



# Watch It!

**HOW TO HAVE GOOD  
RELATIONSHIPS!!**

**Biblical Principles for Life and Service**

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An old saying reminds us that “no man is an island”. We are continually in contact with other people –in our homes, schools, places of work, churches and in our recreation. If you are a Christian you need to ensure that, as far as possible, you have good relationships. A problem or breakdown in your relationship with another person can be disastrous for you and for the other person. It can disturb your peace, harm your health, affect your testimony and hinder your Christian service.

## **THREE LEVELS OF RELATIONSHIPS**

You have two main levels of relationships which you need to watch, guard and control:- your horizontal relationship with friends, family members, co-workers and fellow-students and your vertical relationship with those to whom you are responsible. Many also have a third level of relationship with those who are (vertically) responsible to them. And Satan tries to sow and nurture the seeds of dissension at all three of these levels.

## **BE WATCHFUL!**

You need to be watchful at all times – especially in three important areas. You need to **WATCH YOUR ATTITUDES** to others. You need to **WATCH YOUR WORDS** to and about others. You need to **WATCH YOUR REACTIONS** when someone says or does something unpleasant to you. Be watchful and vigilant at all times!!.

## WATCH YOUR ATTITUDES

Good relationships are based on good attitudes. Your attitude towards another person is how you think and feel about that person. What you say or do outwardly to him (or her) will largely depend on your inward attitude to him. If your attitude is wrong your relationship will soon suffer and be wrong. So you need to work on, and develop, at least four kinds of attitudes to others.

### 1. A LOVING ATTITUDE TO ALL

This is clearly outlined in 1 Corinthians 13. You will endeavour to see the good things in others and not just the bad things. You will try not to be irritated by their actions and attitudes which could upset you. You will make it your goal to think of their needs and problems and how you can help them. Care and love can solve many problems-before they become problems!

### 2. A UNSELFISH ATTITUDE TO OTHERS

It is so easy to be selfish and self-centred in thought and action. But God wants you to be unselfish and not always to be thinking of yourself, your needs and your interests. It is important to study the unselfish life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, and then follow His example of unselfishness as you live and work with others (John 13v14,15). He wants us to *“look out not only for our own interests but also for the interests of others”* (Philippians 2v4).

### 3. A QUIET ATTITUDE TO OPPOSITION AND CRITICISM

This is perhaps the most difficult attitude to develop. When people hurt you, criticise you, oppose you or say harsh things to you or about you, you should not react and retaliate in a non-Christian way. The Lord Jesus, when He was insulted and abused, did not retaliate. He was quiet towards His persecutors and left the results in His Father's Hands; and the Word of God exhorts you to follow His example (1 Peter 2v21-23).

### 4. A SUBMISSIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS AUTHORITY

Everyone is responsible to someone. You live or work under the leadership of others - your parents, teacher, pastor, Mission Board or the forces of law and order. The Bible teaches you to be submissive to them provided their decisions are not morally or ethically wrong (Hebrews 13v7 and Romans 13v1-6). Submission is a difficult concept for many in to-day's world, but it should be recognised and followed by Christians at all times.

Our Christian attitudes should be the opposite of worldly attitudes.

THE WORLD'S ATTITUDES		THE CHRISTIAN'S ATTITUDES
Indifference	← →	Love
Selfishness	← →	Unselfishness
Retaliation	← →	Quietness
Rebellion	← →	Submission

As you examine these two sets of attitudes, the challenge to you is – **“Are my attitudes Christian or are they worldly?”**

## WATCH YOUR WORDS

In almost every broken relationship the tongue plays a vital and crucial role. We therefore need especially to watch our words—what we say to each other (and also what we say about each other). Words can wound and we often hurt each other too much by saying things we never should have said. Criticism, sarcasm, ill-advised humour, and even a wrong tone of voice can cause great harm – and sever a relationship. And the problem is that, once words have been spoken, they cannot be withdrawn.

Consequently the Bible teaches us, over and over again, that we need to control our tongues and watch our words.

The Lord Jesus often spoke about the tongue and how we should use it to bless and do good (Matt 5 v 44, 45). He even tells us that our words show our resemblance (or lack of it) to God.

Paul tells us always to speak gracefully to each other (Col 4v6), and to be gentle and avoid fighting and quarrelling (2 Tim 2v24). James writes in chapter three that our tongues can either destroy or delight and that we should always be “*slow to speak*” (1v19). He even tells us that the control of our tongues is a measure of our spiritual maturity (3v2).

You may be asking –“How can I control my tongue and ensure that I don't use words which will hurt and harm—and break my relationship with others?”

## YOU CAN CONTROL YOUR TONGUE

On the one hand, the Bible teaches that “*no man can tame the tongue*” (James 3v8). But James also writes that the Christian should keep a tight rein on (or control of) his tongue (James 1v26). How can these two statements be reconciled?

If you are driving a car and you want to control it and bring it to a halt, what should you do?

- You do not have the power to stop it. But the brakes do! You do not have the power to control your tongue. But God does. His power is “the brake”. So you need to ask God to give you the power and strength to control your tongue (and also to help you develop the right attitudes). You could pray David’s prayer “*Set a guard O Lord over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips*” (Psalm 141v3).
- But the brake will not stop the car on its own. Your foot has its part to play. So, while God gives you the power, you have a responsibility to think, wait, pray and, if needed, keep your mouth closed. You could echo David’s vow “*I will guard my ways lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle*” (Psalm 39v1).

## GOD’S POWER + YOUR DESIRE AND DISCIPLINE = CONTROL

Above all, remember that your tongue can **BLESS** and **HELP** other people with words of encouragement and appreciation. It can be a “*well of life*” which will provide blessing and life to those who are needy and thirsty (Proverbs 10v11a).

## WATCH YOUR REACTIONS

Many of the problems in relationships are not caused by actions (what you do) but by reactions (what you do in response to others). The problem is that we often react quickly without thinking or praying. There may have been times when you said something you should not have said. If you had waited before responding, you would not have reacted the way you did. You wanted to take it back, but you couldn't. You hurt the person concerned and you also hurt yourself and your testimony. So...

- **BE SLOW** in your reactions. "*Be slow to speak, slow to wrath (become angry)*" (James 1v19). Quick reactions are often wrong.
- **BE GENTLE** in your reactions. "*A soft (gentle) answer turns away wrath*" (Proverbs 15v1). A smile can be an excellent reaction.
- **BLESS** the person involved instead of retaliating. If you do this, Peter writes that you yourself will be blessed. (1 Peter 3v9).
- **COMMIT** the matter to God as the Lord Jesus did (1 Peter 2v 21-24). Let God handle it. He will do it better than you could.

## DON'T DESPAIR

As you examine your attitudes, your words and your reactions—you will probably remember times when you have failed to control them. It would be easy to become very despondent and discouraged. **But the biblical pattern for the Christian LIFE is GROWTH** (1 Peter 2v2). Be patient. It always takes time to learn.

## **YOU CAN RESOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS**

No matter how advanced you are in your growth process, you may find yourself with a relationship problem. It needs to be resolved in a biblical way. There are three kinds of relationship problems which might occur:-

- **YOU HAVE DONE WRONG TO SOMEONE AND YOU ARE CONVICTED ABOUT IT.** Firstly, confess your sin to God (1 John 1v9). Secondly, go to the one you have wronged, confess it to him and ask for his forgiveness (Matt 5v23,24). Thirdly, if others were involved, they should know about your confession.
- **YOU ARE SURE THAT SOMEONE HAS DONE WRONG TO YOU.** First of all, go to him and speak with him about what he has said or done (Matt 18v15-17). Point out that his action was wrong and explain why. But do so gently and with the right attitude. If he sees his mistake and expresses his regrets, the situation is resolved and you can both be reconciled. If not, you should bring one or two mutual friends with you and try again. Their presence and/or contribution should help. If not, the last step is to inform your pastor concerning the situation. You have done all you can to resolve the problem.
- **YOU FEEL SOMETHING IS WRONG BUT DON'T KNOW WHY.** You should go to him and tell him how you feel. You can both then examine the situation and see if there is a problem to be resolved. **YOU ARE NOW WALKING IN THE LIGHT (1 JOHN 1v7) AND THAT ALWAYS REBUILDS RELATIONSHIPS AND DEVELOPS FELLOWSHIP.**