

Introduction: The deep desire of your soul

Relational desire: an intimate, life-giving, character-shaping relationship that has a rugged commitment to one another.

Question:

How in the world do we have that kind of relationship?

We live in a world overwhelmed with INFORMATION, yet starved for WISDOM.

Relational Intelligence/Wisdom: The SKILL of navigating relationships WELL.

- It is NOT merely the ACQUISITION of KNOWLEDGE.
- It is the proper APPLICATION of the right KNOWLEDGE.

There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 14:12 (NIV)

The state of relationship in America

Marriage:

- There is growing pessimism in finding a love that will last a lifetime
- There are fewer and fewer people getting married
- 40-50% of marriages end in divorce

Friendship:

- We live in a socially connected time, but people are more disconnected than ever
- Americans are friendly but lonely (Barna)
- Gen Z is identified as the loneliest generation (Cigna)
- 1 out of 5 Americans have no person they can talk to

Family:

- The average family spends 37 minutes of quality time together
- The average adult spends 3 hours on social media per day
- *“Our kids are growing up experientially rich but relationally poor.”* – Andy Stanley

Dating:

- Half of all singles create a dating profile
- It is a casual, noncommittal, hookup dating culture
- The “rules” of dating are always shifting
- Gen Z and Millennials long to find a love that will last
- Only 9% of singles want to date casually

The challenge with relational intelligence

- It is **COUNTERCULTURAL**.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

- It is **COUNTERINTUITIVE**.

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will find it.

Matthew 16:24-25 (NIV)

An American relational belief:

You have the **RIGHT** to go about relationships however you desire, and still get the **RESULTS** you desire.

The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps.

Proverbs 14:15 (NIV)

Relational Intelligence:

You may have the **RIGHT** to go about relationships however you desire, but you are not free to choose the **RESULTS** you desire.

Application:

If you continue taking these steps relationally, what is the **DESTINATION**?

“We all want progress, but if you’re on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; in that case, the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive.”

C.S. Lewis

Discussion Questions:

1. What is relational intelligence? Why is it so challenging?
2. What did you learn about “relational intelligence” that was helpful to you? Explain.
3. Are the relational steps you are taking leading you to the right destination? Explain.
4. How will you specifically apply relational intelligence to your life today?

Review:

Relational desire: an intimate, life-giving, character-shaping relationship that has a rugged commitment to one another.

Relational Intelligence/Wisdom: The SKILL of navigating relationships WELL.

- It is NOT merely the acquisition of knowledge.
- It is the proper application of the right knowledge.

There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 14:12 (NIV)

The challenge with relational intelligence:

- It is COUNTERCULTURAL.
- It is COUNTERINTUITIVE.

America's relational anthem:

Follow your **HEART**.

Two underlying beliefs of “follow your heart”:

1. Your **EMOTIONS** are the best guide for making relational decisions.
 - The problem with the culture is that it has separated emotions and feelings from thinking.
2. Your **EMOTIONS** are the truest thing about you.
 - The problem is that major decisions about who you are: identity, sexuality, and the future, are based solely on feelings.

The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?

Jeremiah 17:9 (NASB)

Question:

If you don't follow your heart, what should you do instead?

The heart – according to Scripture, it is the center of a person's mind, emotions, and will. It's the seat of one's moral conscience and affection.

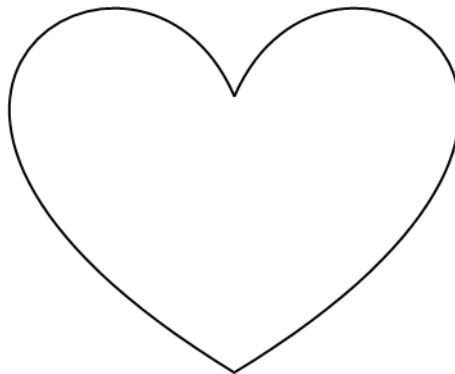
Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

Principle: All of life **FLows** from your **HEART**.

- The condition of your heart directly impacts the quality of your relationships.

The streams of influence in your life:



Relational intelligence: **GUARD** your heart to protect and govern what **FLows** from your heart.

Discussion Questions:

1. America's relational anthem states you need to follow your feelings and emotions. Why is basing your identity on your feelings and emotions an inaccurate view of yourself?
2. Share a time when you made a decision based on the idea of "follow your heart." What was the outcome?
3. According to Jeremiah 17:9, why is following your heart not wise?
4. What are your streams of influence? What does this reveal about your heart?
5. What practical steps will you take this week to guard your heart?

Review:

Relational desire: an intimate, life-giving, character-shaping relationship that has a rugged commitment to one another.

Relational Intelligence/Wisdom: The skill of navigating relationships well.

The modern love promise:

When you fall in **LOVE** then everything will fall into **PLACE**.

- Find the right person → fall in love → live happily ever after

Reverse engineering the love promise:

If everything doesn't fall into place then you fall out of love.

- If everything is not working out right then you must have married the wrong person.

Questions: If love is all you need, then why isn't love more resilient?
Why is love so fickle?

The definition of love in our culture:

Love [noun] – a feeling of strong or constant affection for a person; an attraction that includes sexual desire; the strong affection felt by people who have a romantic relationship; a person you love in a romantic way. - Webster

Questions: How do you have a love that is resilient? How do you experience a love that can withstand the storms of life?

The four loves:

- **STORGE** – Familial love, a natural or instinctual affection
- **EROS** – Physical or sexual love, a deep feeling of attraction or sexual desire
- **PHILEO** – Friendship or companionship love, a close association or affection
- **AGAPE** – Unconditional sacrificial love, a love marked by giving not getting

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV)

- Love is a **VERB**.
- Love is a **CHOICE**.
- Love is NOT being a **DOORMAT** or a **DICTATOR**.

Relational intelligence:

It's less about **FALLING** in love and more about **GROWING** in love.

Question:

How do you grow in love?

Increasing your love quotient:

¹Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ²and 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.

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NIV)

1. Embrace that you are **DEARLY LOVED**.

Agapētos – the object of one's affection, having a very special relationship; beloved.

2. Commit to living a **LIFE** of **LOVE**.

Agape – the self-giving, sacrificial love that gives the other what they need the most, when they deserve it the least.

3. Rely on Christ's love to **EMPOWER** you.

Agapaō – “the unconditional love of Jesus in us, that is flowing through us to be a force of transformation around us.” – Efrim Smith

Application:

Love asks: What is the **HIGHEST** and **BEST** for the other person?

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe the faults of the modern love promise.
2. Why is it important to recognize and distinguish the different types of love? What steps do you need to take to establish agape love as the foundation of your relationships?
3. How do you increase your love quotient? Which of the three forms of agape are you struggling with the most?
4. Agape love gives the other person what they need the most, when they deserve it the least. What are some practical ways you can choose to love in this way?

Introduction: How are followers of Jesus to go about relationships in a sexually confusing world?

America's sexual ethic:

My **BODY**, my **RULES**.

You are a sexual being with cravings, appetites and desires. You have the right to fulfill that appetite with whomever you wish, however you wish, and whenever you wish as long as it is consensual.

“Like all powerful lies, it is based on a truth—sex in itself is “normal” and “healthy.” The lie consists in the suggestion that any sexual act to which you are tempted at the moment is also healthy and normal.”

- C.S. Lewis

If it's just physical...

...why is there so much shame for those who have been sexually abused?

...why is it that sexually active teens are three times more likely to be depressed than those who abstain?

Sex and sexuality has shifted from a physical expression of love and intimacy to that of experiencing personal fulfillment.

The result:

A society **SATURATED** with sex and yet **STARVING** for intimacy.

The root issue:

Compartmentalized **SEXUALITY** and **SPIRITUALITY**.

You are more than your sexuality. Your identity in Jesus Christ is the most important thing about you.

Sexuality and spirituality

1 Corinthians 6:12-14; 18-20

- The right to do whatever you **WANT** doesn't make whatever you want **RIGHT**.

"I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial.

1 Corinthians 6:12a (NIV)

- **SELF-CONTROL** not **SELF-INDULGENCE** is a mark of freedom.

"I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both."

1 Corinthians 6:12b-13a (NIV)

- **ALL** of you, not just **PART** of you, is meant for God.

The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By His power God raised the Lord from the dead, and He will raise us also.

1 Corinthians 6:13b-14 (NIV)

"The sexual confusion so prevalent in our world and in our own hearts is simply the human desire for heaven gone berserk."

- Christopher West

- Sex is **MORE** than just about **SEX**.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.

1 Corinthians 6:18 (NIV)

"Sex is a God-invented way to say to another person, 'I belong completely & exclusively & permanently to you.'"

- Tim Keller

- Your **BODY** is the temple of **GOD**.

¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)

Relational intelligence:

It has never been just physical. So, I will **HONOR** God with my **BODY**.

Application:

Singles – You are not **INCOMPLETE**

Dating – Refuse to **SETTLE**

- Dating guidelines: The "bikini" rule, the "h-factor", nothing good happens after midnight, "Joe's secret weapon".

Married – **WATER** your own grass.

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways has the idea of “my body, my rules” affected your view on sexuality?
2. Why is it important to view sexuality and spirituality together and not as separate concepts?
3. Based on 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, why is sexual sin dishonoring to God?
4. How will you honor God with your body?

Review:

There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 14:12 (NIV)

The modern relational vision:

My HAPPINESS is most IMPORTANT.

- The PURPOSE of relationships is PERSONAL happiness.
- When I get _____, then I'll be happy.
(fill in)
- "Do what MAKES you happy."
- If I'm UNHAPPY, something must be WRONG.

The problem of “happily ever after”:

“It is the very pursuit of happiness that thwarts happiness.”

- Dr. Viktor Frankl

1. It tells us **DIFFICULT** is bad.
2. It leaves us **DISSATISFIED** relationally.

“The empty self is filled up with consumer goods, calories, experiences, politicians, romantic partners, and empathetic therapists... [The empty self] experiences a significant absence of community, tradition, and shared meaning... a lack of personal conviction and worth, and it embodies the absences as a chronic, undifferentiated, emotional hunger.”

- Philip Cushman

3. It creates a **DISILLUSIONMENT**.

“If happiness is having an internal feeling of fun or pleasurable satisfaction, and if it is our main goal, where will we place our focus all day long? The focus will be on us, and the result will be a culture of self-absorbed individuals who can’t live for something larger than we are. As parents, we will then view our children as a means to our own happiness. Marriage, work, and even God Himself will exist as a means to making us happy. The entire universe will revolve around our internal pleasure—me!”

- JP Moreland; Klaus Issler [Lost Virtue of Happiness]

The law of happiness:

¹ Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, ² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on His law, day and night. ³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 1:1-3 (NIV)

Relational intelligence:

Happiness is a **BY-PRODUCT** of a well lived life not a **DESTINATION** in life.

“You can’t get a second thing by putting them first; you can get a second thing only by putting first things first.”
- C.S. Lewis

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:33 (NIV)

Application:

- Choose to be a **GIVER** not just a **TAKER**.

¹ Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Philippians 2:1-4 (NIV)

- Choose **GRATEFULNESS** instead of **GRIPING**.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV)

- Choose **CONTENTMENT** over **COMPARISON**.

¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Philippians 4:11-12 (NIV)

Discussion Questions:

1. Why should your happiness not be the main focus? What is the outcome of this misdirected focus?
2. Have you ever felt like God was holding out on you? Explain. How does viewing God as your loving Father change your perspective on His law?
3. In light of Psalm 1:1-3, what is the outcome of delighting in God's law? What steps can you take to delight in God's law daily?
4. Of the three application points, which do you need God to help you with the most? Spend some time today in prayer asking God to help you with this.