

Cultivating Connection

A biblical approach to relationship challenges

led by Mary Lowman

November 12, 2024

Introduction

God never intended for us to do life solo. We desperately need connections and that need goes back to the Garden of Eden:

Genesis 2:18: *The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*

In your own life—your world—do you see that lack of connection with others and broken relationships are more common than usual? If so, what do you see as the causes?

Cultivating Connection with God

However, before we can address the issues we may have with others, we need to make certain that we have established and continue to grow our connection with the Eternal God. Growing in grace and becoming more like Jesus is the journey God intends for every true believer, but that doesn't just happen. Why not? The Apostle Paul identified it for us so clearly:

Romans 7:21 - 25

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

There are two people in us, and each of those "people" have their own identities.

The new identity is: I no longer live but Christ lives in me. I am the one Jesus loves. I am loved by God and nothing or no one can take me out of his hand. I have the righteousness of Jesus.

The old identity is: I have a right to be who I want to be. I need good self-image. I must have self-confidence. I can do whatever I want to do. I am woman; hear me roar!

Which one wins? Which one controls you? The one you feed. You have to starve one and feed the other.

Paul gives us the answer to this split personality dilemma.

Romans 8:1 – 5, 9 -11

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. . .

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the

body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

How to Walk According to the Spirit

There are certain disciplines of the Christian life that cannot be ignored if you want to walk according to the Spirit. What are some of those?

Paul said the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in those who walk *not* according to the flesh. Your old person will still want some of those things you do when you walk according to the flesh. Believe me, if you're born again, walking in the flesh will be miserable for you and everyone around you.

Investing your life in others

This begins with learning and re-learning that we are called to be a servant.

1 Corinthians 6:19 – 20: *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; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.*

Ephesians 2:10: *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Mark 9:35: *Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all."*

Our Responsibility to Others

Let's make certain that we are aware of what God requires of us and ask God to help us to shore up the weak areas in our lives, in our personalities.

Hebrews 10:24 – 25: *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

How can you stir others to love and good works?

- **You "bear with one another"**

Ephesians 4:1 - 2: *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.*

We've been called to be humble, gentle, patient, and bear with one another. What does that look like?

Do you "bear with" people who are slow to learn?
Do you "bear with" people who don't care what you think?
Do you "bear with" people who just don't suit you?
Do you "bear with" people who seem to always mess up their lives?
Do you "bear with" people who have disabilities of some kind?

- **You seek to put others first.**

Philippians 2:3 – 4: *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

Name ways you can put someone in your family first. A coworker. A stranger in a store.

- **You speak truth in love.**

Ephesians 4:15: *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.*

Ephesians 4:29: *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.*

How to speak the truth in love when you must tell someone they did something wrong?

How to speak the truth in love when you must deny a request because it would be wrong?

- **You strive for restoration of relationships**

2 Corinthians 13:11: *Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.*

Romans 14:19: *Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*

- **You seek to build others up**

Romans 15:2: *Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.*

1 Thessalonians 5:11: *Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*

- **You help those who are often overlooked**

1 Thessalonians 5:14: *And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.*

Can you see how walking according to the Spirit, knowing and obeying God's Word, could have a positive effect on all your relationships?