

Relationships

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God is so good! It is hard to understand how someone's heart can be hardened towards Him when He offers so much to us. But then, all we, (who have accepted the great gift that He offers to all), have to do is think back to the days before *we, ourselves* accepted that gift.

We were lost, deep in sin. We did not know Him and, some of us did not want to know Him at all. Our hearts were *hardened*, we thought we could do everything in our own strength and we wanted to do everything that we thought we were big and bold enough to do. Do you remember those days?

I want you to go back to those days. Rev. Willie Bruce preached a wonderful sermon at our Annual Usher Day this past Sunday. Our theme is "Walk in Love". Now, do you want to know what love has to do with it? Read on...

God is love and we are to love each other as Christ loves us! But, first, how do we get to that point? We have to realize that we are sinners, for all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. [Romans 3:23](#). You can read the Message Bible version at BibleGateway.com to get a clearer picture.

Do you remember doing something that you weren't supposed to do? Did your mother or father have to chastise [*to punish, to criticize severely; rebuke*] you and their feelings were hurt because they had to discipline [*training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character*] you for your own good. If you didn't have a parent like that, then you have missed out on something important. When a parent loves the child, they have to discipline that child for the child to become a responsible adult. (Proverbs 19:18) I am not speaking about unrealistic punishment or torture here. Some folks think they are perfect or have no wrong in them and, therefore, do not need discipline in their lives. We were born into a sinful world, ([Romans 5:12-14](#)). That is not our fault and we can't change that fact, but we can make a change in our lives. We need discipline.

If you cannot relate to a loving parent/child relationship, maybe you can relate to a close friendship. Have you ever felt bad when your friend was going through a trying time? Did your heart ache for that person whom you could do nothing for as far as changing the situation that had caused that pain?

God hurts for us in that way, but the big difference is that He could and did do something about it!

His love is so strong for us that He gave His only begotten son to die for our sins. ([John 3:16](#))

How do we thank Him?

We cannot thank God until we realize the seriousness of the situation that we are in *without Him*.

If you don't know who God is and what He has done for you, then, you are like a person sinking in quicksand. The difference is that you are sinking in sin. You need a lifeline thrown out to you. You need to grab a hold of the [true vine](#)!

Today is the day of salvation. [1st Corinthians 15:1-11](#) tells us that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised on the third day and was seen by the disciples and others, even Paul, himself. Do you believe this? Can you imagine someone giving up their life for you, a sinner? That takes a lot of love and, guess what? God has that kind of love for us; yes, even you.

Do not harden your heart as the Egyptian pharaoh did when Moses asked him to release the Israelites. Open your heart so that you can feel the call of the Holy Spirit. God wants what is best for us and I encourage you to seek that - which is a reconciled relationship with God, the gift of salvation (it is a gift because we cannot earn it, it is freely given to those who accept it) and life in eternity with Him.

For those who have been walking in the light on the narrow path for years, upon years - how is your standing with God right now? Do you still have the same joy you had at the beginning of your journey? This is where the man/woman relationship comes in.

I guess that some of you can relate to being out of touch with your fiance/mate after having been in the relationship for a time. Things seem to have gotten stale. You don't communicate anymore. You don't like the same things. You feel you have grown apart. He doesn't open the door for you like he used to. He doesn't take you out. She doesn't cook anymore. She spends all of her time with her friends. This is life, real life!

Who said that every day would be rosy? That is not in the Bible - it is not the word of God. The word tells us that we will have trials and tribulations, but to be of good cheer for He has overcome the world! ([John 16:3](#); [Romans 5:2-3](#))

Most times we miss the point of the fact that we have to work at relationships. We have to be mindful of the things that make our significant other happy. If you always forget your anniversary or your mate's birthday, do you really expect a lot of attention to be paid to your wants? If you know that your mate likes to hold hands and cuddle, but you get so preoccupied that you just stop doing these things, do you honestly expect to have your favorite meal?

You shouldn't expect special treatment when you are not reciprocating. (*to give and take mutually; to return in kind or degree*)

You have to get back to that place where your hearts intertwined, that space in time. The only way to do that is to be mindful to do the things for each other that you so enjoyed from the beginning. I know that, as you get older, you can't do some things but you can find a substitute. Instead of skydiving, go bowling or go out to dinner

and a movie. Find mutual interests, not differences.

You should be able to grow old together. I know that some things can happen that can be very trying, such as an illness, but you are not to give up!

Love is forever. God tells us that. He will love us for all eternity. You have to be able to identify with that.

Just as you came to God and dedicated your life to Him when you were, say, 12 years old, and you've been on the battlefield for 10 - 60 or more years; is the fire still burning in your life? Are you a living epistle? Can your walk bring someone else to Christ?

You are in a relationship with God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Have you grown indifferent and turned a cold shoulder to Him? Do you find yourself doing things that you know do not please Him?

You dropped out of the choir; you quit the committee because (you claim) those people don't know what they are doing; you attend church services less frequently; the young deacons don't want you around (so you think).

We all make mistakes, especially when it comes to interpreting what others are thinking. That's why there has to be a line of communication open at all times. We must communicate with each other in order to get along; to understand each other's wants and needs. This is love and this is ministry. Don't get uptight because that young whippersnapper thinks he/she knows everything. You were probably the same way at that age. It sometimes aggravates us most when we see our own traits in others.

We have a line of communication open to the Father through Jesus Christ and it is open all of the time! If we have a relationship with Him, we can talk to Him any time we feel like it. Can others do the same with you?

Get back that zeal you had. Do you remember how you felt? Did you want to tell everybody about Jesus? If you didn't, something was wrong, but you have a chance to make it right. If you have lost that zeal of wanting everyone to be saved because He saved you, you can get it back. It didn't go anywhere. It's just waiting for you to pick it up again, like a banner that was won and tucked away and, then, forgotten.

Pick up that banner and run for the Lord! The race is not won by the swift but by those who endure to the end. ([Matthew 24:13-14](#); [Hebrews 12:1-2](#))