



[study guide]

RELATIONSHIPS: Week 1: The Ultimate Relationship

9.30.12

[set up]

Name off or list all of the different kinds of relationships that you can think of. Which of those relationships seem to be easy and which ones seem to take great work and effort?

Why are relationships so messy? Are they really worth all the effort?

How does our relationship with God factor into our personal life and all other relationships?

[digging deeper]

As we kick off our 8 week series “Relationships –a mess worth making” and look at several of life’s key relationships, we start with our most primary and essential relationship, our relationship with God.

Read Ephesians 5:1,2. In this verse, we are told to be imitators of God, as beloved children. Why is it so critical to see ourselves as a “beloved child” in God’s eyes? How does that inform how we see ourselves and how interact with God?

Just as children imitate their parents, we are told to imitate God. How does walking in love as Christ loved us have an effect on all our other relationships and interactions with people?

Explain how the following verses help us understand the dynamics of God’s love for us and our relationship with Him:

Gen. 1:27

Deut. 10:12

Ps. 86:12,13

Rom. 5:8

Rom. 8:14-17

John 1:12

John 3:16

1 John 4:7-21

Is it true to say that our relationship with God is messy?

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There's a great book that came out years ago by a pastor named Mike Yaconelli called "Messy Spirituality" Here are a few interesting quotes from the book:

Spirituality isn't about being finished and perfect; spirituality is about trusting God in our unfinishedness (pg.29)

...it turns out that what disqualifies you and me from "spirituality" – the mess of our lives and our crippledness – is what most qualifies us to be chosen by Jesus... Some of us actually believe that until we choose the correct way to live, we aren't chooseable, that until we clean up the mess, Jesus won't have anything to do with us. The opposite is true. Until we admit we are a mess, Jesus won't have anything to do with us. (pg. 37)

How do these quotes help prompt us to understand that our relationship with God is both (a) Him making the most of our mess as well as (b) making a mess of us?

[living it out]

Answer True (T) or False (F) to the following questions to help evaluate and assess your relationship with God

___ It's accurate to say that my relationship with God is truly my #1 relationship. If true, how is this evidenced in my life and if false, what needs to change to make this true?

___ I see myself as a "beloved child" that God loves so much that He gave the life of His Son to restore my relationship with Him. If true, how will I protect this understanding and if false, what can I do to embrace, believe and act upon this precious and vital insight?

___ For the most part, I think I am doing pretty well at imitating God and "walking in love" in my life and relationships. If true, how is this demonstrated in my life and what is a recent example that comes to mind? If false, what I can do starting today to move in that direction

___ I have come to a place where I understand and believe that my relationship with God isn't always seen as Him fixing my messes, but entering into them and being present with me in the midst of my messiness. If true, how have you experienced God's presence in the midst of your messes? What messes have you seen Him clean up? If false, why are you holding on to the belief that you need to clean your messes up before God can be in relationship with you?

Close this time out by actively engaging God in relationship through prayer. Call Him "Father", "Daddy" and speak to Him as a beloved child. Pray as God leads you in this moment. You can thank Him for loving you in the midst of your messes. You can thank Him for cleaning up certain messes. You can thank Him for making a mess of your life and priorities so that He can be glorified. Ask God to help you stay close to Him and to help you walk in love so that all your other relationship will be influenced and strengthened by His love in and His love through you.