

Making the Most of Our Relationships
Lesson 02 in the series: "Thrive/Survive"

A. In order to make the most of our relationships, we need to think about what relationships are like in heaven.

"Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:1-4 (NLT)

Three ways thinking about heaven helps us make the most of our relationships:

1. It reminds us that God wants His children to get along on earth just like they do in heaven. "Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:9-10 (NLT)
2. It reminds us that we are God's children, adopted into His family. "Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure." Ephesians 1:4-5 (NLT)
3. It reminds us that we are new creations in Christ Jesus. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

"God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."

Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

Note: Worship and Bible study will help us **keep** our thoughts focused on heaven.

"Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives... Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts." Colossians 3:16a (NLT)

B. In order to make the most of our relationships, we need to strip off our old sinful nature.

"So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you... You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. Don't lie to each other, for **you have stripped off your old sinful nature** and all its wicked deeds." Colossians 3:5-9 (NLT)

Two ways we can strip off our old sinful nature:

1. We can **repent** of our sinful habits, attitudes, and behaviors whenever God makes us aware of them. "Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?" Romans 6:1-2 (NLT)
2. We can get **wisdom/counsel** from mature believers. "Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives." Colossians 3:16b (NLT)

C. In order to make the most of our relationships, we need to put on our new nature.

"**Put on your new nature**, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him... Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful."

Colossians 3:10-15 (NLT)

Five ways we can put on our new nature:

1. We can set appropriate times and places to resolve conflict. "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back." Matthew 18:15 (NLT)
2. We can believe the best about each other. "Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance." 1 Corinthians 13:7 (NLT)

3. We can apologize when we're wrong and forgive others when they wrong us. "Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others." Colossians 3:13 (NLT)
4. We can love people while disagreeing with what they say or do. "God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." Romans 5:8 (NLT)
5. We can get creative in expressing our affection. "Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other." Romans 12:10 (NLT)

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Connect Group questions

1. What is the worst apology you have ever heard? What made it so bad? How could the situation have been handled better?
2. Read Colossians 3:1-4 & 2 Corinthians 4:18. How important is it for Christians to think about heaven? Why?
3. Read Colossians 3:5-9. Paul lists a number of sins in these verses that believers need to "put to death," "get rid of," and "take off." Why do you think anyone would want to hang on to any of these bad behaviors? Which items in Paul's list do you find hardest to get rid of?
4. Read Colossians 3:10-17. Paul lists a number of virtues in these verses that believers need to "put on." Why do you think we are sometimes reluctant to "clothe ourselves" with these behaviors? Which items in Paul's list of virtues have been the easiest for you to embrace?
5. Whose counsel do you seek when God convicts you that it's time to let go of a sinful habit? Why are we sometimes reluctant to seek help or advice from other Christians?
6. Discuss the following ways Christians can improve relationships.
 - We can set appropriate times and places to resolve conflict. (Matthew 18:15)
 - We can believe the best about each other. (1 Corinthians 13:7)
 - We can apologize when we're wrong and forgive others when they wrong us. (Colossians 3:13)
 - We can love people while disagreeing with what they say or do. (Romans 5:8)
 - We can get creative in expressing our affection. (Romans 12:10)

Why do you think the coronavirus pandemic has put so much pressure on relationships? Which of these ideas could help strengthen relationships in your home/workplace?

7. Quotations to consider:

"An apology is the superglue of life. It can repair just about anything." Lynn Johnston

"Holding a grudge is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die." Anonymous

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference." Reinhold Niebuhr

8. Spend some time as a group praying for each other's needs and for the needs of people around the world. Please use the following prayer list from Christianity Today as a guide.
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/march-web-only/covid-19-coronavirus-20-prayers-to-pray-during-pandemic.html>