Introduction:

Principle #1: It all begins with God

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 9:10 (NIV)

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 (ESV)
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.

11 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 (NIV)
God’s Wisdom for Building Great Relationships (Part 1)

It All Begins with God
Proverbs 9:10

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.

8 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. 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 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 (NASB)
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
God’s Wisdom for Building Great Relationships

Everyone is Desperately Insecure

(Part 2)

Genesis 3

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

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.”

4. Catch yourself and own it.
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?
God’s Wisdom for Building Great Relationships (Part 3)

Everyone Acts in a Way that Makes Sense to Them

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.

12 There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Proverbs 14:12 (NASB)

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.
Practice:

1. Become a **STUDENT** of others' behavior to learn “the **WHY** behind the **WHAT**.”

2. Choose to ask: “What is the most **GENEROUS** explanation for their behavior?”
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:

37 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.’ 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’

Matthew 22:37-39 (NASB)

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

- What you do
- How you look
- What you accomplish
1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 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 (NASB)

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:**
   - Through prayer
   - Through worship  
     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.” And He said to them, “When you pray, say:

‘Father, hallowed be Your name.
Your Kingdom come.
3 ‘Give us each day our daily bread.
4 ‘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 (NASB)

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.”

- Ask for God’s protection.
Story – negative example

5 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; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; 7 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.’ 8 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 (NASB)

Application - truth

9 “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. 10 For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

Luke 11:9-10 (NASB)

Story – positive example

11 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? 12 Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? 13 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 (NASB)

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 (NASB)

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 (NASB)

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:

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 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. 17 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 (NASB)

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 (NIV)

The relational application:

Give away what you most want to receive in a relationship.
Jesus’ relational model

27 “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 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. 30 Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. 31 Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.

Luke 6:27-31 (NASB)

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

32 If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 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. 35 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. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Luke 6:32-36 (NASB)

Summary: LOVE your enemies.
39 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? 40 A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. 41 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? 42 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.

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

43 For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. 44 For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a brier bush. 45 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.

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?