



(Series adapted from “Strengthening Your Grip” by Chuck Swindoll)  
**Strengthening Your Grip – Relationships**

**Introduction:**

1. We’re starting a **NEW** summer series this morning-: **Strengthening Your Grip on KEY AREAS in your Christian Life**

- I believe this will help us to follow through on our theme: *Gearing Up for Greater Effectiveness* which implies staying on top of KEY AREAS in our Christian walk
- my point being, that if we’re not A+ on key areas in our Christian walk, we’re really NOT going to be ready to meet the challenge that lies ahead of us

Note: The goal is **NOT** statistics (numbers, counting noses!!!)– it’s all about **SOULS** – PEOPLE whom God loves and died for and wants us to help disciple!

- that’s what **Key Verses** like **Matthew 28:19-20** (quote) and **Eph. 4:11-16** (quote) are all about!  
 > meeting people where they are and helping them take the NEXT step of growth

**Q: What is the NEXT step of growth for you?**

2. Our study this morning focuses on: **Strengthening Your Grip on Relationships!**

- It’s not going to be a surprise to you that we go back to Genesis to begin our study!

3. **Genesis 1:26** tells us that at creation, God made this key statement: ***“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness”***

\* That statement is amazing for a number of reasons:

**1) It is a major reference to the systematic doctrine of the Trinity – the “Us” is God the Father, God the Son (cf. John 1:1-2), and God the Holy Spirit**

**2) It reveals the truth about the unity of the Godhead – they get along just fine!**

Example: The Spirit fulfilling His purpose for which He was sent (John 14 & 15), Jesus saying “not My will, but Your will be done”

**3) It tells us something about the way man is put together!**

- In the image and likeness of God – therefore, have the ability to ‘get along’ and accomplish things that bring glory to our Creator!

4. There are several implications to this statement such as:

**1). Man at the point of creation became an eternal being -- i.e. he will live somewhere forever**

- Genesis 2:7 ***Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.***

**2). Another aspect of that “image and likeness” is this: Man is “relationship oriented”**

- It's natural and right for a person to establish, maintain, and improve his relationship – both with God and with other people
- Some say, “Well, I'm not much of a people person.” -- THAT'S NOT TRUE
- God made you a people-person – it may be that you've simply developed some sinful habits of thinking and neglected to grow in your love for others

**Input: What are some reasons why a person might not consider himself a “people person”?**

- See people as inferior to them – not good enough
- View people as an “inconvenience” – building relationships take time!
- Fear of how they will respond
- Pride – we don't want people to find out or come to know about us
- Other priorities than “loving your neighbor as yourself”

Note: Quite honestly, if that were true for most of us, our neighbors probably wouldn't be able to stand us!

[Turn and read Luke 10:38-42 – 3 principles to help us “*Strengthen Our Grip on Relationships*”

## **I. Establishing and Building Relationships with People Is Important to God.**

- see that in our text as well as creation Genesis 2-3

### **A. God's creation of man reveals that He values relationships mankind.**

- sometimes the reasons that some people give for WHY God values a relationship with man get a little “muddy”

- 1) It's NOT because man has so much to offer God
- 2) It's NOT because God somehow NEEDED a relationship

\* God doesn't need anybody – including man

**“Yahweh” = the self existent One**

> He can stand alone – He is the great *I AM* – *Alpha/Omega* – *Beginning/End*

\* Point: **The fact that God created man does not demonstrate His NEED for fellowship but rather demonstrates His DESIRE for fellowship!**

- but God didn't just create man and turn him loose! (Deists believe that He did) – Gen. 3 says...

### **B. God sought out Adam in the garden knowing man had sinned!**

❖ **Genesis 3:8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God *walking in the garden in the cool of the day*, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.**

Q: What does that mean?

- It means this: \* **God not only ESTABLISHED a relationship with man – He truly desires to BUILD that relationship.**

- In other words: God invested time and effort into His fellowship with man!

> Not because He HAD to do it, but because He WANTED to do it!

> Nobody forced God to build the relationship with Adam – He did it out of DESIRE because that is the kind of God He is!

IMPORTANT: Knowing what Adam had done – He still sought out the fellowship with man

### C. Jesus spent time with people.

**Input: Examples of Jesus spending time with individuals or small groups?**

[various answers: Nicodemus, woman at the well, Peter/James/John, etc.]

Point: Jesus took time with people because people were important to Him – He wanted to build those relationships because that's the kind of God He is!

- If Jesus took time to spend with people, so should we!!

### D. God's Word puts a heavy emphasis on the importance of relationships.

- Christianity is NOT a religion of isolation – or 'clicks' – it's an OPEN DOOR to anyone who wants to enter by faith!

- ❖ **Matthew 11:28 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

**Input: What passages come to your mind that emphasizes this concept of friendship/companionship reaching out to people!**

- ❖ **Psalm 119:63 I am a companion of all those who fear Thee, And of those who keep Thy precepts.**
- ❖ **Exodus 33:11 Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.**  
Lev.19:17 is not so famous, but shows the OT law aimed at the HEART as well as the ACTION.  
  - ❖ **Leviticus 19:17 'You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart;'**
- ❖ **Proverbs 17:9 He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.**
- ❖ **Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times . . .**
- ❖ **Proverbs 18:24 But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.**
- ❖ **Proverbs 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend.**
- ❖ **Matthew 11:19 "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!'**
- ❖ **John 11:11 "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep"**
- ❖ **John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.**
- ❖ **James 2:23 Abraham . . . was called the friend of God.**

Point: Relationships are important to God – especially our relationship to our bro/sis in Christ!!

Galatians 6:10 ***So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.***

- the life and testimony of our Savior demonstrated He was *"people oriented"*
- He was NOT a *"people pleaser"* (John 8:29 *"I do always those things that please the Father"*) but He was *"people oriented"*

**Input: What is the difference between being "people oriented" and a "people pleaser"?**

(various answers)

- Let me ask you some questions:

- 1) *Are relationships with people really important to you?*
- 2) *Do your priorities and involvement with people reflect God's priorities in establishing, building, and improving relations with people?*

## II. Relationships Don't Just Happen; You Have to Establish and Build Them on Purpose.

- Luke 10:38-42 [READ AGAIN] – look for SPECIFIC examples of Jesus demonstrating that relationship don't just happen, you have to establish and build them on purpose – INPUT?

- 1) 10:38 -- He could have gone to other places in the village, He chose to go to Martha's house

Note: It is quite possible, considering the custom of the day of believers showing hospitality to other believers traveling through their city (no motels) that Jesus simply knocked on her door, looking for a place to rest, and she "welcomed Him into her home."

Note: It's also true that she could have been anticipating His arrival – that's why she was so busy with "all the preparations"

- 2) 10:39 – Jesus was speaking to Mary and sitting down with her
  - 3) 10:41 – Jesus answered Martha's question – He didn't ignore her
  - 4) 10:42 – Jesus taught us, there are times when "serving" is NOT the most important thing
- but Luke makes the point very clear that Jesus took time for Mary and Martha to build His relationship with them

\* **What does it take to establish and build relationships with people.**

### A. A willingness to INVEST the time and energy toward the relationship

- for some, establishing and building relationship with people is simply not a high priority

\* **VERY IMPORTANT: Luke 10 illustrates to us that there are times when "SERVING" (i.e. activity, busyness) is NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING!**

#### **ACTIVITIES ≠ RELATIONSHIPS**

- Specifically, in this passage, building a relationship with the Savior – WORSHIP – is most important than serving

- Sometimes worship is LISTENING that motivates you to . . . further service.

Application: Look at your schedule – if you are too busy to slow down for people and build some relationships, you are missing a very important part of the Christian life.

- Mainly: \* **Relationships give you opportunity for INFLUENCE!**

> Jesus let having everything "perfect" go – He chose people!

\* **We should view service as a bridge to relationships – an OCCASION or OPPORTUNITY to be with people to establish, build, or strengthen a relationship**

### B. Building good relationships takes good communication.

- we often say "I'm going to love you enough to tell you the TRUTH" – and Jesus told Martha the truth, as should we with each other!

- but how often do we say, “I’m going to love you enough to tell you that I love you”?

**Examples: What did a friend do for you that you will never forget?**

### III. Recognition That God’s Love for Us Motivates Us to Show Love for Others.

#### A. Who Jesus is and what He’s done for us (that’s why He came . . . to die for our sin!)

- one of the biggest reasons we don’t cultivate relationship like we should is that we grown “cold” in remembering how much God loves us
- we can lose sight of our goal of being like Jesus Christ – part of which is loving people!

Quote: *People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.*

#### B. “Church” is not about “You” – it’s about others!

- we have to have the mentality of :

***‘Others Lord, yes others, let this my motto be; help me live for others, Lord, that I might live like Thee!’***

#### C. What does that look like in our church?

#### Conclusion:

1. Don’t fall for the thinking: “I’m not a people person” -- if it is difficult for you to get involved in the lives of others, seek out some help to change and grow
2. Don’t be guilty of being so busy you don’t have time for people.

## Strengthening Your Grip on KEY AREAS in your Christian Life *Relationships—Luke 10:38-42*

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