

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS



IMITATING CHRIST

(6 BIBLE STUDIES)

EXAMINATION APPLICATION

BIBLE STUDIES

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THE SMALL PRINT

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Your Commitment

I would encourage you to make a commitment to attending your group regularly. I realise that sometimes there are things that get in the way, but do prioritise studying the Bible with other. This will involve sacrifice, and effective use of your time, but I really believe that in doing so you will get the most out of studying the Bible and praying together in your small group.

Your Contribution

What you put into the group is going to determine what you get out of the group. I encourage you to contribute honestly to the discussion and workings of the group. I understand people come from different backgrounds with unique personalities & life experiences. But, we all have a big part to play, so I encourage you to be fully present and take ownership of your group.

Your Preparation – Topical Studies

These materials are primarily for use in preparing and/or leading the group discussions but they will also be useful in keeping your thoughts together in one place. The materials firstly provide you with a series of passages so that you can identify and highlight recurring themes and note down your own thoughts and questions. Secondly, the materials include questions designed to provoke thought and help you think through what the passages meant both at the time it was written and also what it means for us now. Because these studies are topical there is a much stronger progression of thought (than there would be in a passage based study). The dangers of such studies are that discussion can move quite far from the Bible. Yet this it is still the best way of covering broad subjects like this.

I would really encourage you to make use of these materials, as doing so will help you contribute and get the most out of the group discussions. The materials are however only “tools”, they are there to help you and not to restrict you or force you to think in a certain manner. I want to see God speaking to you through these passages and if the questions or notes do not help you, then don't use them!

I have included within these materials an introduction to the book. Make of this what you will, but I hope that it is helpful in getting you started with these studies!

Your Leadership

Here are some useful pointers in how to lead your Bible study group. Be aware that included in this study guide are more questions than you can possibly ask and/or answer in one session. They are not designed to be used rigidly, and there will rarely be a need to ask every question! Make sure that you spend some time praying at the start and ensure you read & re-read the passages as much as possible. In relation to the passages, then consider the suggested questions with an open mind. There is rarely “a single right answer” and I would encourage you to share your thoughts with your group.

I have also included a number of quotations from relevant Christian literature, most of which are readily available online if you want to do further thinking or study. My prayer is that as you study together you would grow to love Jesus and experience Him more deeply.

I would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how to make these materials even better!

Steve McClure, Spring 2019

INTRODUCING “AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS”

There are few subjects which invoke feelings of both excitement and dread simultaneously. These studies will help us explore the area of relationships! That includes all of our relationships; our relationship with God, our relationship with other people (i.e. Christians, non-Christians, friends, enemies and so on). There is much in the Bible that we could focus on in doing this but for the sake of these studies we will concentrate on the teachings and behaviour of the only person we can truly consider an expert in relationships Jesus Christ.

The title of these words uses the word ‘authentic’ and by that we mean something that is real or genuine. Deep relationships leave us vulnerable because there can be no room for pretending or putting on a show to impress others.

Few of us would disagree that relationships are a challenging but vital area of our lives. Our focus will be our every day interactions with people and with God rather than homing in on a specific type of relationship. Few things in life get me down more than relational conflict and yet few things have enabled me to grow in my faith quite like this area of relationships.

“All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated. As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon, calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come: so this bell calls us all: but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness....No man is an island, entire of itself...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

John Donne

I hope that you will enter into these studies with ears to hear from God and a determination to put into practice what you are learning. These will surely not be easy lessons but they are ones that can transform our relationships within the group, with our families, with our friends, with those who we find it hard to relate to and supremely in our relationship with God.

Often when we think about the subject of relationships, we tend to think about romantic relationships but that is not what this series of studies about. That said the principles that we can glean from the life of Jesus are relevant to all of our relationships: i.e. if we take these things seriously it will be a blessing to us in all of our relationships.

**To God be the glory;
Steve McClure January 2012 (revised Aug 2020)**

STUDY 1 – THE PRIORITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

INTRODUCTION: This study will help us think about what Jesus teaches and models about the value and priority of relationships. We will consider the things that draw us away from relationships and what it means to really love our neighbour.

SETTING THE SCENE: Why are relationships so important (Additional Quotes 1)? To what extent do you prioritise relationships? What are the implications of where we set those priorities?

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PRIORITY OF RELATIONSHIPS (MARK 12:28-34): How do you understand what Jesus says here about the priority we should give to our relationships both with God and with others? What things cause us to give less priority to relationships? How would you sum up the things you value most in life?

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MONEY (MATT 6:24-33): Jesus says we cannot serve both God and money (v24): to what extent do you agree with that we cannot serve two competing values? Why is the service of these lesser things so pointless (v25b)? How important is faith in freeing us to make relationships our top priority (v30)?

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(a) TASKS (MARK 5:21-43, 6:37, 10:14): How does Jesus balance the needs of people with the tasks before Him? How important to you 'is getting things done'? To what extent can we identify with the danger of allowing the task to become more important than the person who we're doing it for? How can we keep our lives in balance?

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(b) WITH ALL YOUR HEART (feelings, emotions): How are we at expressing our feelings of love for God? Do our prayers have that emotional element that David displayed in the Psalms (e.g. Psalm 6:6, 25:16, 24:8, 55:5, 38:9, 38:17-18, 18:1-2)? How can we grow in loving God with ALL of our hearts?

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(c) WITH ALL YOUR SOUL (decisions, desires, passions): What does it look like 'to hunger and thirst for righteousness' (Matt 5:6)? How do you express your personal love for God? Where might we need to pray "Lord, your will be done," to love God with all our soul (e.g. Luke 22:41-42)?

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(d) WITH ALL YOUR MIND AND STRENGTH (thoughts, actions): How does Paul's encouragement to think upon that which is noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy (Phil 4:8) help us to love God with all of our mind? How can we translate our love for God into everyday life?

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LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR (LUKE 10:25-37): Why does Jesus answer 'who is my neighbour?' with a story? How do we put limits on our love? Why are we so dependent on God's help to love others? Why was it such a risk for the Samaritan to help? What is the risk of not loving (Additional Quotes 2)?

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Where do we start in loving others when there are so many needs all around us? To what extent do you agree that consistent love can only be expressed one opportunity at a time? How highly did Jesus value relationships; see Luke 5:15-16, John 15:13, 17:24 and 1 John 4:11?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What things has this study highlighted for you about the value that you place on relationships both with others? What next steps might there be for you as you seek to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Share with one another the priority you give to relationships with God and with others in your life. Pray for one another that you would learn to love God more passionately and love one another as yourself.

MEMORY VERSES: MARK 12:29-31

STUDY 2 – LOVE AS JESUS LOVES YOU

INTRODUCTION: This study is all about loving one another as Jesus has loved us. In our own strength this is an impossible challenge. God does not however command us to do something that He does not give us the power to do. The choice to love is radical and far reaching.

SETTING THE SCENE (JOHN 13:34-38): Who is the 'one another' Jesus refers to in v34? What is your initial response to such a command? What are the implications of the words "As I"? Why do we tend to compare ourselves to one another rather than to Jesus?

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Compare this impossible challenge with either Mark 11:23, Matthew 14:28-29 or 18:21-22: Why do you think that Jesus asks both His disciples (and us) to do things which are seemingly impossible? How do these challenges encourage us not to *try harder* but to *trust in Jesus*?

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POWER OF JESUS' COMMAND: How would you differentiate between *emotions* and *actions*? Which is primarily involved with obeying Jesus' command to love? When might acting in love contradict how we feel (e.g. Luke 22:42)? When we don't feel like loving, how can we take steps to act in love?

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POWER OF THE NEW: How was Jesus' commandment 'new' (see Lev 19:17-18)? Are our relational motivations 'old' or 'new' (Additional Quotes 3)? To what extent do you agree that 'God would never command you to do something he wouldn't give you the power to do' (e.g. Matt 14:24-32)?

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FEELINGS ARE IMPORTANT: What do we learn from how Jesus shows emotion, e.g. tears (John 11), compassion (Mk 1:40-42), distress (Mk 14:33-34)? How should we imitate the intensity of these emotions (Additional Quotes 4)? Jesus did not deny His emotions but did not always bow to them: How do we take our emotions seriously without allowing them to control our lives?

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RADICAL ACTION (MATT 5:21-24): How does Jesus teaching on murder show the importance of what is in our hearts? In what sense could our feelings be instructive (a call to action) or destructive (eating away at us)? What is Jesus saying in v30 about the need to act radically?

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CHOOSING TO ENJOY FELLOWSHIP (1 JOHN 1:7): What is and isn't genuine fellowship (1 John 1:7-9)? What hinders fellowship? How does fellowship help us to love one another?

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CHOOSING TO FORGIVE (EPH 4:32, 1 JOHN 1:9): What is / isn't genuine forgiveness? How important is God's forgiveness of us in giving us the strength to forgive others?

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CHOOSING TO ACCEPT (ROM 15:7): Why is accepting our differences so important? To what extent do you agree that without people around you who are different you'll never truly grow?

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WILLING TO SACRIFICE (1 COR 13:4-8A): How does Paul's description of love in these verses help us see the daily sacrifices that will transform our relationships?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: Jesus' teaching about love is incredibly challenging and we need His help in order to love others: what steps is He asking you to take here to love as He has loved you?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Share about some of your relationships in which you find it hard to obey Jesus and love as He loves us. Pray that you would be able to fellowship together and forgive, accept and sacrifice for one another. Pray that God would strengthen the relationships in your group.

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 13:34

STUDY 3 – SPEAK FROM THE HEART

INTRODUCTION: It often seems like communication is a process by which information is confused (rather than exchanged) by individuals through a seemingly conflicting system of emotions, behaviours, backgrounds and desires.

SETTING THE SCENE (PROV 12:18, JAMES 3:3-8): What have been some communication successes and failures you've experienced? In what ways is our communication so much more than just words (Additional Quotes 5)? Why is communication so important to relationships (Additional Quotes 6)? What do these passages teach us about how difficult communication can be?

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TRUST IS FOUNDATIONAL: Why is 'trust' is so important to good communication? How do we apply Jesus' words in Matt 5:37 about our 'yes' and our 'no'? How might lies, flattery, broken promises and silence erode trust? How do we build and/or rebuild trust (see also Prov 15:4)?

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MOUTH AND HEART (MATT 12:34, MARK 7:15): What's the connection between what we say and what is in our hearts? To what extent is it possible to control the overflow of what is in our hearts? In what ways might hurtful words to others also hurt us?

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THE VALUE OF HONESTY: When are you prone to be less than honest? How do you react to Jesus' strikingly honest statements (e.g. Matt 8:8-10, 14:28-31, 23:29,33, Luke 23:34 & Matt 16:21-23)? Why is honesty so key if we want our relationships to grow? How do we speak truth in love (Eph 4:15, 29)?

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BRING GOD INTO THE CONVERSATION: To what extent do you agree that more important to the way we talk to someone is the way we talk to God about them? How can we pray more persistently (Luke 18:1, 11:5-13), more confidently (Matt 7:7-11) and more reverently (Matt 6:9)?

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HOW TO BE TRULY HEARD: In order to be truly heard, how important are the following; a tender word or caring touch (e.g. Luke 4:40, 5:12-13), asking questions (e.g. Mark 8:29, 10:51, John 21:15) or telling stories / using word pictures (e.g. Luke 15, Matt 13)? What do we need to do in order to take more responsibility for helping others to hear what we are trying to say?

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TROUBLE-SHOOTING: Jesus has much to teach us about how we respond well to the following:

1. CRITISISM (Jesus gave a clear and confident response...John 8:12-14,19)

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2. DOUBT (Jesus offered proof...John 20:26-29)

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3. RIDICULE (Jesus was silent...Isaiah 53:7, Proverbs 9:7-8)

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4. CORNERED (Jesus turned on the light of truth...Matt 22:19-22)

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5. REJECTION (Jesus went elsewhere...Matt 10:14, Mark 10:17-30)

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: To what extent do you agree that words are the most important tool given to us by God (Proverbs 18:21)? What is your impression of both the potential and the challenge of communicating from the heart?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Share what you find most challenging and most encouraging in the area of communication. Share any steps God is asking you to take in your own relationships to rebuild trust, initiate forgiveness, share deeply with or get back in contact with.

MEMORY VERSE: MATTHEW 12:34

STUDY 4 – AS YOU JUDGE, YOU WILL BE JUDGED

INTRODUCTION: Jesus spoke often about judgement. Sometimes we are quick to judge one another when there is something in ourselves that we need to address first of all so we can see clearly. This study challenges us to swap hypocrisy for integrity and to show mercy in the light of God's forgiveness.

SETTING THE SCENE: Describe some situations when either you or others have been judgmental. How do you understand Jesus' words about judgment in Matthew 7:1-6? In what ways does Jesus teach us to be nonjudgmental through the concepts of hypocrisy, integrity and mercy? Are there areas of our own lives where we have a tendency to be judgmental of others?

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HYPOCRISY (MATT 7:5-6, 23:25): What characterises hypocrisy? Hypocrisy often involves wearing masks (Additional quotes 7); what sorts of masks do we wear and why do we wear them? How do we start to say no to hypocrisy; being genuine in love (Rom 12:9) and quit trying to impress others (Matt 6:1)? Why do we place such value on outward appearance (Additional Quote 8)?

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INTEGRITY: Why do we seem to notice faults in others when so often we have a plank of the same kind ourselves? How could the faults of others become a motivation for change in your own life and vice versa? David says God is pleased with integrity (1 Chron 29:17); how can we determine to live lives of integrity, being honest about our faults and accountable to one another?

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JUDGEMENT AND MERCY: In what sense is the opposite to showing judgement actually mercy rather than tolerance? How can we show mercy without judgement; avoid the perils of a false mercy (offering care but lacking the courage to speak out) and being judgmental without care?

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Is showing such mercy optional or the proper response of those who themselves have received mercy? Showing mercy runs the risk of rejection (people reject God's mercy all the time); what does Paul say in Colossians 3:12-13 about how we might express this tender-hearted mercy?

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UNDERSTANDING GOD'S MERCY (LUKE 7:36-50): To what extent is the secret to a heart of mercy unlocked in seeing God's mercy to us (see esp. v47)? How much of a motivator in showing mercy is and should God's mercy be to us (See also James 2:13)?

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UNDERSTANDING GOD'S JUDGEMENT: Why do we balk so much at the concept of God's judgment? How does trusting God as judge (Rom 12:19), trusting God's timing (1 Cor 4:5, John 12:48, Matt 13:29-30) and being confident about facing the Day of judgement (1 John 4:17, John 5:24) help us be less judgemental? To what extent are we trusting God to judge fairly?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER (ROMANS 3:10-12 & 22-24): How do these passages help us apply Jesus' principle of judgment in our lives? What have we learned about what is happening to the Christian (who is forgiven of much) who is seemingly becoming more judgmental of others?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Share your initial response to the questions and challenges raised by the study. Pray for one another over these areas of hypocrisy, integrity and mercy and start holding one another accountable in areas of your lives where you are struggling.

MEMORY VERSES: MATTHEW 7:1-2

STUDY 5 – THE GREATEST WILL SERVE

INTRODUCTION: We are not by nature humble; we struggle with ambition, the need to be noticed, a tendency to compare ourselves to others and with a DIY means of relating to God. Jesus teaches that true greatness is to be found in being a servant.

SETTING THE SCENE (MK 10:32-43): What do you think motivated James & John to ask Jesus to do whatever they ask (note context in v32-34)? How might you have responded if you had been in Jesus' shoes? In what sense is true greatness found in being a servant? What difference would such an attitude make to our relationships (Additional Quotes 9)? How would you define genuine humility?

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HUMILITY AND AMBITION (MATT 18:1-5): What is your initial response to the concept of ambition in the context of greatness? What did Jesus want the child to teach about true greatness? What's our experience of the difference between demanding what we want (like the disciples) and child-like dependence (Additional Quote 10)? How do we need to change and become like a child?

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NEEDING TO BE NOTICED (MATT 23:2-12): How did the religious leaders demonstrate their deeper need to be noticed (v2-6)? What would be today's equivalent of making our 'phylacteries wide' (*symbols*), loving the place of honour at banquets (*recognition and honour*) and loving to have people call us Rabbi (*titles*)? NB: A phylactery was a little box worn around the head containing Bible verses.

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To what extent do you agree that the only way to be cured of this *need to be noticed* (Additional Quotes 10) is to start noticing the needs of others? In order to do that, how can we immerse ourselves in the truth that God has promised to supply all our needs (Phil 4:19), including our need to be noticed?

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HUMILITY & COMPARING WITH OTHERS (LUKE 14:7-14): How would you summarise Jesus' relational advice at the feast? Why do we compare ourselves with others so often? Do you typically find yourself taking the best spot, lowest spot or just feeling indifferent between the two?

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HUMILITY AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (LUKE 18:9-14): What kind of DIY religion had the Pharisee developed? To do what extent do you notice in yourselves a tendency to do the same? How can we avoid falling into the trap of the Pharisees and follow the example of the tax collector?

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VINES AND BRANCHES (JOHN 15:1-12): If you have time think about how Jesus' teaching about the vine (Jesus) and the branches (us) helps us understand what humility and greatness look like in the same frame? Do you agree that the more you become like Christ the more fruitful your life is? What is it going to mean for you to stay attached to the vine (i.e. remain/abide) in the years to come?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER (1 PET 5:5-6 OR PHIL 2:3-5): Where do we start in seeking to grow in humility; focussing on ourselves or others/God and why)? What does it look like to consider others as more important than ourselves (v3)? How do 'selfish ambition' and 'vain conceit' kill relationships? How do we make a start at humbling ourselves (likely to be action rather than feeling)?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Share your own struggles in this area whether it be 'me centred' ambition, the need to be noticed, comparing yourself to others or a DIY approach to God. Pray for one another in this daily decision to humble yourselves and think of others more important than yourselves.

MEMORY VERSES: MATTHEW 23:11-12

STUDY 6 – TREAT OTHERS AS YOU WANT THEM TO TREAT YOU

INTRODUCTION: We finish up by looking at treating others as you would want them to treat you, the so called 'Golden Rule'. There is huge potential for change in this one rule! If we could begin to act in sync with this one rule in our relationships, the difference would be radical.

SETTING THE SCENE (MATT 7:12, LUKE 6:31): How do you respond to what is known as the "Golden Rule"; i.e. do to others as you would have them do to you? What impact for change do you think this rule could have in our lives and/or society?

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Which of these alternatives do you identify with most? (1) *The Reciprocal Rule* "Whatever you do for me, I'll do for you", (2) *The Ricochet Rule* "Do to someone based on what some other person has done to you" or (3) *The Hidden Motive Rule* "I act like I'm doing it for you, but it's really to get what I want"

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EVALUATING THE RULES: How do these rules perform relationally in the short term and long term? To what extent do you agree that we must give ourselves to meeting other's needs if we are to get our needs met (Additional Quotes 11)?

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LOVE IS SACRIFICIAL (LUKE 23:32-43): How do we see the Golden Rule worked out at the cross? What is your experience of love that is 'sacrificial' rather than 'reciprocal'? How do you understand Jesus' promise that 'your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High' (Luke 6:35)?

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LOVE YOUR ENEMIES (MATT 5:38-42): Why are these commands so foreign to our thinking? How is the decision to *turn the other cheek* actually an act of courage not cowardice? How does the command to give our coat as well reveal the priority Jesus gives to relationships as opposed to possessions? What might the decisions to go the extra mile and to give to the one who borrows look like in practice?

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THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE (LUKE 23:26-43, ROM 5:8): How is Jesus the ultimate example of how to love your enemies (e.g. stripped, insulted and made to bear his own cross)? Rather than allowing your enemies to take away your rights, how can you choose to give them away?

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IDEALISED NOTIONS VS. REALITY: Why is reality often at odds with the idealised notions of the reality of life that we harbour in our heads? How might we make an idol out of the ideal (a perfect image of how things might be) and what might be some examples of that?

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Holladay writes: "The goal of love is not some false ideal we've conjured up in our minds; the goal of love is seeing God at work in our real lives" (pg. 319, *The Relationship Principles of Jesus*): how might such idealised notions prevent us from the goal of love? Instead how might we take our everyday, ordinary life and place it before God as an offering (Romans 12:1)?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: Looking back over the series, what is it that God has been teaching, reminding and challenging you about? What single principle of relationships do you most need to work on? What would life look like if you began to live out the kind of love Jesus taught?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Share the biggest lessons that have impacted you both from this study and the previous studies. Pray for one another that you would be enabled and empowered to put these things into practice in your sphere of relationships.

MEMORY VERSE: MATTHEW 7:12

APPENDIX – ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS

QUOTE 1: “Recently a pioneering band of researchers studied the age-old mystery of what makes people happy. Their answer is not what you might expect. What appears consistently at the top of the charts is not success, wealth, achievement, good looks, or any of those enviable assets. The clear winner is relationships. Close ones. Nothing reaches so deeply into the human personality, tugs so tightly as relationship. Why? For one reason, it is only in the context of connection with others that our deepest needs can be met. Whether we like it or not, each of us has an unshakable dependence on others. It’s what philosopher John Donne was getting at when he said so succinctly, “No man is an island.” We need camaraderie, affection, love. These are not options in life, or sentimental trimmings; they are part of our species’ survival kit. We need to belong.” *Drs Les & Leslie Parrot, pg.11, Relationships: How to make bad relationships better and good relationships great*

QUOTE 2: “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no-one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless – it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.” *C.S. Lewis, pg 169, The Four Loves.*

QUOTE 3: “The old commandments were empowered by traditional habits – the way we’ve always done it; the new commandment is empowered by our dependence on God’s power – the way Jesus did it. The old commandments were based on written rules; the new commandment is based on a living example – Jesus Christ. The old commandments were motivated by fear of the judgement God would bring on those who disobeyed; the new commandment is motivated by love.” *Holladay, pg. 97, The Relationship Principles of Jesus*

QUOTE 4: “I am spellbound by the intensity of Jesus’ emotions; not a tinge of pity, but heartbroken compassion; not a passing irritation, but terrifying anger; not a silent tear, but groans of anguish; not a weak smile, but ecstatic celebration. Jesus’ emotions are like a mountain river, cascading with clear water. My emotions are more like a muddy foam or feeble trickle. Jesus invites us to come to him and drink. Whoever is thirsty and believes in him will have the river of his life flowing out from the innermost being (John 7:37-38). We are not to be merely spellbound by what we see in the emotional Jesus; we are to be unbound by his Spirit so that his life becomes our life, his emotions our emotions, to be transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory.” *G. Walter Hansen, The Emotions of Jesus*

QUOTE 5: “Communication experts say that the word we speak to others can actually produce six distinct messages: (1) What you mean to say, (2) What you actually say, (3) What the other person hears, (4) What the other person thinks he hears, (5) What the other person says about what you said and (6) What you think the other person said about what you said.” *Holladay, pg. 146, The Relationship Principles of Jesus*

QUOTE 6: “...All relationships are fuelled by communication. Just as a car will never reach its destination without fuel, our relationships are guaranteed to go nowhere without communication. Lack of communication has kept some relationships stuck in the garage for decades; others find that they get off to a great start but then run out of gas a short way down the road. It takes good communication

to keep a relationship moving ahead for a lifetime. Just as your car needs the right kind of fuel to make it down the road, your relationships need the right kind of communication to make it right through life. What would happen to your car if you put water – or battery acid – into the petrol tank? It's even more vital to make sure we put the right kind of communication into our relationships." *Holladay, pg. 138, The Relationship Principles of Jesus*

QUOTE 7: "Don't be fooled by me. Don't be fooled by the face I wear. I wear a mask. I wear a thousand masks – masks that I am afraid to take off; and none of them are me. Pretending is an art that is second nature to me, but don't be fooled. For my sake, don't be fooled. I give the impression that I am secure, that all is sunny and unruffled within me as well as without; that confidence is my name and coolness my game, that the water is calm and I am in command; and that I need no one. But don't believe me please. My surface may seem smooth, but my surface is my mask, my ever varying and ever concealing mask." *Quoted in Drs Les & Leslie Parrot, pg.31, Relationships: How to make bad relationships better and good relationships great*

QUOTE 8: "Live to impress people and you'll end up focusing on outward appearance – because that is what impresses people. You'll spend your life painting a better mask. Live your life to impress God and it'll immediately be apparent that he sees right through the mask. God is not impressed with our pretending. There's tremendous freedom to be found in living your life for the sake of He from whom you cannot hide, in whom you are most deeply loved, through whom you can live a life of significance, and with whom you will spend eternity." *Holladay, pg. 205, The Relationship Principles of Jesus*

QUOTE 9: "In every relationship we face this same test: Will I exalt myself, or will I humble myself? Choose one. In decisions ranging from the career path you take to the car you buy to even the clothes you wear, this test is in front of you daily. From the grandest dreams to the simplest details, you take this test of greatness each and every day. Who will be the first to apologise after an argument? ... Can I handle this disagreement with my friend? Who gets the remote control? Will I exalt myself, or will I humble myself? Choose one, because you can't choose both. Humility is at the core of any strong relationships. The truth is, we cannot have good and growing relationships if we're not humble. It's absolutely impossible. Why? Because selfishness destroys relationships, and humility develops relationships." *Holladay, pg. 254-55, The Relationship Principles of Jesus*

QUOTE 10: "You know, Lord, how I serve you, with great emotional fervour in the limelight. You know how eagerly I speak for you at a Women's club. You know my genuine enthusiasm at a Bible study. But how would I react, I wonder, if you pointed to a basin of water and asked me to wash the calloused feet of a bent and wrinkled old woman. Day after day, month after month, in a room where nobody saw and nobody knew?" *Quoted in Charles R. Swindoll, pg. 34-35, Improving your Serve*

QUOTE 11 "The question is this: "How do I get my needs met in this relationship?" As unselfish as we may become, we still have needs – and we wonder how these needs will get met. Here is a big answer to this big question: "I must give myself to meeting other's needs if I'm to get my needs met!" The only way to get my selfish needs met is to be unselfish. Without exception clauses or limiting statements, Jesus says "Do for others what you would like them to do for you." This is the rule that will fuel any relationship. It is the rule that will meet the needs of both you and others in your relationships." *Holladay, pg. 298, The Relationship Principles of Jesus*

MEMORY VERSES

STUDY 1 – THE PRIORITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." **Mark 12:29-31**

STUDY 2 – LOVE AS JESUS LOVES YOU

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **John 13:34**

STUDY 3 – SPEAK FROM THE HEART

You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. **Matthew 12:34**

STUDY 4 – AS YOU JUDGE, YOU WILL BE JUDGED

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. **Matthew 7:1-2**

STUDY 5 – THE GREATEST WILL SERVE

The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. **Matthew 23:11-12**

STUDY 6 – TREAT OTHERS AS YOU WANT THEM TO TREAT YOU

"Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behaviour: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them. **Matthew 7:12a MSG**

Further Reading

The Relationship Principles of Jesus, Tom Holladay © 2008 Zondervan

The Four Loves, C.S. Lewis © 1960, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

The Emotions of Jesus, G. Walter Hansen © 1997 Christianity Today 41, no.2

Improving your Serve, Charles R. Swindoll, © 2004 Nashville: Nelson

Right Relationships: How to create them, how to restore them, Tom Marshall © 1992 Sovereign Wld

Redefining life: My relationships, the Navigators © 2005 Navpress

Relationships: Drs Les & Leslie Parrott, © 1998 Zondervan