

“ROAD MAP TO BETTER RELATIONSHIP”

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Philippians 2:4-8

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INTRODUCTION:

1) A modern day movement: In the late 1990s to the early 2,000, a slogan in the form of an acronym WWJD, swept across the nation and the world. This symbol of Christian belief first appeared on brace-laces, then on T-shirts, tote bags, bumper stickers, and many other things. The slogan asks a question: What Would Jesus Do?

It all began at a church in Holland, Michigan. After a group of young people studied “*In His Steps*” written by Christian author Charles Sheldon, they began to write these 4 letter on self-made brace-laces to ask themselves this question: “What would Jesus do” every time they faced a decision making or a choice. The essence in this is to learn from Jesus in our everyday interaction with people and in our personal decision making process.

2) A modern day application: According to Bible scholars, about 10% of the teaching in the Bible is on “salvation” or how to be saved. The other 90% is about how to show the world a life that was transformed by the power of salvation. In this regard, it is very appropriate to ask this same question: WWJD when we face a situation in life either on personal decision or on our relationship with others whom God has placed in the path of our life. The Bible has so much to teach us about inter-personal relationship as we live our life to show to the world we are disciples of Jesus Christ. Our relationship with people in the church or the society demonstrates the

quality of our spiritual life which has a direct effect on our effectiveness as disciples of Jesus.

BENEFITS OF GOOD RELATIONSHIP: The value of personal relationship with others is far more important in the effectiveness of our ability of bring people to Christ than the knowledge of the Bible we may have, the volume of service we may render in the church or the money we have given to the church or to mission work or all that we may do for the Lord. No one may list all the benefits we may have if we are able to build and maintain a good personal relationship with people around us:

1) See what good relationship can do:

- a) Good relationship brings joy and peace to our life;
- b) Good relationship helps us work well with others;
- c) Good relationship brings glory to our Lord, and
- d) Good relationship makes it easier to bring people to Christ

2) Prerequisite of good relationship: “Everyone should not look only for his own interests, but for the interests of others.” (2:4) Looking for our own interests is part of being human. God doesn't say we should not do that. But God says we should not only look for our own interests, but need to also look for the interests of others at the same time or on the same level. Being self-centered or selfish is in our old nature, but to care for the interests of others is a new godly nature. This is the key problem of almost all personal conflicts we deal with everyday. So we can see that a new relationship depends a lot on our spiritual growth, so we can conquer our old human

nature and replace it with a born-again new nature, a new creation. Without out spiritual growth, it is very difficult, if not impossible to “also look for the interests of others.”

BUILDING RELATIONSHIP JESUS WAY: (2:5-8)

1) Don't push the bucket: “Each person will have to carry his own load.” (Gal 6:5) Yes, the Bible tells us we need to carry each other's burden, (Gal 6:2) but here it says we also need to carry our own burdens, and building relationship is one of these burdens we need to carry on our own because no one can do anything for you in your relationship with others. Don't blame your parents or family background or upbringing. Don't blame on the society, your friends or anyone else for your relationship problems. The day you become a Christian, God has put in you the potential of a new life you need to grow, cultivate, and mature to harvest the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Paul says in Romans 6:3-4, our responsibility to grow a new life: “Are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death (of the old nature) in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we may walk in a new way of life.” It is our personal responsibility to grow in a new way of life after we were buried with Christ through baptism. Don't push the bucket.

2) Resist to claim own rights: “Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus who, existing in the form of God, but did not consider equality with God as something to be used for his own advantage.” (2:5-6) In the world today, as in the US,

everyone loves to claim their rights: Human right, workers right, women's right, children right, right to have free education, medical care, right to protest, right to abortion at will, right to same sex marriage, etc. can't list all the rights lots of people want to have. In a society that doesn't support the weak and the lowly, to claim some rights is a fair struggle, but claiming rights always leads to conflicts with others, even vicious attack on both sides.

Jesus shows us a different mentality of life which is excellent to create and maintain good relationship for both side, that is “resist” the urge to claim our rights. Jesus has all the rights to be God, because he is God, but he did not claim his right, something to be used for his own advantage. While the world insists on claiming self-invented rights, we are told to learn from Jesus to resist that temptation, but to surrender some rights, so we can build better relationship with people around us. If we can surrender some of the rights in order to care for the interests of others, to have a harmonious environment so we can serve the Lord in unity, why is it so hard to do?

3) One step down: self-empty: “Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a slave.” (2:7) In a world where everyone wants to climb a ladder to get higher in almost everything, Jesus did the opposite: Willingly taking many step lower, from God to a slave. “To empty”, *kenoo* in Greek, means to pour out, to void or to cancel self. This is the act of complete humility, giving up his deity to become the lowest form of man, a slave. Pride is a destructive force of all human conflicts, but humility is the only antidote of pride. Paul

advised us, “In humility consider others as more important than yourself.” (2:3)

a) In humility, you path a way others may approach you,

b) In humility, you can see the wisdom and strength in others;

c) In humility, you see your own weaknesses, less critical on others;

d) In humility, you may give in to others, patient with them;

e) In humility, you will accept others, make more friends.

4) Be ready to sacrifice: “He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even to death on a cross.” (2:8)

Sacrifice is opposite of rights. People who are strong in claiming right, are not willing to sacrifice, to give up. But Jesus was willing to sacrifice, even his life, so he can save all men in the world from sins. To sacrifice is to take a loss. But in God's plan, to lose is to gain. Without losing his life, Jesus can never be the savior of the world. In this world, few people are willing to sacrifice to take losses. All they want is to gain at the expense of others. If we are willing to sacrifice our rights, our time, our self-respect, our love and resources and care, we will build bridges for loving relationship with others. In the popular movies “Superman”, Clark took on a huge sacrifice: His super-nature and power, to become a man so he could love a human, Lois. Without being willing to sacrifice, it is hard to have sweet relationship.

EVERYONE NEEDS GOOD RELATIONSHIP:

1) Your relationship at home: In the popular book for personal

evangelism, the concept of “concentric circle” is very important. Concentric means start from the “center”, and the center of all men is his own home. If you truly want to build sweet relationship with people around you, you need to start it at your own home. I put this first here is because many of us have problems in relationship with people at home. There are many reasons why many of us don't have sweet relationship with family, my point is we need to start from the center of our life, tackling the most difficult, then we can expand to others. This is about our relationship with spouses, children, parents and those who are close in our family. Sometimes, it is the most difficult place to build good relationship because they are so close to us, they see every bit of our good and bad sides of us, and we are in contact with them many hours everyday. But if you fail in building good relationship with your family, you are handy-cap to build relationship with others.

2) Your relationship at school/work: I list this here next because workplace or school is the next place where we spend most of our time besides home. This is the place we meet, work with, interact to during our day time, and to many it is the major part of our day. Having good relationship with people at work or school is so important, particularly early years in school where we form our many habits, work ethics and team-working. On top of that, school and work place is the best place to make long-term friendship. Many of us have friends all the way from our school years or co-workers many years ago. Both school and workplace are good places for personal witnessing if we have good relationship with them.

3) Your relationship at the church: I put this here after home, school and workplace because we also have close contact with people there several times a week. Besides our contacts, we are called into the family of God. We suppose to have good relationship with one another at the church. But in reality, not everyone can do that and that is a shame according to what Jesus wants to see us in unity. A good relationship with people in the church promotes sweet fellowship among believers, consolidates energy for mission work, support all areas of ministry in the church, growing the church both in number and in spiritual quality, and the world will recognize we are truly disciples of Jesus Christ. (John 17:21) Maintaining a cordial relationship with people in the church doesn't just benefit the church, it also increases your personal quality as a Christian by making friends, creates mutual support, deepens personal commitment to the Lord and strength your faith throughout your Christian journey. It is a win-win endeavor we all need to pursue.

THINGS WE NEED TO REMEMBER:

1) Good relationship is biblical: “That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you have sent me.” (John 17:21) Two things stand out in this prayer of Jesus for his disciples:

a) They need to have good relationship among themselves to be united.

b) In doing so, they will be effective in their witness to bring people to believe in Him.

Nothing may damage or hinder the ministry of God's work worse than God's people can't get along with each other in the church. How can the world believe in the gospel of peace and reconciliation when they see the strifes among God's people in the church? Let us follow the example of Jesus and do our best to build and maintain sweet relationship among us, so people in the world may believe in Him and be saved.

2) Good relationship is practical: Today, May 4, 2016, after his last two presidential election opponents bowed out the race, Donald Trump changed his approach in dealing with the media, his former competitors, critiques and opponents in his political party. He began his effort of building relationship with all people from former opponents to party leaders, power base in what he used to call the establishment. Why is that? Because he needs support of all these people to help him in his pursuit of the job of the president of this country so he can do what he believes to “Build America Great Again!”

Many of us remember the famous phrase from the popular reality TV show, *The Apprentice*, when Donald said: “You are fired!” No, he can't fire anyone any more if he wants to be the president, wants to turn the country around to be great again. He needs good relationship with all kinds of people to do what he believes to be good for the nation. If a presidential candidate needs good relationship with people, we all need that as well if we want to be successful in what we do.

