

Healthy Relationships

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[0:00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 21st of March 1999. The preacher is Phil Muleman and his sermon is entitled Healthy Relationships.

Our Heavenly Father, we pray that you would help us to focus our hearts and our minds into what your word has to say to us. And may it be a word for each one of us. And may it be a word for each one of us.

Amen. Brenda is a delightful 24-year-old girl who works in a retail photo shop. I often took my film there for developing.

One day, I noticed a tiny diamond ring on her engagement finger. She told me that just last night she had become engaged to the man that Sue was living with.

I bragged about how I had been well married for over 10 years. But face widely, I have never met anyone married that one before, she said.

[1:17] I asked her if she would remain married throughout her life. And she answered, I don't think so. I don't know anyone who's been married for 20 years.

But Sue and I were amazed by the encounter. What is a healthy relationship for people living in the new millennium?

The story that I just mentioned is a true scenario, but obviously it's not my story because I've never been married for 11 years. But the thing is though, that story is out of an article I found on marriage by a person called Paddy.

I don't know if I've ever met her. I don't know if I've ever met her. I don't know if I've ever met her. The thing is though, that the idea of a relationship between two people being a lifelong commitment is becoming less and less common.

Now one of the worst ads that I have seen on TV in recent times is the ad about that couple being married in a church building. They are saying their wedding promises and the minister then says to the bride something that goes along those lines.

[2:30] Do you take George to be your lawful wedded husband until 12 years have passed and when it's such a time he runs off with the office secretary, he keeps the car, the holiday house in the house while you look after the kids and the maintenance of the kids.

It's a disgraceful ad. People laugh at it, but it is a disgraceful ad. It seems perfectly acceptable in our culture for a marriage to fail.

It seems perfectly acceptable in our culture for friendships just to fade away. And it seems perfectly acceptable in our culture for people to have promiscuous relationships.

In fact, there are more and more glossy magazines available which promote promiscuity. Now, some time ago I was at the doctors and as in all doctor surgeries and dental surgeries are in magazines.

At this particular doctor surgery there was a magazine on the rack with an article in it promoting the joys of open relationships. That is, an open relationship is a relationship where there is a committed couple that they share sexual partners.

[3 : 47] And I had to read it. It was there so I read it to see what's going on. And in it, this article spoke the people who spoke and shared of their open relationships promoted the idea that this open relationship actually improved the relationship that they had with the partners so that they were committed to.

Well, I have no idea how but these are the sorts of things that the world tells us will promote spooky relationships in the year millennium.

And what I want to do tonight is get us all to think about what it means for Christians to be in or to have healthy relationships. Now there are many areas that I have thought about over this week and that I have to deal with.

But what I'm going to do tonight is I'm going to give you a biblical overview. I'm going to think about that looking at Genesis and a couple of other passages. And then I am going to look at what passages support the relationship between husbands and wives, parents and children.

And then I'm going to speak very briefly about the dating and the truth of what is this new. Let me begin by saying that the idea of human being in a relationship is no new idea.

[5 : 10] The Genesis account of the creation quite clearly tells us that we were made for relationships. And I think long-term relationships. Primarily, that relationship is with the Creator.

God creates and humans are placed in His creation to look after it. Verse 15 of Genesis 2 tells us, we read, it says that, It is not good that man should be alone.

I will make him a partner as his helper. The fact that the man does not have a suitable helper is the only thing that is not good in God's created order.

Look at Genesis chapter 1. God creates and everything that He creates is good. It is good. It is good. They don't have it. But here in verse 15 it says, God says, It is not good that man should be alone.

So God set to work to find a suitable helper for the man. And we read in verses 19 and 20. So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air and brought them to the man to see what He would call them.

[6 : 19] And whatever the man called every living preacher that was a snake. The man gave names to the old castle and to the birds of the air and to every animal of the field.

But the man who was not found a helper as his partner is. There is no suitable for the man.

So in verse 21 the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and he slept. Then he took from God with one of the ribs and closed up its place to the flesh.

And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man He made into the woman and brought her to the man. Well, this overjoyed the man, didn't it?

And he named her woman. And we see a poem that he reads there. And then in verse 25 we read at the end of verse 25 they were naked and were not ashamed.

[7 : 25] Now this man and this woman Adam and Eve are in a relationship. The man having seen all of creation designed for a partner now has his own.

And they are in Adam and Eve are in a healthy relationship where they felt no shame and they felt no rejection. And there is absolutely no consideration that this relationship will end and in this sinless state preparing at this time it ought not.

But with the onset of sin women's selfish desire to be like God we see also that this healthy relationship is destroyed.

the trust between the man and the woman is broken down. And we see in chapter 3 we see they have to cover up this nakedness of that man.

Neither Adam or Eve can accept the responsibility of their actions and so on. So the man blames the woman the woman blames the serpent and the woman has sick responsibility.

[8 : 36] They sin and they have gone against the God as they have connected. But despite their sinfulness God has not abandoned them.

He helps them. He pretends them. And he lets their relationship with each other continue on as well as their personal relationship with God as sins.

and a healthy relationship that is present in the garden though is now broken down and it's going to need to be worked at to enable this relationship to work.

It doesn't have that perfect state that they were naked there and they weren't ashamed. It doesn't have that same sort of feeling. There's that sort of sign that comes there. And so it's there.

Sometimes there will be joy associated with it in this relationship that they have and sometimes there will be pain. However, the relationships still continue on.

[9 : 35] Now today, the ideal healthy relationships as seen in the garden before sin, I don't think it's possible if not possible. All relationships whether married or single or whatever, all relationships are fractured in some way.

And we still as human beings have to work hard at maintaining healthy relationships. So a healthy relationship, whether in heterosexual marriage, friendship, causing, even in our work relationships, means that we need to have a model to follow.

relationship with the creator. Firstly, a relationship with the creator. This is God has with the first man and the first woman.

relationship with the creator. It means, of course, that we put a healthy perspective on the relationships that we are involved in, in our day-to-day living.

Now the Bible talks about a relationship with God being brought about by faith and knowledge in Jesus Christ. Why is that? Because through Jesus Christ, we gain knowledge of our own and the world's condition before God.

[10 : 59] We become aware of our own simpleness and we gain an understanding of why things don't always turn out the way that we would overcome. Now before I became a Christian, the world didn't make so much sense to me.

I didn't know why we all had to die. I didn't understand it. Why was there so much suffering? Why can't all people find the right person to settle down with in life? And so on.

When I learnt that there was this thing called sin, that sin was a problem that relates to perfection and so on, and that we all stood in need of forgiveness, and I understood that.

And when I accepted that by faith in Jesus, then the world started to make sense to me. And it made sense because I saw how I could enter that into a relationship with God, and that was with Jesus Christ, through what we had done.

So let me say, the primary relationship that we need to maintain as Christians is our relationship with God. For when we keep that relationship in order, it helps us to put into perspective all the other relationships that we're involved in.

[12 : 20] And the way we maintain a healthy relationship with God is by recognising who God is, recognising that He is the Creator, and recognising what He has done for us in the Lord's presence.

We're blessed with us, and seeing that God, on His own initiative, has blessed with us through this. And maintaining that healthy relationship is ways to do that, is brought about through our Bible study, through prayer, and fellowship with other Christians.

Now, I know that these are all things which we say all the time when people are preaching. They're essential for us as Christians to survive, to read those things.

And all those things, reading about it, praying and fellowship with others, if you see all those things in the Scriptures, that we often hear those things. And it amazes me when people say that they don't need to gain the church, they don't need to read the Bible, they don't need to pray.

They're not looking at what the Lord's ears. But I think that these are all essential ingredients to maintaining healthy relationships personally with God.

[13 : 38] And over the years, my Christian faith has helped me to maintain healthy relationships. I can't say that every relationship and friendship I've ever had has been perfected or been perfected in some way or another.

But it's my Christian faith that has helped me to maintain healthy relationships with my Christian brothers and sisters, with my non-Christian friends, with my family, with my wife, and my children and family.

So what is it that we as Christians should be doing to maintain healthy relationships? well, looking at Jesus, see some answers to that.

And in particular, what did he have to do? And I don't need to flip forward, but Mark 10.45 says this, For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

Giving up our lives will never do what Christ has done for all those who placed their trust in him. But as God's people, we fall to a life of service.

[14 : 47] First to God, and then to those around us. If we don't have the same attitude that Jesus had, that is to serve, then we will only maintain relationships for what we can get out of them, whether it be sex, money, good time, whatever it is.

we will only maintain what we can get out of them, not for what they could become. Now, a service job is to serve, not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of the one who he or she serves.

And that's what Jesus did. He came to serve us so that we could enter back into this relationship with God. So I've said that maintaining healthy relationships means that we need to have a servant-like attitude.

So let me now offer some advice on ways in which we can have a servant-like attitude in our day-to-day relationships. And first I want to put out husbands and wives.

And when a male and a female enter into marriage, one thing that needs to be considered is what they have entered into.

[16 : 07] The words in the wedding service, you may have been to a wedding service recently or you may have led one recently, I don't know. But the words in a wedding service come up at one stage and they say until death do us part.

Those words for many have become meaningless. Much like they would be meaningless for that horrendous story I told you at the beginning until death is part.

You see, marriage is entering into a covenant between two people. It's a promise. It's entering into a promise. And rather than being a covenant for life-one companionship though, marriage today is frequently reduced to a contract for the mutual meeting of each other's needs.

And then there's some other words in the wedding service. which go like this, the words so long as we both shall live have been reduced to the words so long as we both shall love.

As long as I feel like loving this person, I'll stay married. That's the sort of thing that people might think about. If marriage is entered into as a contract like this, then it will last only as long as my marriage are being met.

[17 : 21] the Christian attitude to marriage is to be that of serving one another. Let's try to serve the church. Now, serving one another in marriage doesn't necessarily mean bringing cups of tea to your spouse, nor does it mean doing the washing and so on.

I think there are things you can need to work out as you enter into a marriage relationship. But I think it's more a case of knowing how each other works, knowing how your spouse works.

And the way this is brought about is through communication with each other, with one another. Essential to any healthy marriage today is good communicating and listening skills.

Let me illustrate. As I said at the beginning, I've been married for around 11 years in our portfolio of marriage. And over that time, Barbara and myself have had to work hard at making time for each other.

We both have busy lives. And we could very easily be like, see, see, it's just passing the night and not seeing each other. And we would have to work so hard for that to happen.

[18 : 36] It happens sometimes. But we make a deliberate effort in our married relationship to spend time with each other every day where we sit down and we really listen to one another.

It may be only for 10 minutes on some days, but we make the effort to do it. If it's in the afternoon when the kids are around, then we tell the kids that this is one and best time.

And in that time, we listen to each other, telling each other how the day has gone, what has happened, and so on. And we don't come away from that time feeling that we can't listen to one another.

I listen to Barbara, see this and see me, and it's good to know that those sorts of things are happening. All it takes is a little time with each other where the spouse knows that this is their time, and I think that you are helping to strengthen that marriage relationship.

another thing that Barbara and I also do is we spend time at the beginning of each week, even Sunday night, doing our diaries. And that way, we have a rough idea of what is happening and when.

[19 : 52] And if you haven't done it this week, we actually didn't do our diaries and yesterday we forgot that something was happening with us. But we have to do our diaries. One of the reasons we have to do our diaries is because we only have one part.

And it's important for us to know who is doing the argument of peace and when each of us needs to come out and so on. Well, that's an important thing for us. There are probably some other important things for those who are in marriage relationships that you need to do to communicate.

And we also think in our marriage that it's important to celebrate important occasions, such as wedding anniversaries, birthdays, and other special anniversaries that come along in our daily lives.

Now, they are all the sort of practical communication things and so on, which we do. But central to all of these things in our relationship is our relationship with God.

We have both had a separate personal relationship with God. But we don't view our relationship as just Bob and myself on this horizontal dimension like this.

[20 : 58] we see that God is central in our lives. So we spend time praying together, reading the Bible together and so on. So there's Bob and I in this relationship.

We also have this vertical dimension, which is God. And God's very much a central part of our relationship. And I tell you, it's not always easy to spend time together praying and reading a sermon.

And there are many times when we play in that area that we do solve a very important and central part of our relationship. And we're fortunate in our marriage because God is central to his work.

But I'm also aware that there are those whose marriage relationships can have their central focus. Perhaps it's because one partner has caused some grief or hurt in the relationship over a period of time.

Perhaps unwittingly. Or because one of the spouses is not a committed Christian. My advice is to those in that situation to stay committed in that relationship.

[22 : 11] Find someone else of the same sex that you can pray with about your spouse. Make your commitment to God a priority in that relationship.

And put out your faith, God. Model it your spouse. It must be no easy task for those in relationships where the spouse is not a Christian.

However, I think there's companies to know that God can send all situations to do. and I think we have to remember that in any sort of relationship, particularly in a marriage relationship, we have to be willing to carry with our politics.

But there are more things that I'd love to say about husbands and wives and about healthy relationships, but I also want to address briefly about how to maintain healthy relationships between parents and children.

And I happen to think that this is a particularly confusing area for people today, where there is so much autonomy offered to the child. In some respects, the role of the parent has been diminished enormously due to the individualism of the life.

[23 : 27] Now, let me tell you, I'm not against breeding for children. In fact, I'm all for it. But that doesn't mean that we let kids get away with whatever they want. So do that, I think, is irresponsible parenting.

Now, the other night I was at a dinner with some people, and they had a group of children, and I don't know how to say this.

The children were voiceless and were very rude. And the parents, when they tried to discipline the children, and they said, if you do this and can't go, you'll have to come inside or whatever, it wouldn't just ignore them.

And in one case, one of the children just agrees their parents. Now, the problem is that the parents didn't follow through with their accents, and that is irresponsible parenting.

As Christian parents, I think it's very important that we instill values into the child. Now, that doesn't mean that we beat them into them. Far from it.

[24 : 38] I'm dead against that. But we teach our children by teaching them the things that we learn in the Bible and so on. We need to equip our children with the skills, with the knowledge, and the wisdom for the future.

And more importantly, we need to equip them with a healthy knowledge of God and an understanding of the gospel so that they can make informed choices for themselves in the future, so that they can understand what constitutes these healthy relationships as well.

Paul says in Ephesians chapter 6, at the beginning of Ephesians 6, Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Honor your father and your mother. And there's a difference between honouring and obeying. To obey means to do as one is told.

To honour means to respect and love. Children are not commanded to disobey God in obeying their parents. Nor are adult children asked to be subservient to domineering parents.

[25 : 55] Children are not going to act or obey while they are under their parents' care, but the responsibility to honour parents is for life. And parents, let me say this to you, it's important to realise that there comes a time in your children's life when you have to let them go.

Genesis 2 talks about in verse 24, Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one-flesh. This talks about believing and what we call pledging, they're coming together, of a new relationship of the man and the woman.

Parents don't let you have to look at the children's day. Then let me suggest that that is a very unhealthy relationship that is going on his father. And for the parent, Paul also says that is to the father's youth.

The primary responsibility for bringing up our children and young parents is not on the Sunday school, it's not on the service, it's not on the youth group, it's not on the school that you send your kids to.

They're good tools, they're separate tools, and they are useful to help nurture and encourage our children. But the primary responsibility is placed upon the parents.

[27 : 51] again, let me illustrate from my own experience. In our family, we spend times together as a family each morning reading the Bible.

We sit around the table, have breakfast, and then we pull out the Bible and we read other small portions each morning. And we help our kids to understand the passage. And then we pray with our kids.

We use the prayer loop that the whole community gives out excellent. We pray for the things that are written down down the storm. And we write down our prayer request on those two eight-three steps at home, so that the kids can see it too.

They're free to kiss them read, so we write down and they pray for the majesty of the temple. Now, morning is what works for us.

If you're a parent, it may not work for you, but there may be some other more suitable time. Not only encourage you, but find it and do it. I also spend time with each child doing something that they want to do.

[29 : 01] With Josh, he likes cricket in summer, he likes the footy season, he's just come on, and unfortunately he supports the student. But we go play footy.

I do that with him once a week. And it might be in the backyard, might be down the path of something like that. With my daughter, she plays the piano. And she don't know what's him.

And I take an interest and watch the screen. With my youngest daughter, who's learning to write, to sit down, I actually have more quality time with her because sometimes when I'm home, she's home, we do some drawing, and we do things like that together.

But I attempt, and we both attempt to spend time with our children. And I think that is very important. And when we spend that time with our children, it's important that we listen to them, that we find out what's happening in their world.

And encourage them to say. At dinner time, last night at dinner time, I sat down and said, can I watch the news?

[30 : 08] Because it was at 6 o'clock, and Babs of all, this rate was 7. And so I said, okay, and then at half past 7 I realised that we missed all of these. But we make an effort to turn the TV off so that we can sit down and communicate.

Because if we can teach that to our children, then they will grow up learning those sorts of skills as well. We laugh together, we cry together, and we pray together.

we have lots of fun together as well. Now sometimes when Bab and I are angry with each other, yes, we are angry, we do get angry with each other, and we don't have the perfect relationship, because as I said at the beginning, every relationship is a doctor.

When we get angry with each other, there are times when we will argue together in front of the kids, deliberately, and resolve the situation, and make up in front of the kids, as I think, and we both think, that it's very important for them to realise that we can have a loving, healthy relationship, even though there may be differences between us.

The only thing is important is to see them. Not every other thing, but sometimes. Enough about parents and children. Let me offer one more bit of advice about maintaining healthy relationships in the area of day's life.

[31 : 37] I don't really know what the right word is, I'm so out of date. Courting, dating, going out with someone or something like that. But friends, for Christians, dating is a tough road.

It's tough because the field is narrowed down somewhat for you to choose from. Let's face it, the world is full of people, beautiful people, but not everybody in the world is a Christian.

Christian. And Christians should only consider a relationship with another Christian. Now when someone starts going out with someone from the youth group, I've been there, I might be older now, but I've been there.

When someone starts going out with someone from the youth group, or wherever it is, it is often a really exciting time. And you can see the love on the faces between these two people.

people. And everyone is always happy for this young couple, this young life, except for perhaps the parents. Now you might be a bit scared, but let me say this, that if you're considering going out with someone, or that you're already in a relationship with someone, then ask yourself this question, what am I doing to help this person grow in their relationship with God?

[33 : 01] Why do I ask that? Because nine times out of ten, God is left out of that relationship. I know, I've been there.

And it's so important to get this part of your relationship right when you're dating, if you're in that sort of mode of life. If you don't, if you don't get it right now, then you're going to set a pattern for the future relationships.

God is left out and even from marriage. Why should we describe the healthy relationships?

Let me offer you three reasons as I close. Firstly, I think it helps us to have some logic of ourselves to strive for healthy relationships.

relationships. Whether we are in a loving, committed relationship, or whether we are in plutonic relationships with friends and so on, we all need to maintain as best we can those relationships around us.

[34 : 14] And I think it's right and properly to bless that. love. But secondly, the goal for us as Christians is to maintain healthy relationships with us.

That we would serve our heavenly king so that we can partake in the heavenly prize that awaits all those who are faithful and benches people both in word and in action.

the big picture for Christians is that heaven awaits his people. Let me say that again.

The big picture for Christians is heaven awaits his people. And as Christians, when we enter into a relationship with God, we enter into the kingdom of God now, as Lydia said about last book.

But that glorious future that awaits his people is in the world. And it's going to be with God now, with the glorious future of his people.

[35 : 15] And God calls us as his people to serve him first, as his son Jesus Christ did, as well as serve him as of others. And this then, if we are in a truly committed relationship with God, this then should translate into all of our relationships, from our marriage, from the relationship, whatever it is.

And in doing so, it passes on the traditions and the values of God's people that have been handed down throughout the years.

Now, it's not easy. It's hard work to maintain healthy relationships. As I said earlier, all of our relationships, no matter how ridiculous your relationship is, is aggressive in some way or another.

I'm serving all as well as that. But my prayer is this, that we would all serve God, maintain a healthy relationship with him, and that we would serve those around us for the glory of his name.

This God. Our gracious God, we thank you that you are our creator, that you are our saviour, and that through the Lord Jesus Christ, we enter into a relationship with you.

[36 : 40] Please help us to understand that and to realise that every day in our lives as we serve you. And Father, we pray that our goal of relationships is to serve people, to serve you, and that we can look forward to that heavenly prize, heavenly prize of the rest for all those who have helped you.

Please help us in the daily world, in the marriage relationships, in our relationships with our children, with our grandchildren, with our friends, with our workmates, to be responsible, faithful with yours, and to be faithful Christians and witnesses to them.

Yes, these don't you you you you Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[39 : 18] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[41 : 48] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.