

Lesson 4: Building Relationships in which God's Work Will Thrive

Primary Objectives:

1. Do a 3-minute review of main ideas covered in class so far.
2. Lay the groundwork for building relationships in which God's work will thrive.
3. Examine and assess the practical import of the 4 elements of love identified by Paul Tripp.

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Lesson 1:

Lesson 2:

Lesson 3:

2. Lay the groundwork for building relationships in which God's work will thrive.

2.1. Write a list of some common types of relationships people enter into. Compare the differences that characterize these relationships and why people enter into them.

1. Business relationship

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

2.2. Underline the two purposes given in the passage below for why God sent his Son into the world.

Galatians 4:4–5: But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

2.3. Compare the two terms below. What would each entail and/or be characterized by?

Redemptive Relationship:

Adoptive Relationship:

2.4. Given that God has established a relationship with his people that is redemptive and adoptive in nature, describe how that might inform the way you build relationships with others in which God's work will thrive.

3. Examine and assess the practical import of the 4 elements of love identified by Paul Tripp.

3.1. Review the four elements of love listed below, focusing on the first word in each. Share your initial impression about what these words indicate a loving relationship entails.

1. Enter a person's world
2. Incarnate the love of Christ
3. Identify with suffering
4. Accept with an agenda

3.2. Develop a practical approach to "Enter a person's world."

3.2.1. Examine how Paul Tripp describes "entry gates" that move us from casual relationship to life-changing ministry relationships. Make sure the distinction is clear to you for what an entry gate is and is not.

He states an **entry gate IS NOT:**

A problem a person wants to talk about.

A situation or circumstance in their life.

Another person or a problem in a relationship.

Rather, an **entry gate IS** a person's experience of the situation, problem, or relationship. It is the way in which a person is struggling with the problem. (It might be fear, anger, guilt, anxiety, hopelessness, aloneness, envy, discouragement, desires for vengeance, etc.)

3.2.2. Consider the following example and identify what the entry gate IS and IS NOT:

A woman has been married for fifteen years and has three children. She awakens one morning to find that her husband is gone. In a note, he announces that he has left the marriage. He has fallen in love with someone else, taken his clothes, emptied the bank account, and hired a lawyer. She calls you on the phone...

3.2.3. State how this distinction between what is and is not an entry gate might be helpful in moving from casual relationships to life-changing ones?

List some practical ways you might determine what an entry gate is for a person in a particular situation.

3.3. Envision what it looks like to “incarnate the love of Christ.”

3.3.1. Study the following passage. In relation to our ambassadorial role, determine what the last verse indicates about why our conduct and not just our words are important for building relationships in which God’s work will thrive.

Colossians 3:9-13, 17: “Seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.... ¹² Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.... ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

3.3.2. It has become increasingly acceptable in some circles to emphasize competence over character, results over reputation. Can you identify some risks and drawbacks to that approach, especially as it relates to influencing others to change?

3.4. Reflect on the importance of how we “identify with suffering.”

3.4.1. List some things that are common to the experience of every human being.

3.4.2. Summarize what the following passages indicate about the role of suffering in how we relate to others. State why you think people who are suffering are helped by others who have experienced the same.

Hebrews 2:18: For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 4:15: For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

2 Corinthians 1:3–4: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

3.4.3. Create a few points of strategy for how you would “identify with the suffering” of another person. What are some practical things you could do to communicate that?

3.5. Evaluate the relational concept of “accept with an agenda.”

3.5.1. What is your assessment of the notion of “unconditional acceptance”? Is this a biblical concept? State your reasons.

3.5.2. Consider the following statements by Paul Tripp based in part on Titus 2:11-14. Decide if it is right and/or constructive to speak of having an agenda for change in a relationship?

- “The amazing grace that causes Christ to accept us into his family is not a grace that says we are okay”
- “Change is God’s agenda in order that we would become partakers of his divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).”

Titus 2:11–14: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

3.5.3. Imagine a conversation where you want to communicate that you hope God will use you to bring about change in their lives. How would you express that in a way that the person felt both accepted and challenged to grow?