

KINGDOM TRAINING LEVEL 4: SIX PRINCIPLES ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS INTRODUCTION

Level 4 introduces six PRINCIPLES that help us build relationships the way God intended. Christianity exists because God wanted to have a relationship with us. Jesus came to earth to know us and so that we could know God. The greatest command focuses us on relationships: “love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, and mind,” and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39). God created the church to be a Jesus community – where we live out the “one another” commands in such a way that our love will show the world that we are his disciples (John 13:34-35). Level 1 HABIT 4, “Embracing Discipling / One Another Relationships,” introduced many of these relationship PRINCIPLES.

Wherever there are two or more people, there will be relationship issues. History, including biblical history, tells the story of broken relationships. If we are to somehow achieve unity, we will have to figure out how to love even those who disagree with us and get along with those with whom we have conflicts. As Jesus taught, we are to “love our enemies”!

This is all part of God’s plan for relationships. Every day we work on relationships that may last years, decades, even lifetimes. These relationships determine our outlook, attitude, direction, influence, and connections. This class is important because your relationships will play a primary role in determining:

- 1) Your impact on this world and the impact of your family and friends
- 2) The extent to which you (and those you influence) can be used by God
- 3) Whether or not you and your family members become disciples
- 4) How the world views the church – “by this, all men will know you are my disciples”

Building, maintaining, and cultivating relationships is the most important thing we do: First with God, second with others! The most important relationship you have is with God. Your relationship with God sets the standard for all of your other relationships. If your personal relationship with God is not healthy, right, and happy, it will affect all other relationships.

Every relationship is different. This class will focus on relationship PRINCIPLES and demonstrate how to apply them. While we can’t learn everything from a class, we can learn the basics. By examining our current relationships, we can strengthen them and create a platform that will help us be even more effective relationship builders in the future.

LEVEL 4 COURSE OVERVIEW

PRINCIPLE 1:	The Standard: Love Like Jesus Loved	Ephesians 5:2
PRINCIPLE 2:	The Commandments: One Another Religion	Hebrews 10:24-25
PRINCIPLE 3:	The Understanding: Matters of Faith & Opinion	Psalms 133:1
PRINCIPLE 4:	The Challenge: Spiritual Conflict Resolution	Ephesians 4:32
PRINCIPLE 5:	The Application: Discipling Relationships 1	Colossians 1:28
PRINCIPLE 6:	The Application: Discipling Relationships 2	Test

PRINCIPLE 1:

THE STANDARD - LOVE LIKE JESUS LOVED

Christianity is all about Jesus. Jesus is God (*John 1:1-5*). Jesus reveals God (*John 1:14,18*). Jesus set the example for us in every area, the most important being his relationships. We are called to love in the same way Jesus loved (*John 13:34-35*). When Jesus said, “*follow me*,” he called us to be like him – to imitate him. The apostles imitated him so much that it was obvious that they “*had been with Jesus*” (*Acts 4:13*). These apostles called us to follow their example as they followed Christ (*1 Corinthians 11:1*) and to “*walk in his steps*” (*1 Peter 2:21*). Let’s consider how we can take

Memory Verse: Ephesians 5:2

walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

up this calling, this standard, to love like Jesus loved.

OPENING QUESTION: *How is the love of Jesus different than the love of others?*

1. Our Standard is Jesus

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. (1 John 4:9-12)

- What does it mean to say that Jesus is our standard?
 - When God wanted us to know him and how to love, he sent Jesus.
 - Meriam-Webster defines a standard as “something established by authority, custom, or general consent as a model or example.”

2. Jesus’ Calling is “Follow Me”

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. (Matthew 4:19-20)

Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

- What does it mean to follow Jesus?
 - Jesus calls us to leave our previous life behind (our “nets”).
 - We are called to take on Jesus’ heart for people.
 - This means daily: “If it is not daily, it is not Christianity.” (Randy McKean)

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

- What does it mean to follow “in his steps”?
 - Charles M Sheldon wrote a book called “In His Steps” in 1896
 - What would happen if everyone asked the simple question, “What would Jesus do?”
 - How would that change your life?

3. The Scriptures are Interpreted Through Jesus

You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40)

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:5)

- How does this lens affect how we read the Bible?
 - The Old Testament is about Jesus!
 - What we think about people should be what Jesus would think about them.
- When you think about Jesus, what types of interactions defined his relationships?
 - Whatever Jesus did is what God would do and can be defined as “love.”
 - Love initiates; love empathizes; love goes outside of the comfort zone.

4. Jesus Redefined Love as “Agapé”

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. (1 John 3:16)

We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

- How is Agapé love different?
 - The world offers “If” love and “Because” love.
 - “If you love me, I’ll love you.”
 - “Because you love me, I will love you back.”
 - Agapé love is selfless and sacrificial – God loved us first.
 - Even when we were unlovable – *powerless, ungodly, enemies.* (Romans 5:6-10)
 - Our love (for God and for others) should not be based on our ability to love, but on our response to being loved and our desire to show God’s love to others.

5. Our Love Will Let the Whole World Know Who He Is!

This new command I give you, love one another as I have loved you. By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:34-35)

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

- What aspects of Jesus’ relationships do you want to work on?
 - Replace “love” with your name in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.
 - How will our relationships be different than people in the world?
- How will the world know we are disciples?

CHALLENGE

Thinking about how Jesus’ relationships were based on “agapé” love, analyze your relationships with family and friends and ask yourself, “what would Jesus do?” in those relationships.

PRINCIPLE 2:

THE COMMANDMENTS - ONE ANOTHER RELIGION

Jesus is the standard for our relationships. What's next? Not only are we to follow his example, but Jesus gave us many "one another" commandments to provide practical instruction on how to relate to other Christians. They are *COMMANDS*, not suggestions. Without them, we lose our testimony to the world. They paint the ideal Christian behavior and serve as our standard for how we strive to live as disciples. As we study these scriptures, let us *consider* (be intentional about) how we "*spur one another on toward love and good deeds*"!

Memory Verse: Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

OPENING QUESTION: What "one another" commands are you familiar with?

1. Romans 12 - the "One Another" Chapter

- v.1-2 – **Be fully devoted to God** – only then will you understand God's will.
- v.3-8 – **Be grace-full** – see yourself as God sees you, through the eyes of grace.
 - **Be humble** – have a sober estimate of yourself.
 - **Be unified** – we form one body where "*each member belongs to all the others.*"
 - **Be giving** – God gave us all different gifts to connect the body, we need each other!
- v.9-13 – **Be sincere** – get honest about how you are really doing in relationships
 - "*Be devoted to one another in love*" – it takes commitment and follow-through.
 - "*Honor one another above yourselves*" – we must value one another.
 - "*keep your spiritual fervor*" – don't grow weary in relationships, though it takes work!
 - "*joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer*" – pray in faith through troubles.
 - "*Share with the Lord's people who are in need*" – recognize and meet needs.
 - "*Practice hospitality*" – welcome people into your (God's) home.
- v.14-21 – **Be persistent** – work through relationship challenges with agapé love.

2. Twelve "One Another" Scriptures

- 1) **Value one another above yourself.** *Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:1-5)*
- 2) **Spur one another on to love.** *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)*
- 3) **Help each other mature in Christ.** *He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. (Colossians 1:28-29)*

- 4) **Carry each other's burdens.** Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load. (Galatians 6:1-4)
- 5) **Confess your sins to each other.** Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)
- 6) **Build each other up.** Therefore encourage one another and build each other up... acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. (1 Thessalonians 5:11-15)
- 7) **Protect each other's hearts.** See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. (Hebrews 3:12-13)
- 8) **Teach one another grace.** Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral... (Hebrews 12:14-16a)
- 9) **Accept one another.** Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you. (Romans 15:7a)
- 10) **Forgive each other.** Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you... (Ephesians 4:29-32)
- 11) **Submit to one another.** Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:21)
- 12) **Work out conflicts.** If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. (Matthew 18:15)

CONCLUSION

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

- The Golden Rule sums it up – "treat others how you want to be treated!"
- Like the Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40) "Love God... and your neighbor"

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:8-10)

PRINCIPLE 3: THE UNDERSTANDING - MATTERS OF FAITH & OPINION

It doesn't take long in a relationship for the "honeymoon" stage to end and for us to discover that we have different opinions about many things. When it comes to the Bible, we can be even more opinionated because we believe in a moral standard - there is right and wrong. However, when is a belief simply an opinion and when do we need to be unified and come to the same conviction? When are we talking about a cultural issue rather than a doctrinal issue? How do we maintain a spirit of unity and a spirit of love (remember we love "one another")? This study delves into these very difficult and sometimes controversial topics to provide PRINCIPLES that can help us to come to an understanding on matters of faith and opinion.

Memory Verse: Psalm 133:1

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!

OPENING QUESTION: *When do you think it is okay for two Christians to disagree?*

INTRODUCTION: The Battle for Unity

- *John 17:21-23* records Jesus' prayer for unity and the threat that division would come.
- *Ephesians 4:1-6* "Be completely humble... make every effort to keep the unity..."
 - Our unity is rooted in our common faith but requires effort and humility.
 - We are unified because "Jesus is Lord" and the Bible is the Word of God.
- *Romans 1-12* provides the background of how to achieve unity with God and people.
 - *Romans 12* - this "One Another Chapter" provides many keys to unity: be spiritual, be humble before God, love one another above ourselves, and submit to each other.
- *Romans 14-15:13* provides our primary text on how to work together and stay unified.

MATTERS OF OPINION

Romans 14:1-12 - The context is a discussion about matters of opinion.

- Some had a conscience issue about eating meat that may have been sacrificed to an idol and later sold to a meat market.
- Some felt a special attraction toward certain holy days from their past.
- How could this apply today?
 - Drinking alcohol; dancing; dress; materialism/possessions (houses, cars, boat); watching R-rated movies; and observing holidays (Christmas, Easter, Halloween).

Defining Terms

- **Weak conscience or faith:** they cannot participate without violating their conscience.
- **Strong conscience or faith:** they can participate without reservation.
- Remember, he is talking about matters of opinion. It doesn't give anyone license to sin!
 - **Example of a seared conscience:** "I'm strong so I can drink 10 martinis... sleep with my girlfriend... watch adult films... because it doesn't bother my conscience."
 - **NOTE:** True righteousness cannot be legislated by rules and regulations.
 - On the other hand, guidelines are often helpful (e.g., dating guidelines).

Romans 14:13-23 – Paul discusses PRINCIPLES about what causes someone to stumble.

- No room in God’s kingdom for behavior that destroys or injures the faith of another.
- Must NOT insist on exercising our liberty at the expense of another person’s faith.
- What is Christian freedom? We are NOT free to sin or to abuse our rights!

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 Concerning Food Sacrificed to Idols

“Be careful, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.”

1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1 Freedom in Christ

“I have the right to do anything” – but not everything is constructive.

- **Freedom:** never means freedom from the Lordship of Christ!
 - Never means I’m free to do whatever I want; I am free to do what Christ wants!
- **I am free** to do what is best for others instead of what is best for me.
- **I am free** to love: love is thoughtful, respectful, helpful, sacrificial, and giving.

Romans 14:23 If you are in doubt, don’t do it!

But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

WHAT ABOUT “JUDGMENT”?

Romans 14:13 *“Stop passing judgment!”*

- Remember the context: Don’t pass judgment on matters of opinion!

What if someone says to me, “don’t judge me”?

- Are Christians doing something wrong to believe in absolute right or absolute wrong?

Matthew 7:1-5 *“Do not judge...”*

What was Jesus teaching about judgment?

- Jesus condemned **disproportionate** judgment and **hypocritical** judgment.
- It’s ok to deal with the speck (a loving thing to do) once you deal with your own “log.”

John 12:48 / Hebrews 4:12 *God’s word is the judge*

What if the Bible condemns an action that is controversial?

- **Example:** Are you unloving and judgmental because you condemn homosexual sin?
 - First of all, remove the log in your eye: Do you love homosexuals as Jesus would?
 - Jesus expects us to have conviction about sinful behavior (lying, stealing, sexual immorality).
 - Keep your perspective: We are all sinners in need of the grace of God, we all need to repent of whatever specific sin we are guilty of (same for the sin of homosexual sex).

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 What about disfellowship matters?

- We are to condemn sinful acts of those *“in the church.”*
- Our actions should always be done out of love, to try to save that person’s soul.
- Separating a person from the fellowship shows they are separated from God.

NOTE: There are different uses of the same word, so you must understand the context!

- Don’t pass **judgment** on matters of opinion! Do make **judgments** on sinful acts.

The goal of this study is that we can better love each other as God wants us to love each other.

- The right understanding of love keeps us unified even though we come from such diverse cultural and religious backgrounds and experiences.

PRINCIPLE 4: THE CHALLENGE – SPIRITUAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict. Most people hate it. Some people seem prone to get into it. Sometimes two people have a propensity to get into conflict with each other. The very people that we love the most can be the same people we get into the most heated conflict. Conflicts cause serious relationship damage, even between Christians. Jesus knew that there would be disputes between believers. Paul experienced conflict with the other apostles, including Peter. The New Testament is full of teaching on how to avoid conflict and even how to resolve conflict. Let's study God's

Memory Verse: Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

PRINCIPLES for resolving conflict.

OPENING QUESTION: *What tools would you recommend for resolving conflict?*

INTRODUCTION: God's Standard for Conflict Resolution

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³²"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6:27-36)

- This is the standard God uses in His relationship with us!

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. (Galatians 5:25-26)

- We are not naturally like God. We have to work on it.
- Conflict is an opportunity to glorify God. (1 Corinthians 10:31-33)
- It is also an opportunity to grow closer to each other.

How can we use conflict to glorify God and grow closer to each other?

1. CHANGE YOUR FOCUS TO GLORIFYING GOD

James 4:1-3 "What causes fights and quarrels among you?"

- Check your motives: Why do you want what you are fighting for?
- Do not moralize your own desires. Let go of whatever it is, so you can glorify God.

Psalms 37:1-6 "Delight yourself in the Lord."

- Only God can meet all your needs. Keep your focus on him.

Colossians 3:1-4 "Set your minds on things above" - Heaven!

- Our daily times with God should keep our focus on heaven and not here on earth.

Colossians 3:5-11 "rid yourselves of... anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language"

- We can't just walk away: Once there has been a disagreement, we need to agree on a time and place to get back together and talk through our differences.

What does the Bible say we need to do when we are away from that person?

2. GET THE LOG OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE

Matthew 7:3-5 "there is a plank in your own eye"

- Rather than attack others for their wrongs, take responsibility for our contribution to the conflict.
- If you were wronged: How did you respond? Was it godly?

1 John 1:8-9 Confess your sins to God first

Think: What did I do wrong? Scriptures to help you take responsibility:

- **Respond gently.** *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)*
- **Treat them right.** *Do to others what you would have them do to you. (Matthew 7:12)*
- **Consider them first.** *In humility value others above yourselves. (Philippians 2:3-4)*
- **Overlook.** *A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense. (Proverbs 19:11)*
- **Live at peace.** *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18)*
- **Win them over, not win the fight.** *If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. (Matthew 18:15)*

3. GO AND BE RECONCILED

- **Go quickly!** Ideally should meet each other on the way. *(Matthew 5:23-25a)*
 - **Apologize** for your sin. *(Proverbs 28:13, James 5:16)*
- After you have prayed and seen your fault, you need to go back and confess your sin.
- Wait to hear a response. Allow the person to express their hurt thoroughly.
- Say the words, **"I'm sorry!" "Please forgive me"** – let them say, **"you're forgiven"**
 - Only after being forgiven for your sin, you may ask (if you have the need) if you can talk about how the other person hurt you.
 - Ask questions to draw them out, like "What did I do to cause you to react like that?"
- Say, **"I forgive you!"**

Other Scriptures: *Ephesians 4:1-3,32; Matthew 5:23-24,6:12; Mark 11:25*

- Conflict resolution should bring closure.
- God brought reconciliation for us at baptism; we did not deserve it.
- He wants us to have a closure with each other and not leave each other in the doghouse!

4. PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peace makers."

- Remind each other to stick with this conflict resolution process each time.

1 Corinthians 6:1-4 Disciples are competent to help in ways that those who are not cannot.

- Get help from those in the church when you need it.

PRINCIPLE 5: THE APPLICATION - DISCIPLING RELATIONSHIPS 1

Jesus commanded us to “make disciples... teaching them to obey everything I commanded you” (Matthew 28:18-20). Starting with “The Standard: to Love like Jesus Loved” (PRINCIPLE 1), we studied how to live out the “One Another Commandments” (PRINCIPLE 2), to help us stay unified when there are disagreements on “Matters of Faith and Opinion” (PRINCIPLE 3), and to work through conflict (PRINCIPLE 4). In fact, every Kingdom Training lesson from every Level could be used in our discipling relationships. Many of the discipling principles that will be expanded on in the next two lessons were introduced in Level 1 HABIT 4, “Embracing Discipling / One Another Relationships.”

Memory Verse: Colossians 1:28

He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.

OPENING QUESTION: *What did God intend in a discipling relationship?*

1. **FIRST THINGS FIRST: Be Discipled By God**

Luke 5:15-16 “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”

- Jesus was busy, but not too busy for God. We can’t be too busy for God!
- God is our # 1 discipling partner: go to God in prayer, read his Word... then to others.

Colossians 1:28-29 “that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.”

- “He is the one we proclaim,” God is our ultimate discipler, trainer, teacher, coach, mentor.
- Relationships with God’s people were never intended as a replacement for God; they mature us to become everything God wants us to be... to become like Jesus!

2. **GOD’S PLAN: Make Disciples Who Make Disciples**

Matthew 28:19-20 “Make disciples... baptizing them... teaching them to obey everything I commanded...”

- Our goal as disciples should always be to learn to obey everything Jesus commanded.
- Discipling relationships are Jesus’ method for helping us to “obey his commands.”
- Every Christian should have a discipling relationship to become more and more like Jesus.
- God’s plan is reproduction: disciples make disciples who make disciples.

Jesus’ Relationship Layers

John (closest – John 21:7)
The 3: Peter, James, & John
The 12 Apostles (Luke 6:13)
The 72 “Sent Out” (Luke 10)
The 500 (1 Cor. 15:6)
The Multitudes / Crowds

2 Timothy 2:2 “entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”

- ‘Entrust’ is a financial term meaning, “to set something aside that is valuable.”
- The result is multiplication: Paul → Timothy → Faithful Men → who teach others.
- Jesus spent most of his time with the few so it could multiply to help the many.
- Jesus maximized his impact by concentrating on a few.

3. DISCIPLING TRUTHS

A Working Definition of Discipling:

A committed friendship, through ongoing conversations about our lives, that helps us become more like Christ through obedience to God's Word as our standard.

Two Discipling Convictions
1. I need discipling in my life
2. Everyone needs discipling in their lives

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Eph. 4:11-16)

- **Discipling** reinforces the ministry of the word...
 - Those who are farther along in one area can help others to make progress (marriage, family, purity, Bible knowledge, helping the poor and needy, prayer, etc.).
- **Discipling** translates biblical truth into practical living...
 - Apply the Bible to life situations as they come up. Use the scriptures!
- **Discipling** develops character qualities in the lives of Christians...
 - Character development involves doing; discipling is all about doing things together.
- **Discipling** is not limited to a classroom or a set time...
 - It can occur any time, any place.
- **Discipling** is not structured...
 - It's a way of life and a way of thinking.
- **Discipling** is not a program...
 - It's done in the context of relationships, not written lessons.

4. CONCLUSION: Discipleship is God's Plan for our Continued Growth

- **Disciples are Learners – All Our Lives**
 - The Greek word for disciple is 'mathetes' - "to learn or to receive instruction."
- **Imitate Godly Examples**
 - *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)*
 - *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. (Philippians 4:9)*
- **Get Advice**
 - *Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. (Proverbs 15:22)*
 - *Plans are established by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance. (Proverbs 20:18)*
- **Build Trusted Relationships**
 - *One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)*
 - *As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. (Proverbs 27:17)*

CHALLENGE: How can your discipling relationships grow to be what God intended?

PRINCIPLE 6: THE APPLICATION - DISCIPLING RELATIONSHIPS 2

As discussed in Discipling Relationship 1, our number one discipler is GOD! We go to him for wisdom first (*James 1:2-5*). However, God has always used people – imperfect sinners – to help us grow. Just as Jesus became a man to set an example for us in how to live out Christianity, we have many things to learn from mature Christians. Jesus said it in *John 13:15*, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” Paul called the church to imitate him, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (*1 Corinthians 11:1*). Ultimately, we bear the responsibility to seek out and maintain a healthy discipling relationship. If you don’t have one today, it is time to find one!

OPENING QUESTION: *Who are you in a discipling relationship with?*

1. DISCIPLING RELATIONSHIPS ARE ONE WAY, NOT THE ONLY WAY

Review from last time: Matthew 28:18-20, Colossians 1:28-29

- 1) The name for these relationships is a matter of opinion, but the need for these relationships is *COMMANDED* in the Bible.
 - Having a discipling relationship is a matter of obedience to Jesus. (*Matthew 28:18-20*)
 - Discipling relationships serve many purposes:
 - Mature new or younger Christians
 - Help each other grow to become more like Jesus
 - Keep us tied into Jesus by providing help when we need it
 - Help people get all the way to heaven!

How will our local church live out these commands about making disciples?

- 2) The church leaders designed the church structure to facilitate discipling relationships.
 - We meet in small groups or “House Churches” to build strong relationships.
 - Discipling groups and discipleship partners come from these small groups.
 - People with healthy discipling relationships are strongly tied into the church, which is also called the body of Christ. Therefore, discipling helps bond us to Jesus.
 - 3) Different people have had different experiences with discipling.
 - Many credit their spiritual growth and maturity to discipling relationships.
 - Those with a negative experience may need more sensitivity and grace.
 - It’s a wrong reaction to throw out Jesus’ concept of discipling relationships!
- ### 2. DISCIPLING IS NOT... we can know what discipling is by knowing what it is not.
- 1) **...the only way to mature in Christ.**
 - It is one way to make disciples and live out “one another” Christian relationships!
 - Christians cannot fully mature in Christ without discipling!
 - 2) **...being fully responsible to get another person to heaven.**
 - Discipling helps individuals work out their own salvation! (*Philippians 2:12-13*)

- 3) **...an authority over you, requiring you to do what the person discipling you says.**
 - Discipling helps you obey God! The Word of God is the authority.
 - Wrestle with God and seek advice to figure out his will. (*Romans 12:2*)
- 4) **...primarily confessing sin.**
 - When I'm in sin, it is my responsibility to repent and confess. (*James 5:16*)
 - Discipling encourages you to overcome sin. (*Hebrews 3:13*)
 - A healthy relationship includes many spiritual activities but should never feel like an inquisition.
- 5) **...primarily confronting what needs to change in another person's life.**
 - Discipling is an ongoing conversation about life between two friends helping each other become more like Christ. (*Proverbs 27:17*)
 - Discipling is a way for us to walk together and see an example of Christianity to better know how to live victoriously.
 - Discipling should be full of prayer, helpful, patient, along with "encouraging, comforting and urging to live lives worthy of God." (*1 Thessalonians 2:8-13*)
- 6) **...one relationship to meet all a person's needs.**
 - Discipling empowers Christians to meet their own needs. (*Galatians 6:2-5*)
 - No person can or should try to meet all of another person's needs.
- 7) **...accountability time.**
 - It's a time to share, gain direction, gain spiritual perspective, and input.
 - It's a time to 'do' Christianity together: pray, evangelize, help poor & needy...
 - Accountability is a tool to help us achieve our goals. Be humble and get help!
 - The world understands the need for accountability (diet groups, physical trainers, alcoholics anonymous, etc.).
 - Each Christian has their own relationship with God, where "Jesus is Lord."
 - If you need accountability, ask others for help as you work on a particular area of your life to bring it under God's control.

3. PRINCIPLES FOR DISCIPLING

- 1) Set a regular time (weekly is best) and keep that appointment!
- 2) Men need other men in their lives and women need other women in their lives.
- 3) Couples (married or dating) get help from another couple with more experience.
- 4) Topics will vary, but should include:
 - Honest discussion about how things are going
 - Prayer, advice, and sharing scriptures
 - Encouragement and fun activities
 - Planning, discussing schedules
 - Outreach, dreams, struggles...

Ideas for Discipling

- Can be individual or group time
- Help each other with life's ups and downs!
- Pray together and for each other
- Read scripture, get advice, discuss insights and applications
- Be real: be honest and confess sin
- Openness breeds openness
- Be a great encourager!
- Be open to encouragement!