

BECOMING Wiser

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

LESSON 9 // WISDOM FOR RELATIONSHIPS (PART 2)

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 our relationships better. In our last lesson we looked at three ways in which wisdom plays a vital part in relationships. Let's consider three more of these:

1. **Pride is one of our biggest relationship problems.**

We don't usually connect pride with relationship problems, but God's Word tells us that pride is one of the major contributors to relationship stress and conflict.

Proverbs 13:10 (NLT) *Pride leads to conflict; those who take advice are wise.*

Romans 12:16 (NLT) *Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!*

1 Corinthians 13:4 (NLT) *Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud.*

Wise people recognize that pride creates many problems in relationships, including:

- A victim versus villain mindset.
- Judgmental attitudes.
- Contempt.
- Argumentativeness.
- Unwillingness to admit error or to see and apologize for failures.

2. **The greatest control is self-control.**

Another big issue in relationships is control. Many of us spend lots of energy trying to control others.

Control is revealed by our continual efforts to change someone into who we want them to be, conform them into our image or demand what we feel like what we "need" from them. This is an invasion of the will and personality of another. It's a violation of someone's boundaries, a way of exercising judgment and demonstrating pride.

Relationships change for the better when we apply a basic wisdom principle: The greatest control is self-control. This is a critical change of focus. In any relationship, the only person you have power to control is you, and even this is very challenging!

The Bible is clear about the importance of self-control—especially in terms of our mouth and emotions—and the positive impact this has for us personally and for all our relationships (see Proverbs 10:19, 20; 18:21; 21:23; 25:28; Ecclesiastes 7:9).

Proverbs 14:29 (NLT) *People with understanding control their anger; a hot temper shows great foolishness.*

Proverbs 16:32 (NLT) *Better to be patient than powerful; better to have self-control than to conquer a city.*

Proverbs 17:27, 28 (NLT) *A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is even-tempered. ²⁸ Even fools are thought wise when they keep silent; with their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.*

3. Commitment is the glue and forgiveness is the oil that keeps relationships strong.

Successful relationships have an abundant supply of spiritual and emotional “glue” and “oil.” The “glue” of relationships is commitment.

Commitment is an inner pledge of loyalty to another person that is outwardly communicated in words and actions. This is what keeps you in relationships you should be in (see Proverbs 18:24; 20:6; 27:10)!

Proverbs 17:17 (TLB) *A true friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.*

Forgiveness is the “oil” that lubricates the rough times and points in our relationships. Without forgiveness, the rub in our relationships will wear out the gears, and the relationship will not function well—or at all.

Forgiveness heals, and makes the rough places smooth.

Proverbs 10:12 (NIV) *Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.*

Proverbs 17:9 (NLT) *Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.*

Proverbs 20:22 (MSG) *Don’t ever say, “I’ll get you for that!” Wait for God; he’ll settle the score.*

What commitments do you need to reaffirm in your heart? What commitments do you need to freshly communicate to someone? Who do you need to forgive? When will you forgive them?

Discussion questions

1. Why is it wise to avoid pride and cultivate humility in your relationships?
2. In what ways is self-control an important and wise part of healthy relationships?
3. How does forgiveness provide lubricating “oil” in relationships? How have you experienced this in your relationships and what have you learned from it?