

"In the beginning
was the Word,
and the Word was
with God, and the
Word was God."
—John 1:1

The Lord's Flock
Growth
DIGEST
PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES



“FIVE LAWS OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE”

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Introduction

When asked which commandment in the law is the greatest, Jesus replied: “*You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all you mind.*” (Matthew 22:37).

Jesus continued and cited the second greatest commandment: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” (Matthew 22:39).

For our growth teaching this week, let us focus on the Lord's second greatest commandment: “*love your neighbor.*”

“Neighbor” refers to other people around us. It means people at home, in our workplace, in our school, in our church, and in our community.

Dealing with our neighbor, those around us in our day-to-day living, is not as easy as it appears. There should be laws or principles that all of us, believers of Christ, must follow. Without these principles, there will be misunderstanding, ill-feelings, and chaos. The same problems and troubles will arise even if we have principles but we do not observe them.

Five Laws of Relationships with People

There are five laws or principles that will help us develop healthy relationships with people around us.

They are very practical and are solidly based on biblical teachings.

1. The Law of Adversity

Among people around us, there are those who behave as our adversaries, opponents, and enemies. Some treat us with their hatred, anger, and hostilities. Some have even hurt us and cursed us.

How do we face people who are adversarial to us? The Holy Bible is replete with teachings on how to treat our adversaries.

a) Those who persecute us:

- “*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.*” (Romans 12:14). When we bless these persons, we become a blessing to them.

“Bless” in Greek is “*eulogeo*”, composed of “*logo*” (to speak) and “*eu*” (well or good). To bless is “to speak well of a person” or “to speak a good word to a person”. St. Paul exhorts us to bless our persecutors in the sense of returning kindness and love to those who mistreat us because of our testimony to the Lord.

b) Those who are our enemies; those who hate and hurt us:

- **“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”** (Luke 6:27-28).
- **“For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have?”** (Matthew 5:46). Let us do good not only to those who are good to us but also to our enemies who hate and hurt us.

The law of adversity requires us not to hurt those adversarial to us but to bless them.

2. The Law of Empathy

Empathy is the capacity for understanding and participating in the feelings of other people.

The Holy Bible asks us to empathize with other people: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:15).

Empathy is different from sympathy. Empathy is feeling sorrow with somebody; sympathy is feeling sorry for somebody.

When some people are weeping, we can empathize, feel sorrow, and even literally weep with them. We can be sensitive to the feelings of those crying.

In other instances, when some of our friends or associates are rejoicing, do we readily empathize with them by rejoicing with them? This rejoicing seems easier to do than weeping with those who are weeping. This may unfortunately not be the case. Our human nature prods us not to rejoice with those rejoicing. We sometimes resent those who are rejoicing because of our envy and jealousy of the good things and blessings that those rejoicing have received. Such envy should be extricated from our heart.

The law of empathy requires us to be sensitive of the feelings of others. Let us truly rejoice with others who have been victorious and blessed by the Lord. Let us

also relate to those people who have real reasons to mourn, to be hurt, and to be sorrowful.

3. The Law of Harmony

“Live in harmony with one another.” [NIV]. **“Have the same regard for one another.”** [NAB] - (Romans 12:16).

In music, harmony is the pleasing combination of musical tones in a chord. Our life on earth must be lived in harmony with one other – like making beautiful music with each other.

To live in harmony in marriage, in a family, or in a community is likewise to have the same regard for one another. Having the same regard means thinking the same thing with respect to one another. It is also entering into the feelings and desires of the other as to be of one mind with him.

There is a warning about possible attacks of the devil who tries to drive wedges between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, workers and co-workers, etc. We should beware of these dangers.

Whatever is our role within a group of people, let us perform it with one mind and in harmony with one another and with God’s will.

4. The Law of Courtesy

“Do not be haughty but associate with the lowly.” (Romans 12:16b). St. Paul admonishes us not to be arrogant but to be led away and drawn into sympathy with “lowly things” (those of no great consequence) and with “lowly people” (those who walk the earth in humility and a deep sense of their moral littleness).

In our church, there is no room for spiritual aristocracy and snobbery. As a part of body of Christ, we should never say: “I am better than others”. We also should not say that a group of people is

not welcome in our community. Jesus loves all people to come to Him.

The law of courtesy requires that we should be kind, polite, and courteous to all people irrespective of their color, race, language, social standing, and religion.

5. The Law of Humility

“...do not be haughty, ..., do not be wise in your own estimation.” (Romans 12:16b, d).

St. Paul admonishes us not to be haughty, proud, and self-centered. He asks us not to be conceited and not to be thinking too highly of ourselves.

St. Paul also reminds us of Philippians 2:3-4: ***“Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others.”***

“Clothe yourselves with humility in your dealing with one another, for God opposes the proud but bestows favor to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5).

The law of humility requires us to be humble and never to be proud and conceited.

Conclusion:

The Bible-based laws of relationships with people around us require us to bless our enemies, to be sensitive of the feelings of others, to be in harmony and have the same regard with others, to be kind to all, and to be humble.

With the five principles of healthy relationships with others, we now have all the practical guidelines and biblical basis that, with grace from the Holy Spirit, we can faithfully obey God’s second greatest commandment of loving our neighbor as ourselves.