the pure sincerity demanded by God. The Holy Spirit will immediately rebuke us, and we will have to rectify our statements to maintain a sensitive conscience and develop that love we should have for others.

In fact, if we are entirely sanctified, we may find ourselves in the situation described by William Barclay, "There is such a thing as cupboard love, which gives affection with one eye on the gain which may result. There is such a thing as a selfish love, whose aim is to get far more than it is to give. Christian love is cleansed of self; it is a pure outgoing of the heart to others" (**The Letter to the Romans**).

In verse 9 we are to love everyone because that is the natural consequence of being a Christian. In **verse 10** we have a more specific relationship being addressed. We are to be "kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love." The Greek word *philostorgos* would mean "family love." Within the family of God there should be a **deeper** love for God's own children. Alexander Maclaren says, "The love which is without hypocrisy, and is to be diffused on all sides, is also to be gathered together and concentrated with special energy on all who 'call upon Jesus Christ as Lord, both their Lord and ours.' The more general precept and the more particular are in perfect harmony, however our human weakness sometimes confuses them ... Two men who share, however imperfectly, in Christ's Spirit are more akin in the realities of their nature, however they may differ on the surface, than either of them is to another, however like he may seem, who is not a partaker in the life of Christ."

Our relationships with fellow Christians must cause us to rejoice and to prefer one another in honour. This seems to say that holy people will promote the position of another without consideration of where he will be placed. The

older brother in the story of the prodigal is a flagrant example of a failure to have that kind of family love. One need not give examples in the Christian world of these same things which are a clear violation of this commandment in regard to our holy relationships to others! In my opinion the old proverb still applies, "The office seeks the person, not the person the office." That does not preclude being prepared to the best of our capabilities in the field of our calling. It does forbid jealousy when someone is promoted to a place where you seem best fitted.

Since our relationships are based upon love, a natural result of this is found in **verse 13**, "Distributing to the necessity of saints." To conceive of love is to **know** that we are to give! Love seeks the highest good of the object loved, and it is clear that the highest good to those in need is for us to help supply that need. It is obvious that the person that clings to a penny until Lincoln's beard is left on his finger when he releases it is not a cheerful giver as Christians should be. Holiness and stinginess are not compatible but are on opposite sides!

The last relationship to consider is in the last part of **verse 13**, "given to hospitality." There are many places where we are told that hospitality is a good trait (cf. **Heb. 13:2; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 4:9**). In every case the word used is the same combination of two Greek words, the one from love and the other from stranger. So literally, one is not only to love the brethren that he is well acquainted with, but should have an open door to **all the family of God and in a discriminating way to others**. Of course, love will keep us from imposing on those that are hospitable. It is necessary in our day to be discreet, but that does not excuse us from loving hospitality. It is the gift of some to so make you feel at home in their house that there is no strain on the visitor. And one should be careful not to take advantage of his host. While relationships are host and guest, it is good when both can feel that they are comfortable.

I have touched on only a few relationships that I feel are enhanced by being entirely sanctified. If any of us are short in them, be encouraged and practice them. The Holy Spirit and perhaps some good counselling will bring us up more nearly to the ideal!



FOCUS

WORKING WITH THE WORD!

Have compassion (Jude 22). Wesley and Clarke, as well as many other, agree that there are three classes of sinners here mentioned, and three variations in dealing with them. Wesley says as follows: (1) "Some, that are wavering in judgment, staggered by others' or by their own evil reasoning, endeavour more deeply to convince of the whole truth as it is in Jesus. (2) Some snatch, with a swift and strong hand, out of the fire of sin and temptation. (3) On others show compassion in a milder and gentler way; though still with a jealous fear, lest yourselves be infected with the disease you endeavour to cure." Verses **22** and **23** might also be translated as: "Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear - hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh." Although this may be a somewhat difficult passage to interpret, its primary meaning is clear. Christians are to be compassionate, which is to "surround with mercy and love." Added to compassion is an urgency to pull them "out of the fire." There is also a warning attached lest in continual dealing with sinners they become careless about their sin. God's wisdom is needed in order to love the sinner while hating his sin.

Shine (Phil. 2:15). There is a reason why Christians are not to murmur or dispute in their dealings with others. There is a reason why they are to be "blameless," "harmless," and "without rebuke." It is because in the darkened world, filled with corruption, they shine as stars. Jesus said that they "are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14), and He exhorts, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). As shining lights, expose the crookedness and perverseness of your surroundings, and also point this world to the "word of life." All need to so live, even when in heavy traffic or dealing with salesmen, that they would be at ease in witnessing to all those about them. One's behaviour in restaurants, etc., should always befit one holding the Light.

Dissimulation (Rom. 12:9). The Greek word from which "without dissimulation" comes is variously translated "unfeigned" or "without hypocrisy." Love should not be faked, but should be sincere. This involves more than just smiling and shaking hands, or even testifying, "I love everybody," but is a genuine concern and warmth of feeling that springs from the heart and is translated into words and actions.

Paul detailed how this sincere love will be expressed. There will be kind affection along with brotherly love. Many divisions will never arise, or will be quickly put down, if the law of kindness governs the tongue. Many a soul that has drowned under the waves of defeat and despair would have survived if there had only been a kind word or deed. Christians are to take the lead in giving honour to another. How selfish it is to be receiving honour, but seldom returning it. God's kingdom is run differently than this world, for in God's economy the last shall be first and the first last. In another place Paul said that Christians should give more honour unto the weakest vessels. Folk become like the world when they only give honour to those who are "stars." Finally in **verse 13** he said that love should be put into action by giving to needy saints and by a policy of hospitality. Love that is "without dissimulation" will affect both pocketbook and pantry. Love may have to be careful at times, but love is never stingy. It is one thing to say to a brother, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;" it is quite another to distribute to his necessity.

DICTIONARY

cleave - verse 9 - Cling to; keep holding on to.
dissimulation - verse 9 - Pretence; hypocrisy.
perverse - verse 15 - Corrupt.



POINTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

The Kindness of Holiness

As a young lad of fifteen, I walked down the steps of the little basement church and to my astonishment found myself viewing a sight I've never been able to erase from my mind's eye. A group of church people had surrounded my pastor's wife and were literally scolding her. I ran out of the church and told my father and the pastor what was happening.

Really, I had no intention of being a tattletale. I was reacting to a repulsive situation. I couldn't believe such conduct in public. In my judgment as a young person, I was amazed at how unkind those people were to a fellow Christian, let alone their pastor's wife.

All of us, I'm sure, could relate a few illustrations about the unkind deeds and actions of others. And I have a little suspicion that if we'd get real honest, we could even confess a few unkind acts and words of our own.

I believe that whatever holiness of heart and life is thought to be, it is certainly kindness in its purest form. The beauty of holiness is convincingly evident in the display of real kindness.

- Glenn D. Black in God's Revivalist

Wilderness of Human Want

Said H.E. Lucoc, "The ancient barriers of race, clan, colour, and class, with their fearful taboos, high walls of exclusion, had no meaning for Jesus. The whole course of social betterment has been following in His footsteps through the wilderness of human want and need. He is still far ahead in the unconquered wastes of life."

A characteristic of a Christlike Christian is unfeigned love for all mankind.

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ILLUMINATING ILLUSTRATION

Rev. William McDermott, veteran minister of the gospel has said, "The greatest adventure in the world is being kind. You can never tell what will come of just reaching out a hand to help somebody."

Sometimes a look, a word, or a smile is sufficient.

Diane came home from school after writing an exam the very thought of which had petrified her for days.

"How did it go, dear?" her mother asked. "You seem unusually happy tonight. I thought you were scared to death you would flunk, even with all your studying."

"Well, Mom," Diane explained, "just before we started to write, I looked up at my teacher. She gave me the nicest, kindest smile - and, well, I wasn't scared anymore."

A smile! A little thing, but the kindness it showed changed a frightened pupil into one who had confidence to proceed with her examination.

- Jeannette W. Lockerbie

The teenager across the desk from me was tense. It was evident that he was trying to read my reactions to his appearance.

After some small talk, he pulled one strand of his shoulder-length hair in front of his face. "Could you love me with this hair between us?"

I smiled and said, "Sure."

He made it two, then three with the same question. My response was the same. The next question was the one that shook me. "How many would it take for you to write me off?"

That did it. I got the message.

Length of hair, colour of skin, or quality of clothes aren't that important. What people are really looking for in us is that inner dimension that is not controlled by outward appearance. Christ within us makes it possible for us to say, "God loves you! I love you, and I'm prepared to demonstrate that love."

- Dr. Sam Wolgemuth



Notes: Instruction tips

Today's lesson deals with the idea of holy living in the context of our relationships with other people. Many parts of our lives are touched by authority figures. Several are mentioned in the following discussion questions to help solidify truths about holy living in our relationships. Suggested answers are given.

1. One aspect of relationships involves authority in general. There are many authority figures in our lives. What should be our attitude and actions toward authority figures in our lives? God is an omniscient, omnipotent, all-sufficient, and infinite Creator. He demands that finite man live within bounds that He has created (e.g., natural laws of science).

Man must also obey God's moral laws in order to please Him. God has a position of rightful authority over man. The truly sanctified person is submissive to God's will in all aspects of life. He does not balk and buck God's authority at every turn of the way. Instead, his attitude is "to know God's will is to do it."

God instituted the home in the Garden of Eden. His desire is for children to be submissive to the authority of parents (who symbolize God's authority over us). Respect and obedience for parents make respect and obedience for other authority figures (including God) much easier.

Authority figures exist in the realm of government. The Bible tells us to "render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). We are further admonished to be subject to the powers over us (Rom. 13:1). We have an obligation to generally respect and obey government authorities so long as none of God's laws are violated. (Of course, in our society we may go through proper channels to express our displeasure with the government. This can be quite all right if done appropriately.)

People are watching our lives. If we are not submissive to authority figures in our homes, churches, jobs, towns, states and nations, it can logically follow that we are not likely submissive to God. Our influence for right can be greatly reduced in the minds of those who see us run roughshod over authority.

2. What are some proper relationships for husbands and wives? Holy living does not mean that the wife is to run roughshod over the husband. So what does a proper relationship between a husband and wife include? Let's look to the Bible for some answers.

The husband is to be the head of the home. Christ is over the Church, and the husband is to take a leadership role in the home under Christ (Eph. 5:23-25). In no way does this condone a dictatorship. Verse 25 says that the husband is to love the wife as Christ loved the Church. Christ gave His very life for the Church. He continues to seek the best for His Church and gives the needed grace, strength, and help for successful living. While the husband cannot do all that Christ can, still he should strive to provide for, protect, love, respect, and properly treat his wife. He should have her best interest at heart and attempt to make life as profitable for her as he can. Certainly, gross selfishness and abusive actions are out of line with the leadership role of the husband. The husband in essence is to provide spiritual leadership to his home and will have much to answer for at the judgment. However, the Spirit of God can and will enable the husband to live in accordance with God's Word.

The wife has some guidelines to meet as well. She is to honour, love, and obey her husband (Eph. 5:33; Titus 2:4, 5). As the husband submits to the leadership of Christ, so is the wife to submit to the leadership of the husband (Eph. 5:22-24). The wife is not instructed to be a passive robot. She still thinks and acts for herself. Yet, she should desire to please her husband as he leads in a way pleasing to God. The husband and wife combination should make a team. Mutual respect and trust should be earned and given. Good communication and open-mindedness seem essential for the team to function properly. At times forgiveness must be sought and/or granted by one or both. In essence, there must be lots of giving and taking for the marriage relationship to work well.

3. What are some proper relationships of parents to children? Holiness of heart does not automatically translate into perfect parent-children relationships. It is essential for parents to pray for wisdom and help in order to properly train and relate to their children. Praying both with and for children is very important as well.

Parents have several things to consider when striving for proper relationships with their children. It is a must to show love. Nothing can replace the need for love that a child possesses. Always an effort should be made to set the proper example in words, attitudes, and actions. There should be an attempt to try to instil moral and scriptural truths and values in the hearts and minds of children (Prov. 22:6). Obedience, respect, and acceptance of responsibilities should also be expected. Fathers are not to misuse their authority in provoking children to wrath (Eph. 6:4). Parents should provide the needs for their children. Also, immaturity should not be confused with sin. Hopefully, the relationship will show mutual respect, trust, and good communication.

4. What are some proper relationships of children to parents? Holiness of heart does not mean that children will automatically act properly toward their parents at all times. Immaturity yields unwise words or actions. Yet, children should strive to both please God and their parents. Children are instructed to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1). Undoubtedly, if a child learns to obey his parents, he will find it easier to obey God and other authority figures. Children should also honour and respect their parents (Eph. 6:2). Good communication and open-mindedness can help foster a wholesome relationship as well. Trustworthiness and acceptance of responsibility will likely lead to trust from parents and more privileges being granted. Proper attitudes and willingness to take advice can also lead to better relationships.

5. What are some proper relationships to others for the holy person? Several items should be considered for proper relationships with others. We should try to live a godly life as we exert an influence on others. Love of others is essential. People need to be treated as we wish to be treated by them. Right treatment of others can sometimes defuse volatile situations. Honesty in business deals is also necessary. An attempt should be made to live peaceably with others. When disagreements arise, disagree agreeably. Live in unity with the believers.

Forgive others, but never condone sin. Respect the rights of others. Overall, we should try to live a life so that others can believe that we are followers of Christ.

6. Can Christians disagree? Explain. Yes. Several points for consideration are given. Christians are still human. They do not have a corner on all the answers for everyone's problems and situations. God gave each of us a brain to use. While wholesome advice can be good, it is also true that all the angles are not always known by an "expert" giving advice. The person involved with a problem may realize more about the situation than the "expert." Hence, we may justifiably disagree with another's viewpoint in such cases.

It should be remembered that people come from different backgrounds, experiences, cultures, educational achievements, and such like. These can all lead to differences of opinions. Sharing of ideas in a proper manner can enrich the minds of all concerned. We can learn from others.

The Bible is the final answer to the questions of life. It absolutely supersedes manmade views on all issues. At times people may say that they do not see an issue a certain way. That may be all right unless their view violates the Bible. If a view violates the Word of God, it is absolutely wrong. We are justified in disagreeing with such a view.

Differences of opinion do not necessarily mean someone is sinning. Christians should learn to disagree agreeably and to live in unity. As someone has said, "Only two idiots will always agree."

7. What should be done if one has a bad relationship with another? Several things might be done when wrongs occur. If a brother has something against us, we should go to him and be reconciled (Matt. 5:23, 24). If we have wronged another, we should make it right with God (and man is appropriate). If we feel a brother has wronged us, we at times should likely forget it.

However, sometimes we should go to the person and discuss the problem with him. We should listen open-mindedly and strive to restore the person to fellowship. Forgiveness is a must if we are to have proper relationships. (Forgiven wrongs may still need to be righted.)

We may be slandered by others. This can hurt relationships. Sometimes ignoring a problem on petty differences is wise. Never "wear the heart on the sleeve" for we can thereby easily be hurt. If we live right, it is much harder for others to slander us. They can see that we are genuine Christians and will have much less chance of finding problem areas in our lives. We must live above reproach regardless of the circumstances.

Our relationship with others can be proper only if our relationship with God is right. We need to be filled with the love of God. If we totally love God, it is normal to be able to love others as His love flows through us. Things will not always go our way, yet if we are committed totally to God, He will give us the needed grace and help to live victoriously.

ILLUMINATING ILLUSTRATION

A little boy on crutches was hurriedly making his way to the passengers' gate of a railway station with a basket of fruit and candy. Amid the rushing passengers, a young man accidentally hit the basket, knocking its contents in all directions. He only stopped long enough to scold the boy for being in his way. But another young man who was passing saw the boy's distress and began picking up the fruit. As he placed them in the basket, he put a coin in the crippled boy's hand. With a "Better success next time" and a smile, he went on his way.

"Hey, mister," called the little fellow, "are you Jesus?"

"No," answered the friend, "I'm only one of His followers."

What a testimony it would be if all His followers were like that man!

- Exchange



PERTINENT PRINCIPLES

- * A holy life is a voice; it speaks when the tongue is silent, and is either constant attraction or a perpetual reproof.
- Leighton
- * The serene silent beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world, next to the might of the Spirit of God.
- C.H. Spurgeon
- * Holiness is a personal experience to be lived in this world.
- * Religion that fails to mellow the heart, making it more tender and kindly patient and forbearing with others, is not that of Christ.