



Experiencing Relationships

How do you get to know someone well? You spend time with them, you talk to them, observe them, travel with them. When you don't know someone well, there is potential for discrimination, segregation, judging, condemning, and gossiping.

- Discuss what it has been like when you or a certain grouping of people have been ignored, sidelined, or felt the impact of discrimination by others.

[Watch “My Son, My Savior” Chapter 3 – The Miracles and Message]

- *What struck home most as you watched?*
- *What questions emerge for you?*

His Miracles Attracted More and More People to Jesus

Read the account: John 2:1-11

- Why do you think Jesus' mother would have told Jesus, “*They have no more wine?*”
- Determine what Jesus was trying to get across to his mother with the words he spoke to her: “*Dear woman, why do you involve me (what’s that between you and me)? My time has not come.*”
- Besides his compassion and concern for people, discuss other reasons Jesus did these miracles. (John 2:11).

The Threat of Traditions and Rules of Men

- Analyze what Jesus is saying to the teachers of the Law...and you...about the laws of Moses:
“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them ... Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven ... unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-20).

One of the experts in the law tested Jesus by asking, “*Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?*” Jesus replied, “*‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments*” (Matthew 22:34-40).

Jesus told them, “*Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions*” (Mark 7:6-8).

It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ... the law brings wrath (Romans 4:13-25).

- Rules, rituals, and traditions have their value. Compare times when they are beneficial and when they get in the way of the relationships God wants us to have with him and with others.

Read John 5:16-30

- Besides breaking the Sabbath law, what bothered the Jewish leaders about the message Jesus was spreading (vs. 16-18)? (See also *John 10:31-39*.)
- Discuss why our relationship with God is dependent on our relationship with Jesus (vs. 21-24).

Jesus not only Spoke the Message...He is the Message

- Determine the immediate and long-range impact of his comment, *“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*
- What does the following passage, spoken to Jewish religious leaders, add to this? *“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life...”* (John 5:39-40).

Jesus’ Family

“Who are my mother and my brothers?” Jesus looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, *“Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”*

- Discuss the impact Jesus’ statement might have had on:
 - Jesus’ mother, brothers, and sisters
 - the crowds gathered around him
 - You

Another time while Jesus was teaching a woman in the crowd called out, *“Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.”* Jesus’ replied, *“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it”* (Luke 11:27-28).

- Define what Jesus was saying here. Compare what Elizabeth had said in Luke 1:42-45 with what Jesus is saying about those who are considered “blessed.”

- Determine what the following passages say about our family relationship with Jesus.

Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are from the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. ... he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is the devil (Hebrews 2: 10-18).

To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God (John 1:12-13). (See also Romans 4:16-25; 9:6.)

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father” ... Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:15,17). (See also Galatians 4:4-7.)

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are (1 John 3:1)!



Jesus Miracles Attracted More and More People to Him

Mary, Jesus, and his disciples were guests at a wedding in Cana (relatives? friends?). Others may not have seen Jesus as anything special when he arrived, but that began to change when they ran out of wine. The miracle at Cana was the first of many. He healed the blind, the lame, and even raised the dead. He fed thousands of people from the small resources given to him. He cast out demons like he had done for Mary of Magdala. But he didn't heal or help everyone. He didn't come to eliminate in this life the worldwide problem of pain or hunger or sickness or poverty (or lack of wine). Spiritual sickness was by far more damaging and the pain of hell more threatening. He used whatever means possible to draw people to him. *"Even if you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father"* (John 10:38). Later the apostle John remarks, *"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name"* (John 20:30,31).

The Threat of Traditions and Rules of Men

It is interesting to note that those whom the elite despised or overlooked felt at ease with Jesus, but the respectable religious leaders felt angered and threatened by him. That was evident when Jesus met a man at the pool of Bethesda who was an invalid for 38 years. (See John 5:1-15.) Jesus told him to get up, pick up the mat he had been lying on, and walk. It didn't take long for the religious rulers to criticize the man. They referred regularly to the Laws of Moses, but they had developed so many other laws to legislate their view of holiness. Carrying a mat on the Sabbath was breaking one of them. For them, it became all about outward conformity to superficial ritual and routine.

The purpose of God's law is not to earn God's blessings by doing what he requires. The law is like a mirror to show us what we look like to God and to curb our appetite for going too far off track. Like a two-edged sword, it opens us up to uncover the problem that is deep inside. *"Out of the heart comes evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander"* (Matthew 15:19). As much as we try, we can't do his will perfectly or save ourselves by earning his favor. Instead, the law brings guilt and condemnation. But a true relationship with God is all based on his grace—who he is and what he does...not on our works—who we are and what we have done.

Jesus not only Spoke the Message...He is the Message

Once when Jesus was in Nazareth where he grew up, he went to the synagogue, as was his normal practice (Luke 4:14-22, Matthew 13:53-58). In the synagogue, Jesus used as his reference point for truth the Scriptures (Bible)—not legends, traditions, popular sentiment, speculation or what seems to work. He stood up and read from Isaiah 61: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight of the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Jesus was not just a spiritual leader similar to Muhammed, Confucius, or many others. Jesus wasn't even just another biblical prophet merely telling people a message of God. He was telling them that HE is God's message to the world. To those on the Road to Emmaus: *Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.... "Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms."* Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 44-45). For Jesus' followers, the Scriptures alone are the foundation of truth about the spiritual realm and our relationship to God!

Jesus' Family

People in his hometown of Nazareth were familiar with Jesus growing up in the modest household of Joseph the carpenter. When they heard him speak, they were amazed and remarked, "*Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simeon. Aren't his sisters here with us*" (Mark 6:1-6)? Even Jesus' mother frequently didn't understand what he was doing, and we are also told that at the time his brothers did not even believe in him (John 7:5). His family felt he was out of his mind to say and do what he was doing, especially with the criticism he was getting among his religious contemporaries who labeled him as a drunkard, a glutton, a trouble-maker, and a disturber of the peace. So Jesus' mother and brothers decided to go and rescue him (Mark 3:20-21, 31-34). Think about it—rescue the Son of God? When someone told him, "*Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you,*" Jesus answered, "*Who are my mother and my brothers?*" Jesus looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "*Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.*"

It is instructive to notice that Jesus was slowly distancing his ministry from his relationship to Mary as his mother. We hear no words from her after the wedding at Cana and two of the Gospel accounts hardly mention her. Mary becomes less and less a part of his story as Jesus turned people toward another relationship—the one with his heavenly Father—a relationship she also grew into as a disciple of her son, her Savior. This new family would grow through the ages from every tribe and nation and people—one made possible by his blood (a new type of blood relationship).

Jesus knows what it is like to be a baby born in poverty as his mother placed him in a manger. He knows what it is like to dirty his hands working hard as a carpenter, to be accused of wrongdoing when he showed compassion and spoke truth. Jesus ate with sinners, forgave the adulterer, touched the ones with transmittable diseases, and stopped for those others who would pass by on the side of the road. He seeks out the lost until he finds them, whoever they are. He does not discriminate.

- Look over the passages below and list the people who would fit the category of "whoever" in these passages (especially those that may be hard for us to accept).

*"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever** believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.... **Whoever** believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.... **Whoever** believes in the Son has eternal life, but **whoever** rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them"* (John 3:16,18,36).

Jesus said to her, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and **whoever** lives and believes in me will never die*" (John 11:25-27).

*"**Whoever** drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life"* (John 4:14).

*"**Whoever** follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"* (John 8:12).

Every path does not lead to God. Salvation is found only in Jesus, not in yourself, not your ancestry, not your works, not your worth, not your strength. What an outstanding outcome!

Put it into Practice:

- If what you presently believe doesn't match up with what Jesus says, both can't be right. Seriously rethink your relationship with Jesus.
- Besides you, who are the "whomevers" in your area of contact that need to know Jesus? Make a plan to build a healthy relationship with them so that you can share the Word and the Holy Spirit can turn it into a healthy relationship with Jesus.

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