

# GIVING GOD CONTROL OF RELATIONSHIPS

Living for Christ requires having the kind of faith in God that gives Him control over every aspect of your life (Proverbs 3:5-7). One element of giving God control of your life is giving Him control over your relationships. This lesson will focus on some basics about what this should look like.

## MATTHEW 22:36-40

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These two commands touch every relationship you can have (with both God and other people). Furthermore, all the other commands God gives concerning these relationships will flow from this love He prescribes. The Greek word used designates a deep, self-giving, and sacrificial love that acts in the best interest of the one being loved. Foremost, you must love God in this way (with all your being). To do this involves sacrificially keeping His commands without them being burdensome (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3). This love for God must be greater than your love for anyone else (Luke 14:26; Matthew 10:34-39)! Then, you are taught to love your neighbor as yourself. Your neighbor, as defined by Jesus, is anyone you have the opportunity to show love toward – even a stranger (Luke 10:25-37) or an enemy (Matthew 5:43-48)! To love others in this sacrificial way involves doing what is best for them even when it costs you deeply (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 1 John 3:16-18).

## MATTHEW 7:12

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There are many standards people use to determine how to conduct themselves toward other people. Some live by the “Iron Rule,” which teaches to treat others however you are able to treat them by force. Some live by the “Brass Rule,” which teaches to get revenge and treat people how you have been treated. Some live by the “Silver Rule,” which teaches to do nothing that would harm anyone

else. However, Jesus teaches people to live by this “Golden Rule,” which teaches to treat other people in the way you want to be treated (Philippians 2:3-4)! Living according to this rule will radically transform every relationship you have! Furthermore, this rule will impact every aspect of how you treat others (i.e. speech, judgments, service, forgiveness, conduct). So, while God has a lot to say relative to human relationships, simply applying the “Golden Rule” to every relationship and situation will go a long way!

## 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18

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Those who are Christians and have fellowship with God cannot be in fellowship with what is opposed to God. This principle applies to your relationships, as you must not yoke yourself together with one who is not pursuing the ways of Christ. So, you must carefully guard your relationships so that you do not find yourself partnered to someone who is traveling in a direction that will then pull you away from serving Christ (Proverbs 1:10-19; 1 Corinthians 15:33). While this does not mean that you cannot have any interactions or friendly relationships with unbelievers (Matthew 9:9-13; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13), it does mean you must not join others in doing wrong and must be careful as to who you join your life together with (i.e. marriage)!

## COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1

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This passage demonstrates that God gives relationship-specific instructions. First, wives are given the responsibility to submit (yield) themselves to their husbands (also see Acts 5:29; Ephesians 5:22-24, 33; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-6). Second, husbands are given the responsibility to love their wives sacrificially and not to be bitter (exasperated, irritated, harsh) toward their wives (also see Ephesians 5:25-33; 1 Peter 3:7; 1 Timothy 5:8). Third, children are given the responsibility of obeying their parents in everything (also see Acts 5:29; Proverbs 1:8-9; Ephesians 6:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:4-8). Fourth, fathers (though mothers also have roles, Titus 2:3-5) are given the responsibility of not exasperating (provoking) their children to

discourage them (Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6; 13:24; 23:13-14; Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Fifth, slaves are given the responsibility of obeying their human masters and working diligently as they would work for the Lord (Ephesians 6:5-8; 1 Peter 2:18-25; applications can be made to employees). Sixth, masters are given the responsibility to deal with their slaves in righteous and fair ways recognizing Jesus as their Master (Ephesians 6:9; applications can be made to employers).

## ROMANS 12:9-21

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This passage covers a lot of territory regarding God's expectations for dealing with other human relationships. Notice primarily that the love God expects you to demonstrate must be genuine (without hypocrisy, pretending). This includes the relationship between Christian brothers and sisters. These are to be shown honor and you are to serve them and demonstrate genuine concern for their wellbeing (physically and spiritually, 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20). Then, you must live in a peace-seeking way with everyone, as much as it is within your ability to control. Therefore, you must not be the source of conflict, division, and evil within a relationship. Sometimes this will require you to repent and seek reconciliation with others (Matthew 5:23-26). This means that you should never avenge yourself and repay anyone with evil when they do you wrong. Instead, this requires you to accept the wrong that is done to you (Matthew 5:38-42; 1 Corinthians 6:7). You must even be willing to do good to those who harm you so that good can be conquered by evil (Matthew 5:43-48)!

## CONCLUSION

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Giving God control of your relationships will impact every relationship in your life. While many of the things God teaches concerning these relationships run contrary to the common wisdom of the world, letting God mold your relationships in these ways is the only way to glorify Him through those relationships. Therefore, you must humble yourself to accept and obey these and all of God's instructions about your relationships.

## DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

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How will love lead you to fulfilling all the responsibilities of your relationships?

What should your love for God look like?

What should your love for your neighbor look like?

How do the iron, brass, silver, and golden rules compare?

How will applying the "golden rule" impact your relationships?

Why is it important not to yoke yourself together with unbelievers?

What are some relationships God specifically addresses and some responsibilities given concerning them?

How does God expect you to seek peace and treat those who do evil to you?