

The Four Levels of Relating

God designed relationships to be more than two or more people connected by various variables functioning together to accomplish common agendas.

Relationship were designed to be a community of people connecting together on the foundation of truth and love, to reflect the character of God and to accomplish God's objectives for their existence individually and corporately. God created mankind to have communion with Him. God created mankind to be born into a family in order to have a fellowship that reflects a community of love that works together accordingly.
(Acts 17:26-27, Gen 1:26-28, 2:18, 4:1-2)

Definition of Christ-center relationships: Relationships that are primarily devoted to helping one another believe in Jesus Christ, become like Jesus Christ and belong to the community of Jesus Christ. If we are going to build Christ-centered relationships, we must understand The Four Levels of Relating.

I. There are four basic levels of relating: (Proverbs 27:5-6)

- a. Sometimes our relationships can be **open and unloving**. (v5)
 - 1. Rebuking others without respect.
 - 2. Exposing sin with rudeness.
 - 3. Exposing character flaws with harshness.
 - 4. Speaking truth with no love.
- b. Sometimes our relationships can be **closed and loving**. (v5)
 - 1. Appreciative but not expressing it.
 - 2. Concerned but not showing it.
 - 3. Having praise in heart but not expressing it.
 - 4. Desiring the highest good of others but not expressing it.
- c. Sometimes our relationships can be **open and loving**. (v6)
 - 1. Rebuking in love
 - 2. Spending quality time.
 - 3. Speaking the truth in love/giving encouragement .
 - 4. Meeting needs and bearing burdens.
- d. Sometimes our relationships can be **closed and unloving**. (v6)
 - 1. Talking behind someone's back instead of to them
 - 2. Insincere favors or gifts.
 - 3. Flattery
 - 4. Uncooperative

II. An open loving relationship can be expressed to others in many ways at the right time, in the right way, in the right circumstance through: (Proverbs 27:14; 25:11; 15:23; 15:1, Colossians 4:6)

- A. Sincere forgiveness (Matthew 5:23-24, Romans 12:18)
- B. Praising others (Proverbs 27:2, 31:28-29, 1 Corinthians 11:2)
- C. Listening and talking to them (James 1:19, Proverbs 18:2,13)
- D. Sharing where you hurt (2 Corinthians 6:11-13, 7:2-3)
- E. Spending time with one another (2 Corinthians 12:15, 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Ephesians 6:4, Titus 2:4-5)
- F. Gentle correction (Proverbs 27:6a, 1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- G. Self Sacrifice (1 Corinthians 13:5, Philippians 2:3-4)
- H. Submission to God ordained authority (Ephesians 5:22-6:9, Romans 13:1-7, Hebrews 13:17)
- I. Saying I love you (John 13:34)
- J. Giving encouragement (1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14, Proverbs 12:25)
- K. Showing appreciation (Philippians 4:14)
- L. Helping each other (Acts 20:35, 1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- M. Comforting each other (Romans 12:15, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
- N. Bearing one another's burden (Galatians 6:2)
- O. Warm smile or appropriate touch (Proverbs 15:30, Mark 10:13-14)
- P. Phoning or writing expressions of love (3 John 1:13-14)
- Q. Asking for help (Philippians 4:17)
- R. Expressing forgiveness when someone has apologized (2 Corinthians 2:7, Ephesians 4:32)
- S. Discipline of one's children (Ephesians 6:4, Proverbs 13:24)
- T. Using your spiritual gifts to serve others (1 Peter 4:10-11)
- U. Evangelism and Discipleship (Matthew 28:18-20, Ephesians 4:11-16)

Key Point: *When disagreements arise in open loving relationships, unity of heart will be maintained if God's love continues. If unity of heart ceases, seeking forgiveness should be done not for disagreement but for unloving attitudes, words, and actions. You can be right in what you are saying but unloving in your presentation. (Deal with the lack of love.) (Colossians 3:14, Ephesians 4:15)*

(Insights adapted from The Heart of Man and The Mental Disorders by Rich Thomson)

**III. For this reason we can identify ten major reasons why we need to be open and loving.
We need to Open and Loving in Relationship so that:**

- A. We may help each other function in spiritual maturity in all aspects of life to reflect the character of Jesus Christ. (Eph. 4:11-16)

“And He gave some *as* apostles, some *as* prophets, some *as* evangelists, some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of people, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *that is*, Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” – Ephesians 4:11-16

- B. We may strengthen areas of weakness in each other’s lives. (Rom. 15:1-3)

“Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not just please ourselves. Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself, but as it is written: ‘The taunts of those who taunt You have fallen on Me.’” – Romans 15:1-3

- C. We may sharpen each other’s perspectives of life to grow in righteousness. (Prov. 27:17)

“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” – Proverbs 27:17

- D. We may help each other confess and repent of sin. (Gal. 6:1-2)

“Brothers *and sisters*, even if a person is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual are to restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you are not tempted as well. Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.” – Galatians 6:1-2

- E. We may help each other replace our sin with right living. (Gal. 6:1-2)

“Brothers *and sisters*, even if a person is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual are to restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you are not tempted as well. Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.” G

– Galatians 6:1-2

- F. We may encourage one another. (1 Thess. 5:11)

“Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you also are doing.”
– 1 Thessalonians 5:11

- G. We may provide support to one another in hard times. (Prov. 17:17)

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” – Proverbs 17:17

- H. We may provide wise counsel to one another as needed. (Prov. 11:14, 12:15)

“Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory.” – Proverbs 11:14

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a person who listens to advice is wise.”
– Proverbs 12:15

- I. We may help one another stay away from people, places, and products that will lead one into sin. (Heb. 3:12-13, Jude 22-23)

“Take care, brothers and sisters, that there will not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another every day, as long as it is still called “today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” – Hebrews 3:12-13

“And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”
– Jude 22-23

- J. We may guide people into being genuine disciples of Jesus Christ. (Matt. 28:18-20)

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” – Matthew 28:19-20

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