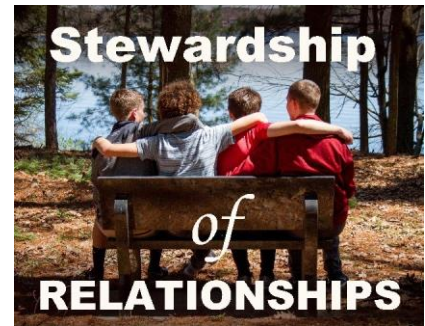


New Life Teens

Sunday School

WHOLE-LIFE STEWARDSHIP #8 – RELATIONSHIPS



DAILY READINGS:

- Monday:** We were created to need relationships (Genesis 2:18; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).
- Tuesday:** Our most important relationship is with God (Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 24:7; 1 John 1:3-7).
- Wednesday:** The Ten Commandments tell how to keep relationships healthy (Exodus 20:1-17).
- Thursday:** Jesus told how to have relationships that please God (Matthew 22:34-39; Luke 10:24-28).
- Friday:** The Bible tells how we should treat one another (Romans 13:8; 14:19; 15:7, 14; James 5:16).
- Saturday:** Relationships that please God include all these (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

MEMORY VERSE: ". . . "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" "Love your neighbor as yourself."
—Matthew 22:37, 39

We Were Created to Need Relationships

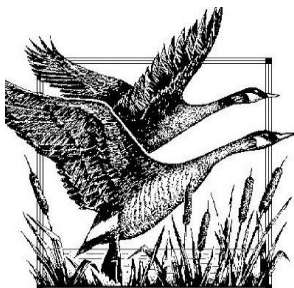
If you live in a colder climate, you have probably seen flocks of geese flying south for the winter. Every time the geese begin flying, they quickly form a V-shaped pattern. This formation was designed by God for specific reasons. Some reasons are:

(1) geese flying together provides lift and air resistance; (2) geese can fly about 70 percent farther using the same amount of energy; (3) when a goose drops out of formation, it soon discovers how difficult it is to go alone and returns to the group. It is not hard to know when the geese are flying overhead because they are continually honking. Scientists believe this is a form of communicating during flight. Did you know that if one goose is injured and has to leave the formation, two other geese will join it, protecting it from predators until it is able to return to the group or it dies?

When you consider the interactions of these geese, the importance of being together and communicating, and the care for the hurting, do you think God wants any less from us? Consider the principles of stewardship: God owns everything; we are the managers. We are to manage God's property in the way that is pleasing to Him. God has given us relationships with family, friends, neighbors, classmates, and coworkers. What is God's design for those relationships? Are we managing the relationships He has given us for His purpose and His glory?

God created us to need relationships. The most important relationship is with God. When we are in a right relationship with God, it will affect all our other relationships. We can love others because He is teaching us how to love. We can forgive them because He has forgiven us. In the busyness of life, it is easy to lose sight of the importance of connecting with those whom God has placed in our lives, the importance of relationships. We focus on what *we* need and what makes *us* happy. However, God knows we cannot truly be what He has designed us to be if we isolate ourselves from others. When we use the lessons of stewardship to consider this valuable resource that God has given us,

it should cause us to look at those around us with more love, compassion, and concern. No circle of friends, family, etc. is the same. No one has the same circle of people as you. That is your unique gift from God. How are you managing it?



What Are Relationships?

We see a wonderful example of God's design for relationships in God Himself. There are three Persons in the Godhead. We call this the Trinity. They are God, the Father; God,

the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit. They each have a specific purpose. They worked together in the Creation and in the plan of salvation, and They are still working together to draw, convict, save, and keep us saved. They work together in perfect unity. God also wants a relationship with you. Throughout the Old Testament, you can find many verses where He said, "You will be My people, and I will be Your God." Once we have that relationship with Him, then we can be proper stewards of all the other relationships in our lives.

God gave instructions in His Word on how to keep relationships healthy. Consider the Ten Commandments. Some tell how to keep in right relationship with God and the others how to treat people. Jesus summed up the Ten Commandments, saying, "Love the Lord your God... 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

If you searched the Bible for verses with the words "one another," some results would be: honor and prefer (Romans 12:10); love (Romans 13:8); edify (Romans 14:19); greet (Romans 16:16); care for (1 Corinthians 12:25); serve (Galatians 5:13); bear burdens (Galatians 6:2); submit (Ephesians 5:21); forgive (Colossians 3:13); and pray for (James 5:16). Some say that money is easier to manage than people, but people are much more valuable. God will help us in all of our relationships if we ask Him.

How to Be a Good Steward of Relationships



Relationships include a connection. You might be related to them, go to school or work together, or worship together. The more time you spend with these people, the better you learn their personalities, their likes and dislikes, and their beliefs. Being a good steward requires an investment of time and energy, getting to know the people God has placed in your life. Just as responsible financial investing requires knowledge and understanding, so does stewarding of relationships.

Another tool in stewardship is to use the gifts and talents God has blessed you with in your relationships. Whether it is a talent of helps, writing, cooking, etc.—all can be used when building relationships with others. What are your particular gifts or talents? Ask God to show you what they are and how to use them in this area of stewardship.

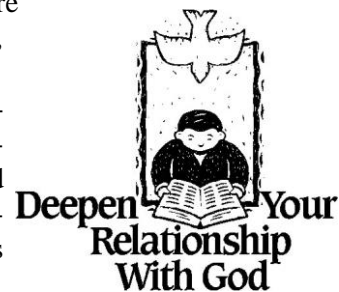
Do not neglect to strengthen your relationship with God. Daily Bible reading, prayer, meditation, and church attendance are vital if you want strong, positive relationships with those around you. Consider Jesus' examples. He loved when it was difficult; He loved those whom others shunned. He did not love only those who received His message, but He also loved those who hated Him and those who killed Him. Read about His interactions with people in the most trying circumstances, when being accused, lied about, and when His words were twisted. Christ's life is a good reminder that we are called to be good stewards of ALL relationships, not just the easy ones.

Pray for all the people God has placed in your life. You might start a list and pray for a few each day. Ask God to show you how to strengthen those relationships. Perhaps there is something you need to make right. Do not wait too long. The old saying, "A stitch in time saves nine," could be applied here. The longer you wait, the wider that breach becomes.

Ask God to help you have a greater love for the people in your life. True love is kind, patient, not boasting, enduring all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). It does not focus on the faults of others. It respectfully allows for differences of opinions or decision-making that you disagree with.

There might be relationships in your life that God wants you to back away from. If you have friends who get you into trouble or are drawing you away from God, good stewardship requires stepping back from those people. People who are gossipers, immoral, abusive, or who continually talk negatively about others are not relationships the Christian should strengthen. If you have people like this in your life, ask God for wisdom. He will show you how to distance yourself without being rude.

It might be overwhelming to think you are to be a good steward of ALL the relationships in your life. God is a fair and loving Owner. He does not ask you to do the impossible. When you spend time with Him, He will direct you as to which relationships need time and attention. He will show you things in your life that are hindering good stewardship, things such as holding on to past hurts, prejudices, and misunderstandings. Who is God telling you to reach out to, forgive, and love today?





1. What are some of the benefits of the V-shaped formation that geese fly in? _____

2. What are the basic principles of stewardship? _____

3. What is the first vital relationship we need? _____

4. Why is your circle of family, friends, etc. unique? _____

5. How is the Trinity an example of good relationships? _____

6. How might spending time with people strengthen relationships? _____

7. Why is spending time with God vital concerning your relationships with others? _____

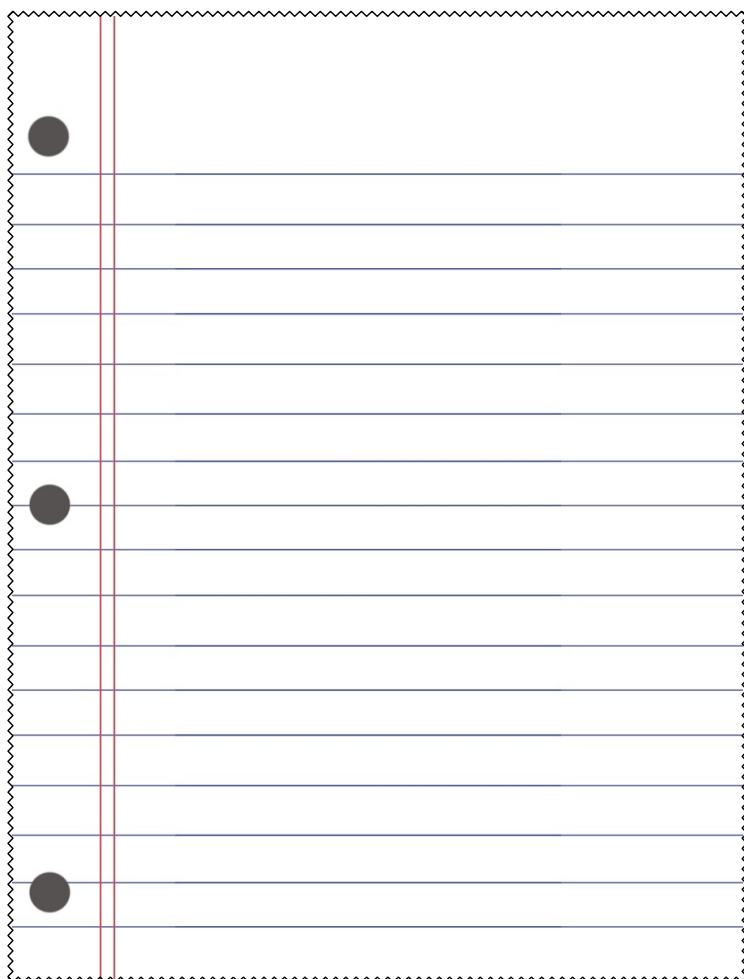
8. Consider stories of the Pharisees and Jesus. How did Jesus manage difficult relationships? _____

9. When it comes to a relationship that has become difficult, what does "a stitch in time saves nine" mean? _____

10. What should you do about relationships that are getting you into trouble or drawing you away from God? _____

My Relationships

Start a list of the relationships in your life.
This will be long. Take your time.
Include family, friends, classmates, and coworkers.

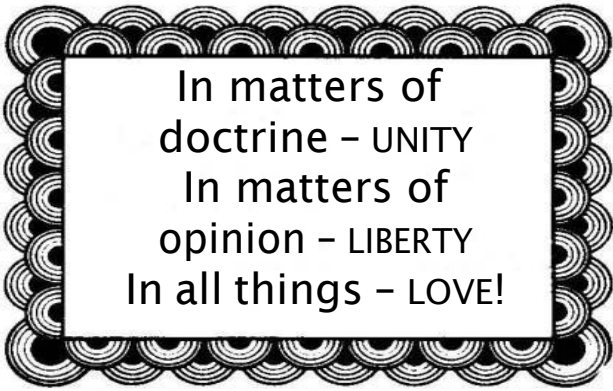


Consider

- How can I strengthen this relationship?
 - Are there any relationships that need repaired?
 - What do I know about this person? Likes, dislikes, hobbies, interests, family? How could I get to know them better?
 - What are some of the problems in this relationship? How could I seek first to understand where they are coming from?
 - What are some ways I can show that I love and care for this person?
 - How can I find common ground with someone who is different than I am?
 - Is there anyone on this list I need to forgive or to ask forgiveness from?
 - Is there anyone on this list that God is telling me to spend less time with? Are they hindering me spiritually?
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Beware of Relationship Destroyers

Criticism, prejudices, lack of love, pride, selfishness, disrespect, and the spoken word that can never be taken back



In matters of
doctrine – UNITY
In matters of
opinion – LIBERTY
In all things – LOVE!