



Discipleship Course

The difference being a Christian makes to relationships

Love your neighbour as yourself- session 1

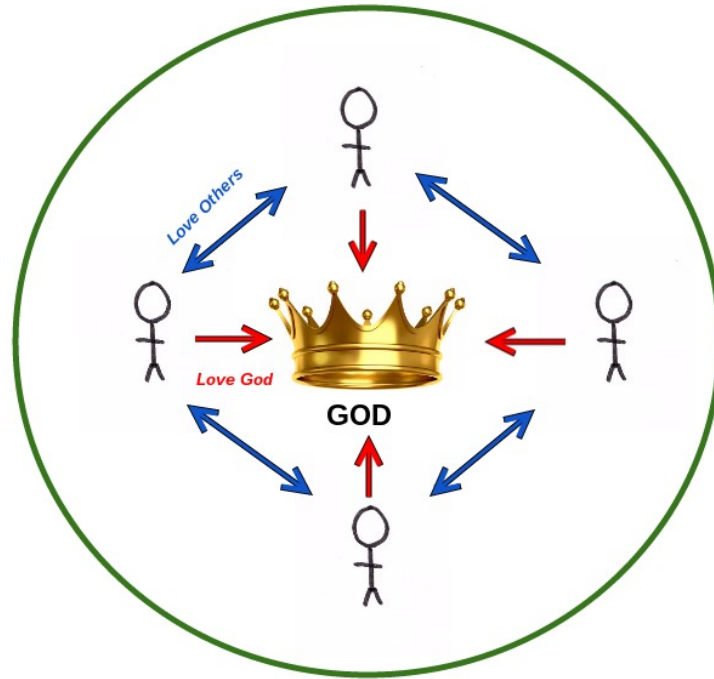
Intro: Relationships and life

"Our relationships with other people probably have the biggest single impact on our lives. According to Jesus that's no surprise, because God has made us to be relational beings"

1. The relationships we were made for (Mark 12:28-31, p. 1018)

→ Relationship with God (v29-30)

→ Relationship with other people (v31)



Relationships as God designed them

2. The effect of sin on our relationships (Romans 1:28-32, p. 1129)

→ Sin puts self at the centre

→ Which causes chaos in our relationships

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"

James 4:1

"At one time too were foolish, disobedient, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." Titus 3:3

Sin makes us...

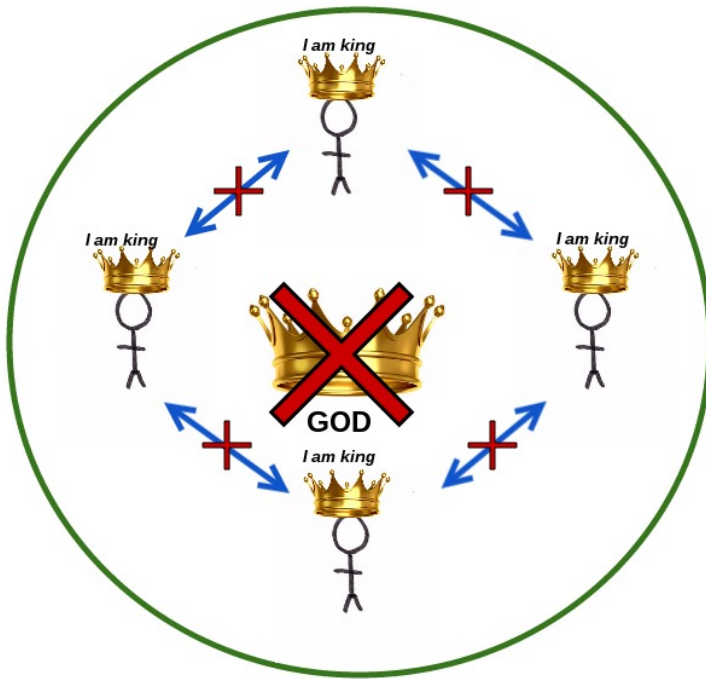
Self-centred (me and my desires are the most important thing)

Self-righteous (I'm the one who should decide what's ok)

Self-sufficient (I don't need others- I can do it by myself)

Self-conscious (I focus on what other people think of me)

All of which hinder relationships...



“When love for God is replaced by love for self, we see people either as obstacles that hinder our goals, or vehicles to achieve them” Paul Tripp

The effect of sin on our relationships

3. The effect of the cross on relationships (Eph. 2:14-18, p. 1174)

→ The cross fixes our relationship with God (v16)

→ The cross fixes our relationships with each other (v14-17)

Small Groups: Colossians 3:1-17- New life!

In this part of Paul's letter to the Colossians Christians, he describes how Jesus has given all of his followers new life. This free gift of new life will lead to a massive change in their day to day lives- particularly in how they relate to each other.

Christians have been given new life in Christ! (v1-4)

1. What does Paul say is true of Christian believers in the past, the present and the future?
2. What are we encouraged to do in response to Christ giving us this new life?

... So we must 'put off' the old self (v5-11)

In this section Paul imagines two sets of clothing: an old set standing for our lives before following Christ, and a new set standing for the new lives Jesus has given us.

3. In v9, how does Paul sum up what our attitude should be to each 'set of clothing'?
4. What marks out the 'old self'? (v5-8)
5. One Christian writer has said of these verses, 'unbridled sexual license and untamed angry speech result in the breakdown of relationships at every level'. Do you agree?
6. How might these characteristics show up in our own lives?
7. In v5 Paul tells us to put these things to death. What will that mean?

Reflect: Are there any lingering parts of the old self that you need to commit to putting to death?

... and clothe ourselves with the new self (v9-14)

8. In v9-11 we get introduced to the 'new self'. What is happening to the new self, and what will that result in?
9. v11 describes some of the great social and relational 'divisions' in 1st century culture. What are the divisions in our own age, and what difference should being a Christian make to these?
10. Work through this 'new clothing' and ask- 'what kind of actions and words will make these a reality in our lives? In our church?'

Reflect: Are there any relationships in your life which you particularly need to put these new clothes on for?

One to one in the week

If you are able to, arrange to meet for half an hour with someone else in the group and spend some time chatting through the following

- Talk through the 'reflect' questions from last week together, and share your own thoughts on these with each other
- Read through **James 4:1-3**, and work through these questions:
 - *When relationships break down, what does James say is the underlying cause?*
 - *How quick are we to point the finger somewhere other than ourselves?*
 - *What difference will it make to our relationships if we were quicker to admit our own sin?*
- Share a prayer request, and pray for each other.

Next Week's Small Groups: Ephesians 4:1-16

*Paul is writing to a church family in modern day Turkey, from prison. He wants them (and us!) to understand what their life together as a family should look like. In short, they are to be a **united** family, and a **maturing** family.*

1. **When you think of 'unity' and 'maturity', what springs to mind?**
2. **Paul's big desire for us in these verse summed up in v3. What does the word 'keep' imply? (v3)**
3. **We don't need to *create* unity- how has that already happened? (v4-6)**

In God's eyes all true Christians are already united! But we are to make every effort to maintain that visibly.

4. **What do the words '*make every effort*' imply? (v3)**
5. **What concrete and practical steps can we take to *make every effort*?**
6. **In pairs, or as a group, trace out the logic of v7-13**

1. _____ has given gifts to _____ (v7-8)
2. These gifts include _____ (v11)
3. The purpose of these people is _____ (v12a)
4. When God's people get on with these _____ (v12b-13)

7. What does it mean to 'become mature'? (v13)
8. What do the people in v11 all have in common?
9. What is the purpose of their teaching?

Reflect: What 'works of service' might you be able to throw yourself into with church family?

10. If Christians, *fail* to grow in maturity, what danger is laid out in v14?
11. What alternative to being 'tossed around' does Paul spell out in v15?
12. What opportunities might we have to lovingly speak God's truth into each others' lives?

Reflect: Jot down a couple of ways that Ephesians 4:1-16 will change your attitude to church family

Recommended books for this term

<i>Relationships- a mess worth making</i>	Timothy S. Lane & Paul David Tripp	An introduction to what the Bible teaches about our relationships in life
<i>The Living Church</i>	John Stott	A wonderful introduction to God's vision for his church
<i>Friendship</i>	Vaughan Roberts	How we can be grow in our friendships as Christians
<i>Serving without sinking</i>	John Hindley	A great book thinking through our motivations and priorities in serving others
<i>Married for God</i>	Christopher Ash	How to live out God's purposes in marriage
<i>The single issue</i>	Al Hsu	What does the Bible say about being single?
<i>Counterfeit Gods</i>	Tim Keller	How money, love and power can become 'gods' in our lives
<i>Gospel Centred Work</i>	Tim Chester	A book introducing God's plan for work and how we fit in with it
<i>Honest Evangelism</i>	Rico Tice	A short book helping us to see why telling others about Jesus is hard, but still worth doing!

Prayer Points