

# Lord of Our Relationships



## SABBATH—AUGUST 6

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Exodus 20:14, 17; Psalm 127; Psalm 128; Luke 6:27, 28; Acts 2:40-47; Ephesians 4:32; Ephesians 5:25; Ephesians 6:1-4.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Carry each other’s heavy loads. If you do, you will give the law of Christ its full meaning” (Galatians 6:2, NIRV).

**IMPORTANT THOUGHT:** God created human beings to enjoy close relationships with Him and with one another. Jesus is the Lord of our relationships. With Him as our Lord, we will experience the close relationships that were part of God’s first plan.

**CREATED FOR RELATIONSHIPS.** God created Adam. Afterwards, He said, “ ‘It is not good for the man to be alone’ ” (Genesis 2:18, NIRV). Adam was not just a work of art made by the Creator. The Creator made Adam with a desire to have a relationship with God and with other created people. God brought Eve to Adam’s side. Then Adam explained how he felt about this closeness: “ ‘Her bones have come from my bones. Her body has come from my body. She will be named woman, because she was taken out of a man’ ” (Genesis 2:23, NIRV). Genesis 3:25 gives a short description of the close relationship Adam and Eve enjoyed: “The man and his wife were both naked. They didn’t [did not] feel any shame” (NIRV).

So much has changed since Adam and Eve first met each other. Relationships have become damaged and broken by sin. But God still desires us to experience the close relationships that were part of His first plan.

Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 13.

**SUNDAY—AUGUST 7****THE GOD OF RELATIONSHIPS  
(Romans 12:2-21).**

We all must live in relationship with other humans. We cannot escape this fact. Nature itself shows we are supposed to live in relationships.

Each one of us is here only because of a relationship that led to our birth. Even after birth, babies cannot live more than a few hours on their own. They need relationships to live. They need at least one other person to take care of their physical needs. Their mental needs are almost as important as their physical needs. Babies desire love and attention. From their youngest days, babies react to human love, touching, words, and moods. Babies do not form relationships with trees or with beds. They form relationships with other people. Children who have loving, caring parents are so much better balanced emotionally than children who do not. That is because God made us to be in relationship with other people.

But something has gone wrong with our relationships. All around us, we see examples of bad relationships. Most of the heartache we suffer as humans, we suffer because of bad relationships.

God loves us for this reason. He clearly cares about our relationships, which are an important part of our life. God wants us to have positive

relationships. That is why the Bible has so much to say about this important topic.

**What do the following verses tell us about relationships? What can we learn from these verses about how we relate (socialize or connect) to others? Exodus 20:14, 17; Luke 6:27, 28; Ephesians 4:32; Ephesians 5:25; Philippians 2:2, 3; Romans 12:2-21; Galatians 6:2. Find other verses in the Bible that talk about relationships. (Be prepared to share what you find with your class.)**

As we socialize with others, people will see the true measure of our walk with Jesus. So it is very important for Jesus to be Lord of our relationships.

**How well do your relationships show the principles<sup>1</sup> from the verses above? In what areas do you need to make changes?**

**MONDAY—AUGUST 8****RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD  
(Matthew 22:36-39).**

We all want healthy relationships with each other. But healthy relationships are not always so easy to have. We are all sinners. We all have faults. We are all people with character weaknesses that do not always help us get along with others.

<sup>1</sup>principles—basic rules of life.

But our relationship with God is very important to our relationship with others. He created us. He alone can change us. When we have a close connection with God, we can have the kind of relationships with others we should have.

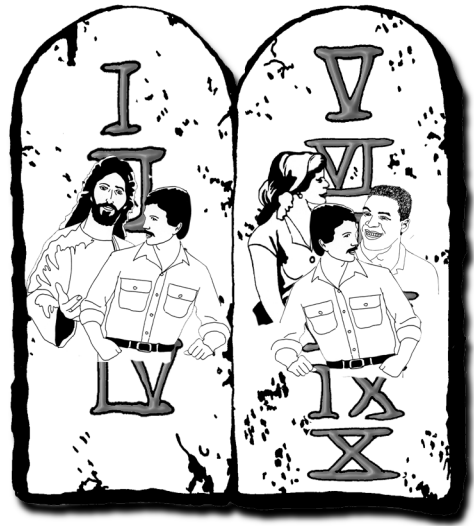
**What does Jesus say in Matthew 22:36-40 about the connection between our relationship with God and our relationship with others? Why is our relationship with God so important in helping us have the right relationships with others? What does God do to us that helps us have the right kind of relationships with others? How do the following verses answer these questions?**

Psalm 51:10 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Galatians 4:19 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Peter 1:4 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



Job said, “I know my Redeemer [Savior] lives. In the end he will stand on the earth” (Job 19:25, NIV). He was saying something more than just a fact. This same Hebrew verb<sup>2</sup> for “know” is used in Genesis 4:1. In Genesis 4:1, Adam “knew” his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Job was talking about a very close, personal relationship. “To be living Christians, we must have a vital (living) connection with Christ. The true believer can say, ‘I know that my Redeemer (Savior) lives.’ This close relationship with our Savior will take away the desire for earthly satisfactions. All our powers of body, soul, and spirit should be devoted to God.”—Adapted from *Review and Herald*, May 30, 1882.

**How has your relationship with God influenced your relationship with people? Write down the useful ways knowing God has helped you**

<sup>2</sup>verb—a word that shows action. Run, drive, and walk are words that are verbs.

relate to others. In what areas do you need to grow?

## TUESDAY—AUGUST 9

### THE GIFT OF MARRIAGE (Ephesians 5:21-33).

Marriage and the Sabbath are the two things we have taken from Eden. But many marriages today have not been as perfect as the marriage in Eden. Maybe marriage is one of the best examples of the damage sin has caused to human relationships. In Eden, the goal of marriage was to bring fulfillment, happiness, and joy to the husband and wife. But many of today's marriages fail to reach this goal.

**Read Genesis 2:23, 24. Genesis 2:24 is a command repeated in Matthew 19:5 and Ephesians 5:31. Is this command talking only about a man and wife being together in sex? Or is there more involved? If so, what?**



“They are no longer two, but one”  
(Matthew 19:5, NIV).

Jesus is Lord of our lives and Lord of our relationships. So our understanding of marriage will be what God wants marriage to be. “Men and women can reach God’s goal for them if they will accept Jesus as their Helper. What human wisdom cannot do, His grace will do for people who give themselves to Him in loving trust.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, pp. 112, 113.

### Answer the following questions based on Ephesians 5:21-33.

1. How are wives to relate to their husbands?
2. How should husbands treat their wives?
3. How does what Christ did for the church show what a husband should do for his wife?
4. What principles of love and respect are seen in Ephesians 5:21-33? How would following these principles make any marriage stronger?

## WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 10

### THE GIFT OF FAMILY (Psalm 127).

**What wise thoughts can we learn from Psalm 127 and Psalm 128 about the gift of family?**

God has blessed each one of us with the gift of family. We may be single or married, with or without children. But we are all part of a family. That family becomes a small but important part of God's great family—the church! In all our family relationships, we have been saved by Jesus' blood. So now He is our Lord. So we should show a Christlike spirit that is different from the spirit of unbelievers.

In the home, parents have a very important duty to live out the principles of their faith. Love, forgiveness, kindness, care, and discipline are some of these principles.

So many of the child's early memories about God come from how the parents treat the child and each other. Our words, our body language, our voices, and our actions influence our children. And long after the actions and words are past, the influences continue in the hearts and minds of the children. The children are so easy to influence. They are so tender and sensitive. How important it is for parents to deal gently with them!

**What advice does Paul give to Christian families about the relationships between parents and children? Ephesians 6:1-4.**

When children are within our care and influence, Jesus wants us to

avoid two things: (1) a harsh and cruel temper and (2) an uncaring attitude.<sup>3</sup> Parents need to find a balance between these two things. They are to give punishment and guidance when needed. But at the same time, they are to show children the mercy<sup>4</sup> and love God shows to all people. It is a very important and serious responsibility. As in all relationships, parents need to learn from God at the foot of the Cross.



**THURSDAY—AUGUST 11**

**THE GIFT OF COMMUNITY  
(Acts 2:40-47).**

People who live under the lordship of Jesus experience a special sense of community.<sup>5</sup> The Greek noun used in the New Testament to describe this

<sup>3</sup>attitude—how you think and feel about something or someone.

<sup>4</sup>mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

<sup>5</sup>community—a group of people living, working, or worshipping together.



community is *koinonia*. *Koinonia* is often translated as “fellowship.” Paul spoke of “*Koinonia* of the Holy Spirit” in 2 Corinthians 13:14 (NIV). Some Bible experts suggest that it may also be translated the “*Koinonia* brought about by the Holy Spirit.” This means we let the Holy Spirit work in our lives so we can have fellowship with others.

**Read the description of the early Christian community in Acts 2:40-47. Then answer the following questions.**

1. What kind of unity did they show?

2. What kind of fellowship did they have?

3. In what useful ways did they relate to each other?

4. What did they show to the world because of their fellowship?

What a beautiful picture of the early church. What a powerful picture of the very principles about relationships Jesus Himself taught and showed in His life. Try to imagine what good your local church could do if it were to show such fellowship (read John 13:35).

**What changes need to be made in your church so it can show bet-**

**ter what we see in Acts 2:40-47? Why must those changes begin in the heart of each believer? What is the only way these changes can happen?**

### FRIDAY—AUGUST 12

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** When building relationships, listening is important. We listen to God through the Bible and through nature. We listen to others as they communicate with words or acts.

Study the following situations in Jesus’ life. In each of these situations, He showed the importance of listening when building a relationship: John 3:1-21; John 4:4-42.



**Jesus was a good listener. How well do you listen to other people?**

“The first thing one owes to others in the fellowship is listening to them. Love to God begins with listening to what He says in the Bible. In the same

way, love for Christian brothers and sisters begins from learning to listen to them. It is God's love for us that He gives us in the Bible and when He listens to us. So it is His work we do for our Christian brothers and sisters when we listen to Him. . . . But Christians have forgotten that Christ has given them the ministry (work) of listening. Christ is the Great Listener. We should share His work. We should listen with God's ears so we may speak God's words."—Adapted from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1954), pp. 97–99.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. In every part of our relationships with others, there is one important theme. Matthew 16:24 describes this theme best. Read Matthew 16:24 in class. What is the important principle there? Why is this principle so important for us to have the right relationship with others?
2. List the three most important relationships in your life. What are you doing to encourage these relationships?
3. What are some creative ways you can reach out to people who do not have meaningful relationships in their lives?
4. As a class, read together what Bonhoeffer wrote above. What useful things can you do in order to become better listeners?