

How to Treat Others

Objective:

To grow closer to God through:

- 🕒 Sensitivity to others' needs and feelings.
- 🕒 Loving our Neighbour.
- 🕒 Learning how to love, forgive, accept, and encourage others.

Memory Verse:

“Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God” (Romans 15:7).

References:

- 🕒 The Gift of Forgiveness - Dr. Charles Stanley

Scripture Readings:

The Old Way: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

The New Way: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:43-47).

Introduction:

Dealing with others is not always easy. One can experience anger, frustration, and anxiety since not every one (including us) appreciates or understands the Christian Way. Let us discuss some situations that you might face or experience on a daily basis. What would you do if:

1. Someone cuts you off in traffic.
2. A friend spreads slanderous words about you.
3. You saw your classmate cheating.
4. Your roommate has his/her Girl/boy friend spend the night with them in the same bed.

These are just a few examples and hopefully by looking at our Lord Jesus Christ's treatment of the sinful woman, the Samaritan, and by studying the Parable of the Prodigal Son, we will be able to find the answers and comfort.

Lesson Outline:

I. Love

A. Our lives can't reflect God's love unless we learn to love others

⌚ “He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in the darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him” (1 John 2:9-10).

⌚ “If someone says ‘I love God’ and hates his brother he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 John 4:20).

⌚ Our Lord has given us a very easy prescription on the road to complete Love. He gave us our brothers and sister so we can practice Loving those whom we can see so we can Love the Unseen God, who Himself is Love and the source of Love.

⌚ Do people know you are Christian? Or those around you saw you as a “religious fanatic.” There wasn't anything particularly different about your life other than it was spent at church on Sundays

⌚ St. Paul saw that same type of attitude developing among the church in Corinth, which is why he sent out this stern warning:

⌚ “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1).

⌚ Our walk with Christ doesn't set us apart if we don't have love. We're just an annoying noise drifting through the air, unable to minister God's love to anyone.

⌚ The Lord Jesus even stressed this point: “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

B. Love is the bond of unity

⌚ When we love people, we can soften their hearts and touch their lives in unique ways “Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Colossians 3:14).

⌚ Now, if there is a situation where you have to separate from your brother or sister then follow the example of Abram who gave Lot the first choice and he accepted whatever is left over. Review Genesis 13:1-13, in particular pay attention to verse 8: “So Abram said to Lot: Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren.”

C. Love brings joy to our lives

⌚ The world would certainly be a lonely place without God's love. Without God, we have no purpose, no meaning, and no destiny for our lives. Our lives would take on a whole new meaning -no meaning at all. We would wander aimlessly through life, desiring for something or someone to love us and give us

hope and purpose for our lives. Many people who haven't discovered the love of God are wandering around right now in search of this missing ingredient to make their life complete.

☺ “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may remain in you and that your joy may be made full” (John 15:9-11).

D. Importance of Love

☺ Do you desire to know God more deeply? Do you want to understand Him more, understand His heart? Do you want to know why He does what He does? In order to do so, we must strive to know more about His love, applying it to our everyday lives. So, why is love so important in understanding God?

☺ However, God's love may be difficult to understand. We can understand loving our parents, son or daughter, brother or sister. Although more often than not, we don't easily love our fellow employees, the maniac driver who cuts us off in traffic, our obnoxious neighbour, or Sister “Better-than-you” from church. But God does. His love is unconditional and not based on anything we do.

II. Forgiveness

Here are some basic steps to help move you toward a Christ-centred response.

A. Forgive the offender

Hurt turns into bitterness and an unforgiving spirit when it isn't dealt with properly. Think of it this way that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the spiritual resource to truly forgive others (Matthew 18:21-35; Psalm 32:1; Ephesians 4:32). When you release someone from the debt he or she owes you, you are free to see that person as Christ does, and anger and bitterness no longer have the power to rule your decisions. You also will feel that you were behind the bars of bitterness and hatred and anger, and forgiveness open the doors of prison and you “the prisoner” are let free.

B. Seek first to understand before you seek to be understood

☺ Practice the skill of being a good listener and try to imagine the perspective of the offender. What might have been his motivations? What is going on in his life right now? Many times, a person who hurts you is the victim of hurt himself. He feels that the only way to release that anger and “get back at the world” is to do the same thing to someone else. The process of loving someone enough to ask questions and hear the other side does not mean excusing the behaviour. You must still recognize the person's action as wrong and hurtful and then forgive, but understanding the offender's private pains could be a key step towards reconciliation or preventing further conflicts in the future.

☺ In keeping with a spirit of Christ like love, speak with non-combative yet truthful words. A perfect verse to keep in mind at such times is Ephesians 4:29: “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers”. Speaking in love does not mean that your words will not be sharp and pointed; sometimes truth is very

unsettling, and the individual who has come against you may need to grapple with some tough issues.

⌚ If you think the conversation may be difficult, or if you are unsure of the right approach, consult with your father of confession first. It is always helpful to keep the overall goal in mind.

⌚ In any conflict, you need to realize that the outcome is not in your hands. No matter how hard you may try, you ultimately cannot force someone to listen or change. Only the Lord can work with that person's heart, as you continue to extend patience and love. Who knows, maybe someday your "worst enemy" could become your best friend in Christ. Whatever the result, you can be sure of God's blessing as you seek His way of dealing with those who hurt you.

III. Acceptance

⌚ Accept every one in love, from the man who cuts you off in traffic to the former friend who spreads slanderous words about you. When you are hurt by these thoughtless or deliberate wounds of others, how do you typically react? Honestly? It's no fun to be hurt. The old sandbox saying of "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" simply isn't true. Physical injuries heal over time for the most part, but the bruises from emotional conflicts do not disappear over time without specific, spiritual remedies.

⌚ From a worldly perspective, it is considered normal to react in the "don't get mad, get even" philosophy. That is part of the reason why Jesus tells us that our behaviour, as those who belong to Him, must be radically different in order to get the attention of a hurting world. Jesus says: "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who spitefully use you. **And just as you want people to do to you also do to them likewise.** But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them... But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to unthankful and evil. Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful... Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:27-38).

⌚ Loving both the unlovely and the unloving is not easy. Jesus did not say that this response would come naturally. If it did, He would not spend so much time explaining these principles and the importance of following His example in your dealings with those around you.

⌚ Remember, acceptance does not mean accept the wrongdoing of your roommate, or the wrong "life style" of your co-worker. You accept the person not the behaviour. Christ loves the sinners to bring them to repentance. However, He did not accept their sins, remember He told the woman who was caught in adultery, "go and sin no more".

IV. Encouragement

- ⌚ What does encouragement mean to you? Can you recall a time when someone came alongside you for the sole purpose of lifting your spirits or making you smile?
- ⌚ Have you ever done that for a hurting person? It feels good to know you're loved. It feels especially good in those low moments when you can't see ahead clearly, when you don't grasp God's perspective and vision for your life.
- ⌚ There's no such thing as a person who doesn't need encouragement. The individual who claims to be above "simple-minded comfort," or who seems completely unreceptive to it, is likely the one in the direst need of it. God's Word is filled with important principles that can be applied to building up others' hearts.
- ⌚ The prayer of your heart can be the same as St. Paul's, who longed for all believers to know the sweetness of united fellowship. He prayed "that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ" (Colossians 2:2).
- ⌚ It's crucial to always speak graciously and politely, the way you want others to speak to you. The issue of communication is paramount in every arena of life. Colossians 4:5-6 says "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one".
- ⌚ It's not always easy to use gentle words, particularly in a situation in which you must confront someone about an uncomfortable issue or when the person is antagonistic or abrasive to you. If you ask the Lord to set a guard over your tongue, He will give you discretion in what to say and what to withhold (Psalm 141:3).
- ⌚ A common pitfall of misguided encouragers, however, is the temptation to flattery. Complimenting someone's appearance or abilities is a good thing, when it is done for the purpose of genuine appreciation without seeking gain for oneself. If every time you see someone you feel the urge to find something to compliment about that person, analyze your motives. No one trusts or believes a continual stream of empty praise, so make sure that your compliments are sincere, sparing, and designed to encourage at appropriate moments.

Applications:

We discussed important and difficult issues in the Christian life. Many motivational speakers, courses, and seminars try to deal with forgiveness, acceptance and encouragement and may succeed to a certain extent. However the most difficult topic of all is Love. The word love is probably the most abused and misunderstood in the world. Many equate love to romance, lust or a one-way street to get ones desires without any commitment or responsibilities. Love in the Christian Doctrine is:

- ⌚ Love is God and God is unlimited, therefore it is a life long journey to get closer to God, and to experience His love. Our hearts can flow with love after it has been filled by His love first.

⌚ Love is very important in all aspects of our life but in particular in our family life. Love in the family means to put others before you and their needs before yours, it is to be the last in the family. The Christian family is modeled according to the love of Christ to the Church, which is unlimited and unselfish love.

⌚ True Love has no expectations. Many times our relationships are built on how we exchange feelings, visits, gifts... etc. However our Lord loved us to the end. He is the Lover of Mankind for no reward or expectations.

Conclusion:

If we are really looking for love we have to look to our Master and learn to be the last and the servants in all aspects of our life. It is a long and never ending journey.

Other Resources:

You may want to have a listen to a sermon by HGB Youseff

<http://www.suscopts.org/resources/audio/hg-bishop-youssef/english-sermons/>

If you have any good activities or resources please share with the group.

God Bless your service for the Glory of His Holy Name.