

BECOMING Wiser

Getting wisdom is the most important thing you can do! And whatever else you do get, good judgment.
Proverbs 4:7

LESSON 8 // WISDOM FOR RELATIONSHIPS (PART 1)

There is perhaps no area of life that has more impact on your happiness and fulfillment than the quality of your relationships. Relationships can be the source of your greatest joy or your worst misery.

The Bible is a relationship book. In the pages of Scripture, we find guidelines, principles and commands from God that will make your relationships better. Let's see how wisdom plays a vital part in this.

1. It takes wisdom to build better relationships.

God cares about the quality of your relationships and He knows how to make all your relationships better. The Bible tells us that this requires wisdom.

Proverbs 14:1 (NLT) *A wise woman builds her home, but a foolish woman tears it down with her own hands.*

Proverbs 24:3, 4 (NLT) *A house is built by wisdom and becomes strong through good sense.
4 Through knowledge its rooms are filled with all sorts of precious riches and valuables.*

Relationships have several potential phases:

- Enchantment and infatuation—the emotional, chemical/hormonal phase.
- Engagement—interaction, sharing time together, doing things together, etc.
- Testing—experiencing differences and difficulties.
- Distancing or developing—the testing period results in one of two main options. We either become more distant from one another or develop greater intimacy and understanding, and grow in character!

The only way relationships develop in a healthy way through these phases is through wisdom. The wiser we become about relationships, the stronger and more enduring our relationships will be.

Gaining wisdom requires effort (see Proverbs 4:7). This is why most people never get as much of it as they need for a strong, successful life based on strong, successful relationships. If you're unwilling to gain relationship wisdom, your relationships will continue to suffer.

What is your "relational IQ?" How much have you learned about relationships? What do you know now about relationships that you didn't earlier in your life? It takes this kind of growth in wisdom to build better relationships.

2. Relationship peace is the by-product of wisdom.

When you live in wisdom, you experience greater peace—and this is the atmosphere God wants to help you establish and maintain in your relationships. Living in peace is the “better” way to live (Proverbs 17:1; 12:20b).

The absence of peace is usually a sign of the lack of wisdom in a relationship. The wiser you become, the more peace you will experience in your relationships.

The Apostle James reminded us of the connection between God’s wisdom and peace (see James 3:13-18). Your goal should be to discover and practice this wisdom that will bring peace to all the relationships in your life.

3. It’s easier to start a conflict with someone than it is to end it.

To have peace in our relationships, we must understand that contention and conflict come naturally to us. They are part of our sinful, selfish nature.

James 4:1 (NCV) *Do you know where your fights and arguments come from? They come from the selfish desires that war within you.*

Peace takes effort to resist and overcome these sinful desires in our lives. It’s always easier to start a fight than it is to end one! Notice what Proverbs says about this:

Proverbs 15:1 (NLT) *A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.*

Proverbs 17:14 (NLT) *Starting a quarrel is like opening a floodgate, so stop before a dispute breaks out.*

Proverbs 20:3 (NLT) *Avoiding a fight is a mark of honor; only fools insist on quarreling.*

Proverbs 26:21 (TLB) *A quarrelsome man starts fights as easily as a match sets fire to paper.*

Proverbs 21:9 (NLT) *It’s better to live alone in the corner of an attic than with a quarrelsome wife in a lovely home.*

Make sure you don’t have a contentious attitude and approach toward others. Instead, be wise and pursue peace. This is the way to God’s blessing in all your relationships.

Discussion questions

1. How would you describe your “relational IQ”—the level of wisdom you have gained and applied in your relationships? In what practical ways can you grow in this area?
2. Read James 3:13-18. What do these verses tell you about the connection between wisdom and peace in your relationships?
3. Read Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 20:3 and James 4:1. How do these verses challenge you to be wise and to pursue peace with others?