



Real Life Relationships!
How do we relate in love with those we disciple?



Relationships are hard. Relationships are hard because we are all people broken by sin. We are not perfect. Because we are not perfect, there is conflict. When there is conflict in relationships, there is pain.

Because we are not perfect, we become estranged from people that we would like to have as friends; that we would like to be close too. Instead of being loved by them, we are rejected by them. They may even be hostile toward us.

Sometimes we know what we did wrong and we would like to reconcile. We would like to tell them that we were wrong, understand their pain, and make amends. We would like to tell them how sorry we feel, and we want them to forgive us. But they are not willing to even try.

At other times, we are rejected because we are being falsely accused of something we did not do and those that accuse us will not even consider that they may be wrong. Sometimes they will not even meet with us to hear our side of the story.

At other times, we don't know why we are being rejected by those that we would like to have as friends. We are left with our thoughts and speculations.

I have had these experiences with family members. I have had these experiences with church members. I have had these experiences with people that visit our church.

Recently I read on social media that one person said my sermon last Sunday was one of the greatest sermons they had ever heard. I also read that another person said that it was one of the worst sermons they had every heard, that I was ignorant, and that they would never attend church here.

How did your week go with your relationships? Did you suffer the pain of rejection? What are you going to do with that pain?

Here is what I have learned to do with it. I have a real-life relationship with God and other people in His church.

What do I mean by a Real-Life Relationship?

A real-life relationship is sharing life with a person that you give the right to know everything about you and they give you the right to know everything about them.

I have a real-life relationship with God. I talk to Him about my pain, what caused it, and who caused it. I talk to Him about what my flesh would like to do or say. I talk to Him about what my flesh would like to see Him do to certain people.

I will read His Word and listen to Him for what He wants me to do. I will surrender to Him and His will. I will focus on doing my part whatever He says it is. I will trust Him to do His part. I will release the other person to God to fix.

But since I understand that God's Spirit works in me through the body of Jesus, I have a real-life relationship with my small group. So, without disclosing any names, I will talk to my group tomorrow night about my pain and what caused it. They won't try to fix me as a group, but they will pray for me. If someone has a Word for me, they will get with me after group or during the week.

I have a real-life relationship with a few people that is deeper than my group. I will talk them one to one about my pain and may even tell them who caused it. They will pray for me and if they have counsel for me, they will share it with me. They will love me no matter what I do.

Here is what happens. The Holy Spirit comforts me. I feel loved by God and His church. The Holy Spirit speaks to me. The Holy Spirit sanctifies me. I become more like Jesus because of my pain and suffering.

Real Life Relationships are the rails that effective discipleship travels on.

Where did I learn this discipleship process from? I learned it from Jesus. Jesus lived it with the Father and His disciples. I am just doing what He did.

Jesus was an expert at Real Life Relationships with God the Father and with others. He created us. He created us for relationship. When He became a man, He modeled for us how to form real life relationships with God the Father and with others by the way that He lived out His life.

Based on the life of Jesus, how do we go about forming real life relationships with God the Father and the church?

1. God the Father

Jesus spent time with God the Father

He frequently withdrew from everyone into the wilderness to pray.

This is the way He launched His ministry.

Luke 4:1

4 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,
NKJV

This was His practice throughout His ministry.

Luke 5:16

16 So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.
NKJV

What was Jesus doing with all that time in prayer? We do not have a lot of His prayers recorded but what we do have is enough to know what was going on between Him and the Father.

One recorded prayer that we have is in John 17. In that prayer Jesus talked about His purpose in coming and His concern for His disciples and all believers.

John 17

17 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,

2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world.

They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

7 Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You.

8 For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

9 "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.

10 And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.

11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

13 But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;

21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

25 O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.

26 And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

NKJV

After this prayer, we have another one recorded in the garden of gethsemane. In that prayer He talked about His concerns about what He was about to experience.

Matthew 26:36-46

36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there."

37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed.

38 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."

39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

40 Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?

41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

42 Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done."

43 And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.

44 So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.
45 Then He came to His disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting?
Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.
46 Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."
NKJV

Another recorded prayer is when He was on the cross. He shared the pain of rejection that He was feeling.

Matthew 27:46

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"
NKJV

What was Jesus doing with all that time with God the Father? He was having a real-life relationship with Him!

2. His disciples

Jesus spent time with His disciples.

Jesus was very busy. He had a ministry to multitudes of people in Israel. His disciple John said that if someone tried to record all the stories about Jesus and what He did, it would produce an endless volume of books.

John 21:25

25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.
Amen.
NKJV

But Jesus did not allow His ministry to the multitudes to detour Him from spending time with His disciples.

In the gospels, we have a partial record of the times He shared with them and what they discussed. But one thing we know for certain is that He was transparent with them.

They were with Him when He talked about...

- His love for the Father
- His disgust for religious men
- His pain over the rejection He experienced
- His suffering over the losses He experienced
- His concerns for himself
- His concerns for them
- His ambitions for them

Over time He disclosed everything about himself. He was so transparent that at one point He said to Philip in dismay....

[John 14:9](#)

[9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? NKJV](#)

What was Jesus doing with all that time with His disciples? He was having a real-life relationship with them!

Where did I learn this discipleship process from? I learned it from Jesus. Jesus lived it with the Father and His disciples. I am just doing what He did.



Since 1984, here are three of the guys that have served on our team at Western Hills that I have had a real-life relationship with.

I could talk to them about anything and they could talk to me about anything.

All three of these guys are having real life relationships with others like I had with them. Why?

[Real Life Relationships are the rails that effective discipleship travels on.](#)

If you will establish real life relationships with others for the purpose of discipleship, I can promise you two things.

- You won't be lonely
- You will make a difference.
- You will experience great joy.

Will you receive Jesus?

Will you answer His call to make disciples through real life relationships?

Will you make it your chief priority in life to have a real-life relationship with God the Father and with others?