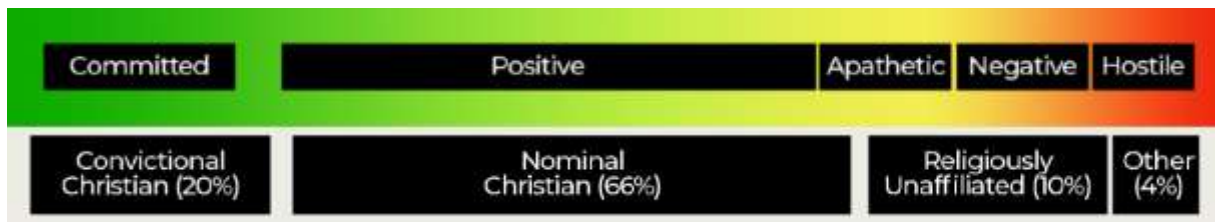
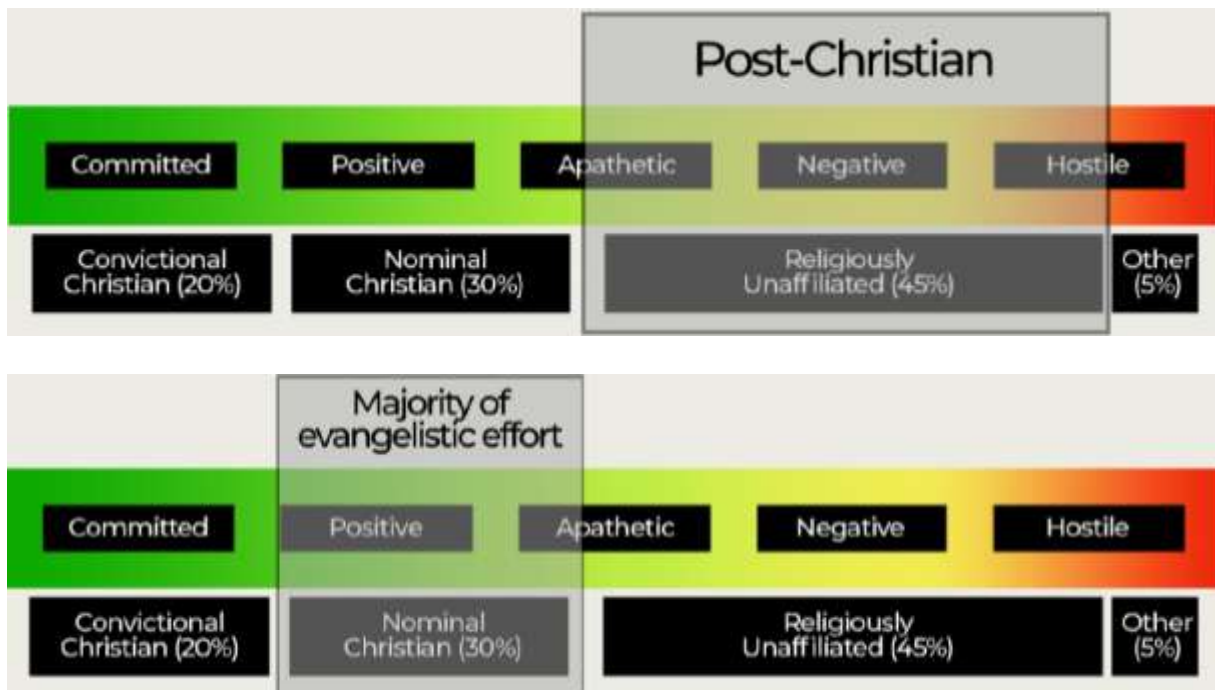


**According to the Pew Research, the fastest-growing “religious group” in America is the religiously unaffiliated.**

**\*Attitude and affiliation towards Christianity**  
USA Population in 1990



**\*Attitude and affiliation towards Christianity**  
Millennial and Gen Z Generations in the USA (2020)



\*Source: In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace. (2020, June 09).  
<https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace>

## **Christian progression**

- Convictional Christian – People who actively follow Jesus, try to align their values and lifestyle with biblical truth, and live out their faith with conviction.
- Cultural Christian – People who may have a positive view of Christianity and consider themselves to be Christian, though it tends to be more of a category for them than a lifestyle.
- Progressive Christian – People who still believe in God and identify as Christian, but have let go of many of Christianity's core beliefs. They generally no longer accept the authority of the Bible and shape their faith and view of God according to how they want to see reality.
- Post-Christian – People who have followed the natural consequences of progressive Christianity. Once Christianity has lost its connection with biblical authority and power, it is no longer effective in changing hearts and minds and responding to the brokenness and pain of life in this world.
- Non-Christian – People who may or may not have consciously rejected Christianity but don't know about it or consider it. Many young people in the U.S. fall into this category because their parents took steps away from the church, actively or passively rejecting it, and they grew up in a non-Christian home.

**To reach a post-Christian culture we need to become cross-cultural missionaries to our own people in our own cities.**

### Three key realities to engage post-Christian culture:

1. Secular people have become suspicious of **RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS** and are far less likely to walk into a church.
2. Secular people today do not have the same **ASSUMPTIONS** as previous generations.
3. Secular people are open to **SPIRITUALITY**.

### Four key influences on global youth culture:

1. **ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY** (Music, film, theater, sports)
2. **INTERNET STARS** via social media platforms.
3. **VIDEO GAMES** (is bigger than Hollywood where the average 21-year-old male has spent 10,000 hours playing video games).
4. **PORNOGRAPHY** is a pervasive and unashamedly part of many daily routines. Sexuality is just a personal pursuit of happiness; harmless.

### Philosophical pillars:

- **SECULARISM** – Faith is private and not meant to be pushed on others.
- **RELATIVISM** – There is no absolute moral truth.
- **ACCEPTANCE** – Tolerance is not enough, you must affirm.

### Four big worldview questions:

1. **ORIGIN** – Where did life come from? How did life begin?
2. **MORALITY** – What is right and wrong and who decides?
3. **PURPOSE** – What is the purpose of life?
4. **DESTINY** – What happens after we die?

### **Predominant worldview:**

**SECULAR HUMANISM** – the religion of self. The idea is that God has been replaced, man is at the center, and there's no outside authority that can tell me how to live my life. The key to happiness is found within.

### **What should our response be?**

*When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.* Nehemiah 1:4

*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.* 1 Corinthians 4:20

*...we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.* 1 Thessalonians 2:8

### Application:

1. What impacted you most from this teaching?
2. Why is it important to recognize and understand the post-Christian shift?
3. What is shaping the global youth culture? What should our response be?
4. The foundation for reaching secular culture, for reaching young people in our families, and in this world, who will not walk into a church is **desperate prayer** and a **broken heart**. Take some time to specifically pray for this now.

## **How to build relationships and friendships with secular, non-religious people**

### **Reasons why brokenness and loneliness has become an epidemic:**

- The concept of cheap sex
- Technological advancement

### **The truth:**

Secular people are looking for deep relational **CONNECTION** and **BELONGING**.

### **The cultural lie:**

To love or be in relationship with someone, I have to **AFFIRM** their lifestyle or worldview.

**Jesus demonstrated that association and relationship with “sinners” is NOT synonymous with affirming their lifestyle.**

### Tribalism:

- Us versus Them
- Tribalism is a toxic trait of modern-day culture
- Tribalism existed during Jesus' day (example: Jews and Samaritans)
- Jesus defied tribalism in a radical, counter-cultural way John 4
- Jesus offended the religious people because He spent so much time with sinners Luke 15:1-2

### The power of friendship:

- Friendship **HUMANIZES** "them"
- Friendship allows you to **DEMONSTRATE** the Gospel in actions. Philippians 2:3-4
- Friendship helps you really **UNDERSTAND** their perspective and communicate the Gospel effectively.
- Friendship allows you to **EARN** the trust to challenge their views and speak truth.

### Relevance versus holiness:

- Be **DISTINCT** and clear that you are a Jesus follower... but not obnoxious or a “Jesus robot”
- Don’t be **OFFENDED** that non-Christians act like non-Christians (language, lifestyle, philosophy, etc.)
- The **GOAL** is not to “flaunt” your moral superiority, but the **GOAL** is that we allow them to see our supernatural hope, love, joy, and peace.

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect*

1 Peter 3:15

### Adopt a missionary mindset

- Start by actively **PURSUING** people in your “Oikos,” or sphere of influence.
- Expand your “Oikos” by being **RELATIONALLY PRESENT** in secular places.
  - Hobbies
  - Causes
  - Places or events
- Ask the Holy Spirit to lead to a “person of peace” and give you **SUPERNATURAL FAVOR**.

**Principles to remember when engaging in secular places:**

**1. Relax, be yourself, and have fun**

- Be patient. Don't feel the need to make something happen.
- Have a long-term view of this.
- Don't take yourself too seriously, it's okay if it's awkward sometimes.
- Try to have fun, joy is contagious.

**2. Harness the incredible power of asking questions and listening**

- Listen, ask questions, listen.
- Do not make assumptions.
- Learn their real story.
- Really try to understand their perspective and how they came to believe what they believe.
- Remember: empathy is not the same as agreeing or affirming.

**3. Find common ground and genuine ways to affirm them.**

**Application:**

1. Explain why it's so important to understand that association and relationship with "sinners" is NOT synonymous with affirming their lifestyle.
2. Why do you think so many believers struggle with being either too holy or too relevant, when engaging lost people?
3. Ask God to highlight one person in your "Oikos" that you will actively pursue for a deeper relationship. Write down their name and begin to pray for opportunities.
4. Where (hobby, cause, place, or event) will you be relationally present in order to intentionally build new relationships with secular people? Write down your next steps.

## What is a spiritual conversation?

### Gospel conversation vs. spiritual conversation

- **Gospel conversation** – is the biblical narrative of creation, fall, and redemption that is centered around the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- **Spiritual conversation** – is presuppositional, which means that it addresses the underlying assumptions that the gospel is built on.

The purpose of a spiritual conversation is to set the foundation for the Gospel to sit on; remove intellectual barriers and move from secular to spiritual.

### Three types of conversation

- **FRIENDSHIP** conversation
- **SPIRITUAL** conversation
- **GOSPEL** conversation

## How do you start a spiritual conversation?

1. Ask the Holy Spirit for supernatural **DISCERNMENT**. 2 Corinthians 4:4
  
2. Be **WISE** about your communication and avoid certain pitfalls.
  - Personal box
  
  - Religious box
  
  - Political box
  
3. Everything has **SPIRITUAL IMPLICATIONS**.
  - Morality
  - Purpose
  - Identity
  - Love
  - Family
  - Work
  - Beauty
  - Hope
  - Dreams
  - Sickness
  - Loss

### Four things to look for during spiritual conversations

1. **IDOLS** – things they are putting their hope and identity in.
2. **FELT NEEDS** – dealing with anxiety, depression, broken relationships, etc.
3. **LIES** – things that they are believing that stand in the way of them hearing biblical truth.
4. **TRUTH** – things they are already believing or living out that is in alignment with biblical truth.

Look for ways to connect (affirm or challenge) your conversation to at least one truth of the Gospel.

### How do you appropriately engage in a spiritual conversation?

1. You are not convincing people that you're right. You are encouraging them to pursue the Truth.
2. Create an open environment where it's okay to doubt, ask hard questions, say something naïve, and process in real time.

### Have I failed if I don't share the gospel?

- *I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.*  
1 Corinthians 3:6
- You are not the hero; Jesus is!
- Respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- The goal is to move people closer to Jesus at every interaction.

**Application:**

1. What challenged you the most from this teaching? Why?
2. Explain the difference between a gospel conversation and a spiritual conversation.
3. “You are not convincing people that you’re right. You are encouraging them to pursue the Truth.” How does this perspective change your approach to those who don’t believe in Jesus?
4. How does knowing that “Everything has spiritual implications” make it easier for you to engage in spiritual conversations?
5. How will you create an open environment where it’s okay to doubt, ask hard questions, say something naïve, and process in real time?

## Introduction:

Jesus and the message of the cross is the only **HOPE** for our world.

### Expect spiritual opposition

There is nothing the enemy hates more than when you are sharing the Gospel.

Lies from the enemy:

- Who do you think you are?
- You're a fraud.
- You're a hypocrite.
- You're inadequate.
- They are not going to listen, why bother?

## Principles for sharing the Gospel:

### Rely on the **HOLY SPIRIT**, not scripts or tracts

- Don't "vomit" Gospel scripts.
- The Goal is not for you to share the Gospel. The goal is for them to hear and understand it.
- Wait for the right opportunity. Be patient. Listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

### People need to experience the **POWER** and **PRESENCE** of God

- The Gospel is not a transfer of information, it is a supernatural revelation of God.
- Ask the Holy Spirit for boldness, courage, authority, and power.

### Introducing people to the **PERSON** of **JESUS**

- We're not defending a concept of philosophy, or behavioral lifestyle.
- Who is Jesus? What do people think of when they think of Jesus? Is it accurate?
- Reframe Jesus. (Maybe through a Bible study for the non-religious)

### No **CROSS**, No **POWER**

- The message of the cross, the death and resurrection of Jesus, 1 Corinthians 1:18 is both foolishness and the power of God.
- This tension forces us to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit.
- It reminds us that it is not about our wisdom or eloquence. 1 Corinthians 2:4

**Contextualizing the Gospel for your audience:**

- Contextualization is about communicating in a language they can understand.
- It's not about popularity or compromise, it's about clarity.
- Avoid using Christian language that is foreign and strange to secular culture.
- Jesus used words and imagery that was very relevant to the audience He spoke to.

**Don't use the Bible as an argumentative authority:**

- "The Bible says," is not a compelling or effective approach for post-Christian people.
- Leverage the truth, that is experientially verifiable, taught in the Bible, not the authority of the Bible itself.

**Paul's Example:**

- |  |               |
|--|---------------|
|  | Acts 17:22-34 |
| • He compliments the Athens on their interest in the gods.                     | Acts 17:22b   |
| • He referenced an altar dedicated to an "UNKNOWN GOD."                        | Acts 17:23    |
| • He quotes one of their poets.  | Acts 17:28b   |
| • He summarizes the biblical account of creation, without referencing Genesis. | Acts 17:24-26 |
| • He calls his audience to repentance.   | Acts 17:30    |
| • He preaches the death and resurrection of Jesus                              | Acts 17:31    |
| • Response: Some rejected, some wanted to know more, and some believed.        | Acts 17:32-34 |

## Communicating the Gospel effectively in the context that God has called you to:

There is **POWER** in your story

- Practice sharing your story and the message of the cross.
  - Short and succinct (3-5 minutes)
  - Non-religious language
  - Including Jesus and the cross

Take a **RISK** and **INVITE** a response. Give people an opportunity to say **YES** or **NO** to Jesus

## Discipleship relationships:

- Doesn't start the day someone commits to a local church, but the moment they meet a follower of Christ.
- It's about doing life together, not a weekly event.
- Doesn't have to happen in a classroom or a church hall, it can happen in the context and environment people come from.
- It's intentional: we guide the relationship purposefully to see spiritual growth, making the most of every opportunity.
- Should lead to multiplication.

## Application:

1. What lies have you believed when it comes to sharing the Gospel with others?
2. Aaron challenges us to practice sharing your story and the message of the cross. Take some time to write it down and share it with a friend this week.

## Navigating politics and sexuality

### Politics

#### Fear and the **POLITICAL SAVIOR**.

- When we have a culture of fear, we see secular people as the enemy and then we adopt a zero-sum game of winning and losing.

#### Followers of Jesus should be **HOPE**-driven not **FEAR**-driven.

1 Peter 2:11  
Philippians 3:20

- Remember who the real enemy is.

Ephesians 6:12

*When He saw the crowds, He had **compassion** on them because they were **confused** and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

Matthew 9:36

#### Don't make secondary things **PRIMARY**.

#### We live in an **ACTIVIST** culture.

- Cultural hot topics:
  - Environmentalism
  - Racism/Black Lives Matter
  - LGBTQ/Sexuality
  - Feminism
  - Mental health/Suicide prevention
  - Economic injustice
- Look for opportunities to connect (affirm or challenge) and then have a conversation seeking the truth together.

## Sexuality

Recognize that beneath the mask of intense moral conviction, there's deep **CONFUSION** and **BROKENNESS**.

- At the core of the confusion is the circular statement, “love is love” (love is sex; love is lust; love is a feeling; love is whatever I want it to be).
- The core truth we can hold onto is that people desire to belong and feel accepted, but they have no idea where to find it.
- Jesus responds to confusion with compassion. And like Jesus, we need to engage this topic from a place of radical love and mercy.

Matthew 9:36

We need to approach with **EMPATHY** – understanding their reality properly.

- Many people experience same-sex attraction, gender dysphoria, or other things that are confusing as it relates to their sexuality.

We need to make a critical distinction between **TEMPTATION** and **SINFUL** action.

- Temptation is not a sin, but the action in thought or deed in response to the temptation is sin.

Hebrews 4:15

We need to approach with **LOVE** in action.

- One of the lies of our culture is that in order to love someone, we must affirm their lifestyle and behavior.
- The best way to challenge this lie is to love them in action, while not agreeing with their lifestyle and behavior.
- Being in a relationship and association with someone is not synonymous with affirming their lifestyle or behavior. It's about challenging the lie that stands in the way of them meeting Jesus.

The key spiritual apologetic assumption we're challenging is related to **PURPOSE**.

- In the secular world, meaning and purpose is self-defined.
- In the Christian worldview, we are created intentionally by God. He created our bodies, minds, and souls with a clear purpose and a way to operate them as revealed in the Bible, that will allow us to thrive spiritually, physically, emotionally, and sexually.

**How do we answer if someone insists on asking the question, "is homosexuality a sin?"**

1. Ask, "do you really want to know?"
2. If you want to understand my view on sexuality, you need to see it in context.
  - Unpack God's value and purpose for each unique life.
  - Communicate that we were created to thrive in a certain way for our good.
  - Clarify that it's not based in hate, but for our good.

**Jesus first; sexuality, behavior, and discipleship second.**

- Many have a legalistic view of Christianity; that actions and behavior have to change first.
- They don't understand that submitting sexuality and behavior is a part of discipleship and trusting that God's ways are better than my ways.
- Until they have an encounter with the living God made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection, and surrender their life to Him, and invite the Holy Spirit to live in them, none of it will make sense.

**Application:**

1. How have you prioritized winning an argument with someone, over introducing them to the person of Jesus?
2. In the past, how have you interacted with people who have different views than you on politics or sexuality? In what ways has Aaron's teaching challenged that? What will you do different next time?
3. Aaron mentioned that when Christians have a culture of fear, secular people are seen as the enemy. According to Ephesians 6:12 who is the real enemy? How did Jesus respond to the crowds in Matthew 9:36?
4. How did your perspective toward the LGBTQ+ community change, after realizing that many are struggling with confusion and brokenness?
5. What are some ways you can approach with love in action?
6. Why is it important to focus on introducing people to the person of Jesus rather than focusing on their behavior?

**Introduction:**

**Principle #1: It all begins with God**

*<sup>10</sup> The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

Proverbs 9:10

*<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

James 1:5

**Practice:**

I want God to make His **WORD** my **HANDBOOK** for relational guidelines.

I want to **FILTER** everything I read through Your Spirit.

Through Your Spirit, give me clear **DIRECTION** from Your Word.

*<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

Jeremiah 29:11

**Making God's Word your handbook for relational guidelines:**

- If you are single 1 Corinthians 7
- If you are married Ephesians 5
- If you are a parent Deuteronomy 6  
Ephesians 6
- If you are married to an unbeliever 1 Peter 3
- If you are divorced Matthew 5  
Matthew 19  
1 Corinthians 7
- If you are in a business The book of Proverbs

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why does building great relationships need to begin with an accurate understanding of God?

2. From James 1:5, what does God promise to give us if we ask Him?

Are there any conditions?

3. Why is using the Bible important to building great relationships?

4. If we neglect God's Word, is there another way to gain God's wisdom?

## Principle #2: Recognize everyone is desperately insecure

Not just some people, but **EVERYONE** is desperately insecure.

Recognizing this principle will change how you look at every single person.

- It will change how you **PROCESS** their words.
- It will change how you **RELATE** to them.
- It will change how you **THINK** about them.
- It will change how you **THINK** about yourself.

*<sup>8</sup> They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup> He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."*

Genesis 3:8-10

## The fall brought guilt and shame

### The result:

- Fear-based relationships with God and others
- A loss of security and safety – insecurity

### The action:

- Hiding to cover who we really are – our nakedness
  - Strong response – arrogance
  - Weak response – withdrawn

### How do you deal with insecurity?

1. Understand that no one has it all together.
2. Understand that everyone is hiding, pretending, or projecting to some degree.
3. When you feel uncomfortable, threatened, or afraid, simply admit and verbalize it appropriately. Refuse to “play the game.”

### Practice:

Take off your mask. **AUTHENTICITY** builds genuine relational intimacy; **HYPOCRISY** destroys it.

The very first sin recorded in the Early Church was **HYPOCRISY**.

Acts 5

### Application:

Catch yourself and **OWN IT** when you start to posture or image-cast.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why is it so important to recognize that everyone is desperately insecure?
2. When we are insecure we display either a strong or weak response. Which response do you typically demonstrate? Ask the Lord to help you be authentic and genuine with those around you.
3. In Acts 5, what was Ananias and Sapphira's consequence for hypocrisy? Why was this judgement necessary?
4. What steps can you take to "take off" the mask of insecurity?

**Review:**

**Principle #1: It all begins with God**

God has the wisdom and the skill to do relationships.

Proverbs 9:10

**Practice:**

Make God's Word your handbook for relational guidelines.

**Principle #2: Recognize everyone is desperately insecure**

Our fear-based insecurities begin at the fall of mankind.

Genesis 3

**Practice:**

Take off your mask. Authenticity builds genuine relational intimacy; hypocrisy destroys it.

**Principle #3: Everyone behaves in a way that makes sense to them**

When people act in immature, inappropriate ways, or even have patterns that appear dysfunctional and damaging, they are doing it for reasons that make sense to them.

*<sup>12</sup> There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*

Proverbs 14:12

We all have a way that seems right to us, but if it isn't in alignment with God's wisdom, it will produce tremendous conflict and the relationship will further deteriorate.



**Discussion Questions:**

1. What from this message resonated with you the most? Why?
2. Why is it so important to understand that everyone acts in a way that makes sense to them?
3. To avoid misunderstandings you must learn the “why” behind the “what.” Is there someone in your life you need to become a “student” of? If so, what steps will you take to identify what makes sense to them?
4. Think of a time when you did not think generously of someone’s behavior. What was the outcome? What could you have done differently?
5. Take time to pray and ask God to help you be in alignment with His wisdom. Ask Him for patience and love for others as you begin to recognize that everyone acts in a way that makes sense to them.

## Principle #4: You can't give away what you don't possess

If you don't like yourself, you will never be able to **LOVE** others.

### The Great Commandment:

*<sup>37</sup> And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." <sup>38</sup> This is the great and foremost commandment. <sup>39</sup> The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'*

Matthew 22:37-39

Affirmation **FEELS** a lot like love, but it is not. Affirmation is based on:

- What you do
- How you look
- What you accomplish

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; <sup>2</sup> and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*

Ephesians 5:1-2

**Two commands:**

1. "Mimic" God

Ephesians 5:1  
Ephesians 4:32

2. Walk in love just as Christ did

Ephesians 5:2

**How do you mimic God and walk in love?**

"As beloved children"

Ephesians 5:1

Until I find my significance, security, and value from my relationship with Jesus, every relationship will be a dysfunctional attempt to get **LOVE** and **ACCEPTANCE** from others through my performance, manipulation, looks, barter, or deceit.

**Practice:**

Loving others demands that you learn to know, accept, and feel God's unconditional love for you.

**1. Know:**

- God loves you apart from your performance Romans 5:8

**2. Accept:**

- You are fearfully and wonderfully made Psalm 139
- You are valuable 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

**3. Feel:**

- Pray – and ask God to make His love real in your heart.
- Worship – through praise and song to feel His love for you. Zephaniah 3:17

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the difference between affirmation and love?
2. According to Ephesians 4:32, what are some ways you can “mimic” God?
3. How can believing that you are loved by God change the way you love others?
4. Loving others demands that you learn to know, accept, and feel God’s unconditional love for you. Which of these do you struggle with the most? Ask God to help you know, accept, and feel His love.

**Principle #5: Knowing God (as He is) – is the prerequisite for loving others (as they are)**

**Premise:**

1. The goal is to love people as they are.

2. The kindness of the Lord leads to repentance.

Romans 2:4

Every culture has **FALSE VIEWS** of God that send people down religious trails that lead them away from God.

- The disciples grew up in a false system of prayer.

When Jesus prayed there was a sense of **LIFE** and **INTIMACY**.

- One of the disciples asked Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray...”

Luke 11:1

*It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."<sup>2</sup> And He said to them, "When you pray, say:*

*'Father, hallowed be Your name.*

*Your Kingdom come.*

*<sup>3</sup>'Give us each day our daily bread.*

*<sup>4</sup>'And forgive us our sins,*

*For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.*

*And lead us not into temptation."*

Luke 11:1-4

### **Overview of the Lord's Prayer:**

"Father hallowed be Your name."

- God is transcendent, but He is approachable and intimate.

"Your Kingdom come."

- Get God's agenda on the table first.

"Give us each day our daily bread."

- Pray for your specific needs.

"And forgive us our sins, [as we ourselves] forgive everyone who is indebted to us."

- Intimate prayer with the Father is always a cleansing experience.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Matthew 6:13

- Ask for God's protection.

### Story – negative example

<sup>5</sup> Then He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; <sup>6</sup> for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; <sup>7</sup> and from inside he answers and says, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ <sup>8</sup> I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

Luke 11:5-8

### Application – truth

<sup>9</sup> “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

Luke 11:9-10

### Story – positive example

<sup>11</sup> Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? <sup>12</sup> Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? <sup>13</sup> If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

Luke 11:1-13

**Definition of Prayer:** Keeping COMPANY with God.

**Practice:**

1. Bring all your needs to the “**HOW MUCH MORE**” Father who loves you.
2. Come to God in desperate **DEPENDENCY** – “I have nothing.”

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Bringing about change in a relationship is not about fixing people; it’s learning how to love them as they are. Who is God leading you to love in this way?
2. Do you see God as approachable and intimate? Why or why not?
3. Your prayer life always reveals your level of genuine dependency. What does your prayer life reveal about your dependence on God?
4. How does knowing that God is a loving Father change the way you love others?

**Principle #6: Comparison always leads to carnality**

*For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.*

2 Corinthians 10:12

**You are what you are by the grace of God**

*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.*

1 Corinthians 15:10

**Begin to say to yourself:**

I am going to break the **HABIT** of **COMPARING** myself with other people.

**Practice – Three things to help you break the habit**

1. Habitually choose to **VIEW** others the way God does. 1 Samuel 16:7

“...God sees not as man sees...”

2. Habitually choose to **EVALUATE** yourself the way God does. Psalm 139:13-18

God loves you and cares for you just the way He made you.

3. Habitually choose to **MEASURE** your performance/success by answering the following questions:

- Did I give my very best **EFFORT**? Colossians 3:23

- Who am I seeking to **IMPRESS**?

- Am I fulfilling my God **ORDAINED POTENTIAL**? Matthew 25

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Think about how many times you compared yourself to others in this past week. How will you begin to break the habit of comparing yourself with other people?
2. Paul understood he was who he was by the grace of God. What steps can you take this week to develop this kind of thinking?
3. Who are you seeking to impress? Why?
4. According to Psalm 139, what impacts you the most about the way God sees you? How can you create a habit of seeing yourself as God does?
5. Take some time to thank God for the way He's created you.

**Introduction: Observations from people-watching: one person listens and the other person talks.**

**Often, the person who talks:**

- Is very animated
- Talks about how unfair, insensitive, selfish, ungrateful, wrong someone else has been in the relationship

**Often, the person who listens:**

- Nods approvingly
- Comforts and agrees

**Principle #7: Right relationships are always more important than being right**

**Disclaimer:**

It's not about moral issues, theological issues, or condoning a behavior. It's about normal, everyday relationships with other people that you love and care about.

**The key to practicing this principle:**

*<sup>12</sup> So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. <sup>14</sup> Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. <sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*

Colossians 3:12-17

**Understand you are:**

1. **Chosen:** you are **SIGNIFICANT**
2. **Holy:** you are **ACCEPTED**
3. **Beloved:** you are **DEARLY LOVED**

### How should you treat people?

- With compassion
- With kindness
- With humility
- With gentleness
- With patience
- Bearing with one another
- Forgiving each other

### Practice:

1. Refuse to see conflict as **NEGATIVE**. Instead, embrace conflict as God's **"TUTOR"** for learning and/or loving others.
2. Be willing to **OWN** fifty percent, or more, of a problem – regardless of what you think is **FAIR**.
3. Ask yourself, "Why is it so important to be **PROVEN** right or get your way in a situation?"

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the key to practicing the principle: “right relationships are more important than being right?” Which component is hardest for you to accept? Why?
2. What is the difference between empathy and compassion?
3. Describe a time when your desire to be “right” affected a relationship you cared about. Looking back, what could you have done differently?
4. Why is it so difficult to embrace conflict as God’s “tutor” for learning and/or loving others?
5. Are you willing to own fifty percent or more of a problem in a relationship? Why?
6. What is behind the desire to prove that you are right?

## **Introduction: “Chronic-relatatitis”**

### **Definition:**

People in your relational network who act or treat you in a way that either causes inward concern or outward conflict.

## **Principle #8: The only person I can change is me**

*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

Luke 6:38

### **The relational application:**

Give away what you most want to receive in a relationship.

### Jesus' relational model

<sup>27</sup> "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. <sup>29</sup> Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. <sup>31</sup> Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.

Luke 6:27-31

**Summary:** Give the very **OPPOSITE** of what the person deserves.

<sup>32</sup> If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. <sup>34</sup> If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. <sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Luke 6:32-36

**Summary:** **LOVE** your enemies.

*<sup>39</sup> And He also spoke a parable to them: “A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? <sup>40</sup> A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. <sup>41</sup> Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>42</sup> Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.*

Luke 6:39-42

**Summary:** Deal with your own stuff **FIRST**.

*<sup>43</sup> For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. <sup>44</sup> For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. <sup>45</sup> The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.*

Luke 6:43-45

**Summary:** My **SPEECH** will reveal my **HEART**.

**Practice:**

Ask God what He wants to change in **YOU** rather than focusing on what needs to change in the other person. Then go to work on it, by His **GRACE**.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What is “chronic-relatatitis”? Who in your relational network would you say you are experiencing “chronic-relatatitis” with?
2. How do you think they would react or respond if you give them the opposite of what they deserve?
3. If your speech reveals what is in your heart, what does your speech reveal about you?
4. In Luke 6:42 Jesus mentions, “first take the log out of your own eye.” Are there any areas in your life that you need to deal with right now? What steps will you take to make these changes?