

## Introduction

We live in a day where we have more information and technology available than at any time in history. Yet, despite all this knowledge, our relational skills have digressed to the point where we are a broken society. The family structure has deteriorated. The majority of marriages end up in divorce. Seventy percent of the children today grow up in a broken family. We are in desperate need of training and help with our relationships. This includes our relationships in our families, in our neighborhoods, and in our work places.

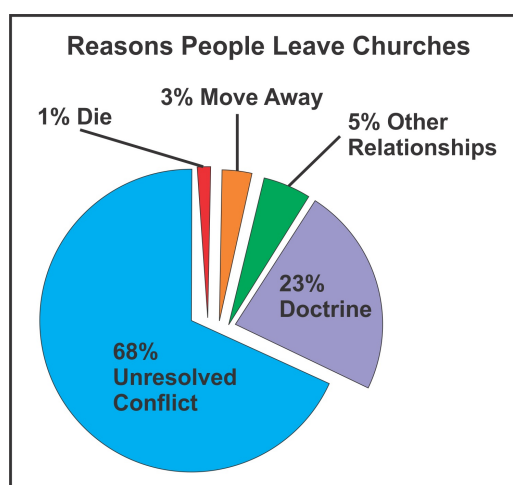
When I was the General Manager of a design firm in Atlanta, one of the Project Managers was having a rough time with his neighbor. Steve had spent twenty-two years with the British Navy as a Ship Administrator. He was gifted administratively, and was a good worker. After retiring, he joined our company, and we became friends.

Steve had a problem with his neighbor, and in particular, his neighbor's dog. The dog would use the bathroom on Steve's lawn, or garden as he called it. And, the neighbor did not clean up after his dog. So, every day Steve would have to clean up after his neighbor's dog. Steve got more and more aggravated and angry about it. Steve began scooping up the mess and putting it on his neighbor's front porch. Things between Steve and his neighbor continued to deteriorate. One day Steve came in and told me that he had sold his house. Moving away from his neighbor was the only solution that he could come up with.

Most people do not know how to go to their neighbors and work out their differences. Confrontation and conflict are not what we like to engage in. In fact, most of us do whatever we can to avoid confrontation and conflict. Most of us will move to a new neighborhood or to a new church rather than deal with confrontation and conflict.

Statistically, the church is not handle things much differently than Steve. Here are the statistics about why people leave a church:

- 1% die
- 3% move out of the area.
- 5% move due to relational ties
- 23% move due to doctrinal differences
- 68% move due to unresolved relational conflict



Last year when I began praying and looking at conferences to schedule for 2012, I seriously considered a conference on conflict resolution. If we are going to effectively minister to people, we must be skillful in handling relational problems. Jesus said, "blessed are the peacemakers, for theirs is the kingdom of God." You and I are called to be peacemakers. Therefore it is important for us to be skillful in our relational skills.

As Bill Lotgering and I prayed about the various message series for 2012, this series on Healthy Relationships was one of the things that the Lord spoke to us about. In this series, we will be covering the following messages:

## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

Healthy Relationships # 1, Trust, March 4, 2012  
Healthy Relationships # 2, Love, March 11, 2012  
Healthy Relationships # 3, Honor, March 18, 2012  
Healthy Relationships # 4, Communication Part 1 (Listening), March 25, 2012  
Healthy Relationships # 5, Communication Part 2 (Gracious Words), April 1, 2012  
Healthy Relationships # 6, Forgiveness, April 8, 2012  
Healthy Relationships # 7, Commitment, April 15, 2012

Today we will discussing trust. Without trust, it is impossible to develop or maintain a meaningful relationship. Without trust, it is impossible to have a healthy marriage. Without trust, it is impossible to have a healthy work relationship. Without trust, it is impossible to effectively minister to people. Trust is one of the keys to successful relationships. Therefore, we are going to start with trust. Specifically, we are going to look at three things that affect trust: **Reputation, Consistent Behavior, and Words of Truth.**

### 1. Reputation

When the Apostle Paul became a Christian, nobody wanted to be around him. Everybody thought that he was coming in to find out who the Christians were so that he could have them arrested and put to death. Paul was the young man that held the cloaks of the people that stoned Stephen. That event signaled the beginning of a massive persecution against the church. Historians tell us that more than 2,000 Christians were martyred at that time. And right in the middle of all the persecution was this young, zealous man named Paul.

(Acts 7:58-60) "And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. {59} And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!.... {8:1} And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.... {8:3} But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison."

In Acts 9, we find that Paul was still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. He was looking for anyone belonging to the Way, and imprisoning them and/or killing them. Therefore, Paul built a terrible reputation among the Christian community. People were fearful of him, and did whatever they could to stay away from him. Paul was not a man to be trusted.

(Acts 9:1-2) "Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, {2} and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.""

We find in our text that the Lord appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and asked him why he was persecuting the Lord. The Lord blinded Paul, and he had a conversion experience. At the same time, the Lord spoke to a man named Ananias, and told him to go find Paul and lay hands on him so that he could regain his sight. Ananias answers, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man,

## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem, and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Thy name.” Paul had a really bad reputation, and he was not a man that Ananias trusted.

(Acts 9:3-4) "And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; {4} and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?""

(Acts 9:10-17) "Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Behold, here am I, Lord." {11} And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, {12} and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight." {13} But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem; {14} and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Thy name." {15} But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; {16} for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." {17} And Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.""

After Paul is baptized in the Spirit, he began speaking out boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus. The Jews were greatly troubled by this and tried to kill him. The disciples helped him escape, and Paul went to Jerusalem. We pick up the account in Acts 9:26. Paul tried to associate with the disciples in Jerusalem; and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. The people did not trust Paul. They only knew of Paul’s old reputation; they had not seen evidence of a changed life. Paul had not yet earned their trust. Paul had not established a new reputation.

(Acts 9:26) "And when he had come to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple."

We learn from this account one very important principle. Trust is earned. A person’s behavior must match his words. Without a proven track record to support your testimony, there is no trust. If Paul had not gained such a bad reputation, if he was an unknown person that had come to Christ, people would have been more open to extending trust to him. People want to trust one another. But, when there have been breaches of trust, people are not as open to extending trust to a person. That trust must be earned by consistent, appropriate behavior.

It is easy to forgive someone. I do not believe that the church was bitter at Paul. I do not believe the disciples in Jerusalem had unforgiveness towards Paul; they simply did not trust him. Many people struggle with separating forgiveness with trust.

Having worked with many people who were struggling with drug addictions, I have had to deal with this issue on numerous occasions. One man that had been struggling with Cocaine for eighteen years had a two-year old son. The wife left him in charge of their child while she ran some errands. When she came home, the man was in the basement all strung out with Cocaine. Nobody was watching

## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

their son. He had shirked his responsibilities as a father and a husband. I counseled the woman to forgive her husband, but that she was not to leave her son with her husband until he could be trusted again. Forgiveness did not mean that she could leave her two-year old with her husband the next week. Paul was no different than this man that I just told you about. He had done much harm to the saints in Jerusalem, and they needed to see evidence of a changed life before they could extend trust to him.

When nobody in Jerusalem trusted Paul, Barnabas came along and took hold of Paul. He brought him before the apostles and testified about Paul's changed life. Barnabas was aware of Paul's new reputation. Barnabas was a reputable and trusted man in Jerusalem. When Barnabas vouched for Paul's credibility, people were then willing to extend trust to Paul. Then, Paul was able to move about freely in Jerusalem.

(Acts 9:27-28) "But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. {28} And he was with them moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord."

We need to be like Barnabas. We need to learn to give people a chance to prove their trustworthiness. Many times we want to hold on to a person's past and keep them imprisoned by their past. We are a work in progress. God is not done with me. God is not done with you. He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it.

(Philippians 1:6) "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

## **2. Consistent Behavior**

A good reputation is established through positive, consistent behavior or actions. In Proverbs 31, we find the characteristics of an excellent wife. Solomon tells us that "her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life." Her husband trusts her because her actions were good. She did good things and not evil. Her actions were consistently good, and so she developed an excellent reputation.

(Proverbs 31:10-12) "An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. {11} The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. {12} She does him good and not evil All the days of her life."

This husband trusts her with all his heart because she does him good and not harm. She has a track record; it says that she does him good all the days of her life. There are no inconsistencies. She is always doing him good and not evil. She has a good reputation.

What if she had done him wrong? What if she had slandered him at ladies' meetings? What if she had exposed his weaknesses at prayer meetings? What if she had done him evil? She would be no different than Paul. She would have to earn that trust with good behavior.

## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

Inconsistent behavior and actions do not yield trust. Inconsistent behavior yields just the opposite – a lack of trust. People do not know whether Jekyll or Hyde will show up. They do not know if the new you or the old you will show up. People need to see consistent behavior or actions before they will extend trust to a person.

would like to take a look at a man whose actions caused Paul to lose trust in him. This man did not have a bad reputation; but his actions showed a lack of consistency or faithfulness, which caused Paul to not trust the man. This man's name was John, or John Mark. In Colossians 4:10, Paul identifies John Mark as Barnabas' cousin.

(Colossians 4:10) "Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him);"

We find this young man accompanying Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey. Paul and Barnabas had just returned from Jerusalem. In Acts 11:27-30, Luke tells us that some prophets had prophesied that there was going to be a famine all over the world. Therefore, the church at Antioch took a collection for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. They sent the money with Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem.

(Acts 11:27-30) "Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. {28} And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. {29} And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. {30} And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders."

Then, in Acts 12:25, Barnabas and Paul have returned from Jerusalem. They brought Barnabas' cousin John Mark with them. They were discipling him, and preparing him to accompany them on their missionary journeys.

(Acts 12:25) "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark."

In Acts 13, the Holy Spirit tells the elders at Antioch that He is sending out Barnabas and Paul. Paul had a call to plant churches and bring the gospel to the Gentiles. And now, the Holy Spirit tells them that the time to fulfill that call is now. So, they pack their bags and set out on their first missionary journey. In Acts 13:5, we find that they brought along John as their helper.

(Acts 13:5) "And when they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper."

A few verses later we find that John left the team when they left Paphos to go to Perga. John went back to Jerusalem, where Paul and Barnabas had picked him up before returning to Antioch. John may have missed his friends. John may have had a special young lady in Jerusalem that he was missing. We do not know why John left, only that he left them. Ministry is hard work, and he may not have been ready or prepared to lay his life down. It may have been that he was a little scared.

## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

In Paphos, they had a power encounter with a magician, and the magician was blinded. It might have been the ministry that scared him. It may have been any of a number of reasons; but John left them.

(Acts 13:12-13) "Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord. {13} Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John left them and returned to Jerusalem."

In Acts 15: 37-41, Luke writes about the second journey they were planning to take. Barnabas wants to take John Mark with him again. He says that Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphilia. The word desert is much stronger than just leaving them. It implies that they were counting on John to help them and that he had team responsibilities that he abandoned when he left them. John did not have a bad reputation. He had done something that caused Paul to doubt his faithfulness. When our lives have inconsistent actions in them, people will have a difficult time trusting us. John had breached Paul's trust. Paul was not willing to put him into a position of responsibility again. Paul did not trust John Mark.

(Acts 15:37-38) "And Barnabas was desirous of taking John, called Mark, along with them also. {38} But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work."

Luke records that there was such a sharp disagreement over John Mark that Paul and Barnabas split up and went their own separate ways. Barnabas took Mark with him and they sailed to Cyprus. Paul took Silas and went through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches.

(Acts 15:39-41) "And there arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. {40} But Paul chose Silas and departed, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. {41} And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches."

Barnabas was the one that took Paul's hand and gave him a chance in Jerusalem. Barnabas is also the one that was taking John Mark's hand and was giving him a chance to prove to be trustworthy. When people are not trustworthy, instead of writing them off, we need to have the same attitude as Barnabas. We need to help people become trustworthy. We need to teach people to be faithful. When people learn to be faithful, they will be trustworthy.

In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul identifies Apollos and himself as servants of Christ. He goes on to say that it is required of stewards to be found trustworthy. The King James says that they are ministers of Christ, and that as stewards, they need to be found faithful. If we are going to be faithful husbands, we need to be found faithful and trustworthy. If we are going to be excellent wives, we need to be found faithful and trustworthy. If we are going to be outstanding employees, we need to be found faithful and trustworthy. If we are going to minister to people in the East Mountains, we need to be faithful and trustworthy.

(1 Corinthians 4:1-2 NASB) "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. {2} In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy."

## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

(1 Corinthians 4:1-2 KJV) "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. {2} Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

At this point in time, John Mark is not a faithful and trustworthy minister of the gospel. There were inconsistencies in his life. But, God is not finished with him yet. God has prepared good works for us to do. He had prepared good works for John to do. John just needed to be mentored and to be taught to be faithful. Barnabas was willing to be that mentor for John. Barnabas knew that God had begun a good work in John and that He was going to complete it. Barnabas was willing to do whatever it took to help John become a faithful servant of Christ, even if it meant separating from Paul.

(Ephesians 2:10) "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

(Philippians 1:6) "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

We find two more accounts of John Mark. In 2 Timothy 4:11, Paul writes that only Luke is with him at the time. He asks Timothy to pick up Mark and bring him when he comes, because he is useful to me for service. It is quite obvious that Barnabas had done a great job mentoring John Mark. It is obvious that John Mark had become a faithful minister. Paul obviously trusts John now and states that he is useful to me for service.

(2 Timothy 4:11) "Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service."

This is the same Paul that also wrote two chapters earlier that Timothy was to work with faithful men. Paul believed in using faithful men. Paul believed in using men who would not desert them and who could be counted upon. Paul believed in using men who were trustworthy. In Philemon 1:23-24, Paul gives us a list of his fellow workers who are with him. He lists Mark as one of these traveling companions. Therefore, we know that John Mark had become such a man. He was working with Paul, and Paul considered him very useful.

(2 Timothy 2:2) "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."

(Philemon 1:23-24) "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, {24} as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers."

How do we teach people to be faithful or trustworthy people? In Luke's gospel, Jesus gives three principles of faithfulness.

(Luke 16:10-12) ""He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. {11} "If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you? {12} "And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who

## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

will give you that which is your own?"

### **A. We must be faithful in little things.**

If someone will not be faithful in little things, he will not be faithful with many things. Stewards need to be diligent and faithful in little things. A lot of people throw away pennies. Not me. I pick every penny up that I find. Pennies are the small things. If you cannot be faithful with pennies, who will entrust dollars to you. I roll my pennies and every so often I trade them in at the bank for dollars.

There are lots of little things that we can learn to be faithful in. We can learn to faithfully show up on time for appointments. We can learn to faithfully make our beds, or pick up after ourselves. We can learn to send thank you notes. We can learn to thank people for doing things for us. I try to thank Karen every meal for preparing it for me. These seemingly small gestures are very important to God and to others.

We can learn to faithfully serve as a greeter, or in the helps ministry. It may be serving faithfully on the Media Team. The Media Team is not in front of people getting recognition. The only time you really notice the Media Team is when something goes wrong with the overhead or with the sound system. A couple weeks ago the computer froze up in worship. People wonder what is wrong with the Media Team. There is nothing wrong with them; the computer just decided to freeze. They don't get much recognition. But God recognizes them. God appreciates their faithful service. It may be something behind the scenes, and seemingly small, but it is important to God and to this church. We have to learn to be faithful with small things before God trusts us to do bigger things.

This also is an important principle in discipleship. When you are working with a John Mark, teaching him to be faithful, you have to give him small assignments. You also have to have more checkpoints and accountability to make sure that John is faithfully carrying out his duties. We have to help John succeed. We have to make sure that John does all the little things that are required to be successful. As John becomes faithful with smaller tasks and assignments, you can give him increased responsibility. That is how you train someone to be faithful.

Many times someone lets us down with a responsibility given to them. The person was not a mature and faithful person, and should not have been given the responsibility. We decide not to use the person any longer. We need to be like Barnabas, and take John Mark with us a second time. We need to work with John Mark and help him become faithful with the small things. Then, we can give John more responsibility as he grows in his faithfulness. He is earning our trust and respect through his increased faithfulness.

### **B. We must be faithful with money.**

Jesus said that if we cannot be trusted with unrighteous mammon, how can we be entrusted with true spiritual things. One of the requirements to being in leadership is to be faithful in tithing. If we cannot be faithful in our use of money, the Lord said that He cannot entrust true riches to us. As we are faithful with our tithes and offerings on our current income, God can increase our seed for sowing and entrust us with more income.



## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

2 Cor 9:10 "Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;"

In the church today, we are asking God for true riches. We are asking God for a mighty move of the Holy Spirit. We are asking Him for signs and wonders and miracles. But according to George Barna and other statisticians, the average giving by church members is 2.5 %. Why should God pour out true riches when we are not faithfully using our mammon? He would be violating His own principles to give us signs and wonders while we are being unfaithful. We need to repent of this so that God can begin to pour out His Spirit on mankind and we can see revival breaking out. It is imperative that we get this right.

### **C. We must be faithful with that which belongs to another.**

If we will not take care of that which belongs to others, what reason does the Lord have for believing that we will take care of our own. We joke about renters and how they tear things up. There are not many renters who leave a property better than they find it. A Christian should always leave the property looking as good as he found it? Why? Because of the principle of being faithful with that which belongs to another.

This principle is used in raising up leadership in the church. If someone is not faithful in the vision of the church, why should leadership raise the person up in his own church or work. People need to faithfully serve another's vision so that God can raise them up at the proper time. There are many talented individuals with lots of potential, but there aren't many faithful people. I would much rather choose someone with less talent and gifting, but who has tremendous character and is faithful. He will impact the kingdom far greater in the long run.

Prov 20:6 (KJV) "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?"

### **3. Words of Truth**

In the book of Jeremiah, the Lord says that everyone should be on guard against his neighbor. He tells them not to trust any brother. Why? Because every brother deals craftily, and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer. Everyone is deceiving his neighbor and not speaking truth. The behavior of God's people was not matching up with God's character. When you and I do not live speak words of truth, there can be no trust.

(Jeremiah 9:4-8) ""Let everyone be on guard against his neighbor, And do not trust any brother; Because every brother deals craftily, And every neighbor goes about as a slanderer. {5} "And everyone deceives his neighbor, And does not speak the truth, They have taught their tongue to speak lies; They weary themselves committing iniquity. {6} "Your dwelling is in the midst of deceit; Through deceit they refuse to know Me," declares the LORD. {7} Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, I will refine them and assay them; For what else can I do, because of the daughter of My people? {8} "Their tongue is a deadly arrow; It speaks deceit; With his mouth one speaks peace to his neighbor, But inwardly he sets an ambush for him."

## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

The emphasis in this passage about trust is on why people could not trust one another. Let's take a look at the various things that the Lord points out.

- Deals craftily
- Slanders his neighbor
- Deceives his neighbor
- Does not speak truth
- Taught their tongue to speak lies.
- Committing iniquity
- Dwelling in deceit

The thrust of this passage is a lack of truth and honesty with one another. Because there was no truth, there could be no truth. The Hebrew word for truth is *emeth*, which means certainty, trustworthiness, or truth. When someone said something, the other person did not know for certainty that what was said was true. Without honesty and truth, there is no grounds for trust in a relationship.

H571. 'emeth, eh'-meth; contr. from H539 (*aman*); stability; fig. certainty, truth, trustworthiness:--assured (-ly), establishment, faithful, right, sure, true (-ly, -th), verity.

In the book of Ephesians, Paul writes that we are members of one another. Because we are members of one another, we must lay aside falsehood and speak truth (*aletheou*) to one another. Without truth in a relationship, we cannot trust one another. We cannot be members of one another without truth. We must lay aside falsehood if we are going to be members of one another.

(Ephesians 4:24-25) "and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. {25} Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH, EACH ONE of you, WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another."

The Greek word for truth is *aletheuo*, which comes from *alethes*. The "a" is a negative prefix meaning without or not, and the second word means concealed. The word literally means nothing concealed or hidden. It means that the whole truth has been shared. Things have not been left out to give a different impression.

G226. *aletheuo*, al-ayth-yoo'-o; from G227; to be true (in doctrine and profession):--speak (tell) the truth. [G227. *alethes*, al-ay-thace'; from G1 (as a neg. particle) and G2990; true (as not concealing):--true, truly, truth.]

Many years ago we were living in Atlanta. Chad was not born yet. We only had nine of our own children at that time. We also had two foster children living with us. With eleven children in the house, we were a sizable group. I think that our grocery bill alone was over \$1,500.00 a month. We did not have cable TV and other expenses; we had large grocery bills.

One day Karen made a delicious meat loaf dinner. The kids had it in their mind that they did not like meat loaf. They really did not give it a try. Frugal Dad did not want to waste all that good ground meat, and so I put it in a pan, broke it up and mixed it with taco seasoning. My daughter Amy came in just before dinner and asked me a very straightforward question. "Did you use the meatloaf to

## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

make this taco meat?"

I knew in that moment if I said yes, the taco dinner was going to be wasted. I knew in that moment that they would not give it a fair trial. In that dark moment, I lied to Amy. My intentions were good, but I did not speak words of truth. The truth could not be hidden or concealed. It was readily apparent that this was not the normal taco meat flavor. Dad was banned from cooking any more meals. Dad lost the trust of his children that day. It was a dark moment that I have regretted for many years. To this day, my older children remember and laugh about how Dad tried to deceitfully get his children to eat those meatloaf tacos.

If we want people to trust us, there cannot be any deceit or deception. We must tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We must be straightforward with people.

Sometimes situations come up that catch us off guard. We must still speak truth. I tell my secretaries never to lie. There is no such thing as a white lie; it is just a lie. When someone calls and asks for me, they are not allowed to tell the person that I am in a meeting unless I am in a meeting. They cannot tell them that I am not there. There are lots of ways to screen the call truthfully. I have a very large work load, and stay extremely busy. They can tell them that I am busy at the moment, but that they would be glad to give me a message for them. Sometimes, a little thought beforehand is all that is needed.

When I was the General Manager of a Design Firm in Atlanta, a Sheriff pulled up to our office one day. The owner saw him from his office, and told me to go tell him that he was not there. I went out to the front desk and simply asked if I could help him. He asked for the owner, and I simply responded by asking if there was something I could do to help him. He said he had something to deliver to the owner, so I said I would give it to the owner. The Sheriff handed it to me and left. I did not have to lie. We need to find ways to say things truthfully.

Another area of deception is a little bit like a white lie. The intentions are good, but it is still deception. Scripture tells us to believe that we have received what we ask for. That is faith. So, some people are believing God for something, but it has not happened yet. They may have a head ache, but they are believing God for healing. When someone asks about how they are doing, they say they are healed. The truth is that they are believing God to be healed, but at present they are still in lots of pain. There is no truth or authenticity in what they are saying.

(Mark 11:24) ""Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you."

One day Jesus and his disciples came to Bethsaida. A blind man was brought to Jesus and they entreated Him to touch the blind man. Jesus spit into his eyes, and laid hands upon him. Then, Jesus asked him if he saw anything. The man did not respond that he was healed and could see perfectly. The man was honest with Jesus. He said, "I see men like trees, walking about." This prompted Jesus to lay His hands on his eyes and pray again. This time, the man was restored and began to see everything clearly.

(Mark 8:22-25) "And they came^ to Bethsaida. And they brought^ a blind man to Him, and entreated^ Him to touch him. {23} And taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him

## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes, and laying His hands upon him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" {24} And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I am seeing them like trees, walking about." {25} Then again He laid His hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly."

When someone has a headache, back ache, or any other kind of need, it would be far better to tell you that they are suffering. If someone tells me they are healed, I won't bother praying for them. If they tell me they are believing God to be healed, but it has not happened yet, I will usually stop and pray right then for them. I will usually ask them if the condition has changed. If it has not changed, I pray again. I may pray differently. I may stop and ask the Lord for direction before praying for the person again, but I will pray again.

If you are believing God for a new job great. But, don't tell people you got a new job, unless you have a new job. If you are believing God for a new house, don't tell people that you got a new house unless you have a new house. If you are like me and believing God to be debt free, don't tell people you are debt free unless you have paid off all your loans and are debt free. It is great to believe God for things. I can give you lots of testimonies of great and mighty things that God has done that I have believed and trusted him to do for me. Believing God for something does not give us the right to lie about our present condition. We must be truthful. We must not deceive, mislead, misrepresent, or conceal facts. If we are not truthful, we will lack authenticity. We will lack credibility. And, people will not trust us. For us to have trusting relationships, we must learn to speak words of truth with one another.

When the Lord gave instructions about marriage, He said, for this reason a man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. I believe that naked implies more than physical. There was nothing hidden or concealed between them. There was complete openness and transparency. If a wife feels that her husband is keeping things from her, she will not trust him. If the husband feels that his wife is concealing things, he will not trust her. There must be open and honest communication in order for there to be trust.

(Genesis 2:24-25) "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. {25} And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

I served as an associate pastor at a church. I learned a lot from the Senior Pastor. But, I never trusted the man. I always felt like he was withholding information. I never felt that he was sharing openly. When you do not feel that there is openness and transparency, trust in the relationship is hampered. At one elder meeting, the Senior Pastor asked us for our counsel about a matter, which we gave. There was not mixed counsel; we all gave the same counsel. At church a few weeks later, the Senior Pastor announced to the church that he was doing something, and that he had sought the counsel of the elders about the matter, and they were in agreement about it. Well, I was at the meeting, and the counsel given was 100% opposite of what he shared with the congregation. Whatever lack of trust I had earlier for the man was confirmed and reinforced that morning. I could no longer serve under that man. Without honesty, there is no trust.

One of the many reasons that we can trust God is that He is righteous. His words and His actions

## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

are consistent with one another. Notice what Moses says about God in Numbers 23:19. He says, “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” God always does what He says He will do. He can always be trusted to do what He says He will do.

(Numbers 23:19) ""God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

Bill mentioned a few weeks ago that we have sixty-six bags of seed. We can trust in His promises, because God is trustworthy. He always does what He says He will do. That also applies for you and I. If we are going to establish trusting relationships, we have to be people of our word. When we tell someone we will do something, we must mean it. One of the reasons that I am a stickler about starting the service on time and ending on time, is that I want us to be people of our word.

### **Conclusion**

In the passage in Jeremiah, notice what God says that He will do for His people. He was going to refine them and assay them. He says, “for what else can I do?” In order for there to be trust among His people, they needed to be purified. God’s people needed to repent and have a change in their behavior if trust was going to be restored.

(Jeremiah 9:7-8) ""Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, I will refine them and assay them; For what else can I do, because of the daughter of My people? {8} "Their tongue is a deadly arrow; It speaks deceit; With his mouth one speaks peace to his neighbor, But inwardly he sets an ambush for him."

When there has been a breach in a relationship, and trust has been destroyed, we have to have a change of behavior. People have to see a new Paul, one that is trustworthy. People have to see a new wife, one that does her husband no evil and only good all of his days. When we tell someone that we are sorry, we have to mean it. We have to change our behavior to reflect the words that we are speaking. We have to earn that trust.

God wants us to have healthy relationships. Healthy relationships require trust. For us to have trust, we must speak truth. We must be consistent and faithful in our actions and behavior. And, if we are faithful people, we will develop a good reputation, and people will trust us.

This morning, allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you. How is your relationship with your co-workers? How is your relationship with your spouse? How is your relationship with your children? Do the people in your life trust you. Have you been inconsistent in your behavior? Have you been faithful? Have you been truthful with others, or have you concealed things? Have you been deceptive and made meatloaf tacos? Have you been open and transparent with people?

God wants to refine and assay His people. God wants a pure and spotless bride. He wants the East Mountain Vineyard to be a people with strong and healthy relationships, and it starts with trust.

This morning, if you need to repent, ask God to forgive you. If you need to confess your sins to

## Healthy Relationships # 1 – Three Keys To Trusting Relationships

someone else, do that. James tells us to confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. If you need someone to pray with you, we will have some of the leaders up front that will be glad to pray with you. Let's start working on a new reputation today.

(James 5:16) "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

### Introduction

- Without trust, it is impossible to have a healthy \_\_\_\_\_.

#### 1. Reputation (Acts 7:58-60, 9:1-4, 10-17, 26-28)

- Christians did not \_\_\_\_\_ Paul because of his bad reputation.
- Forgiveness is given freely, but trust is \_\_\_\_\_.
- People need to be given opportunities to \_\_\_\_\_ their trustworthiness. (Phil 1:6)

#### 2. Consistent Behavior

- A good \_\_\_\_\_ is established through consistent behavior or actions. (Pr 31:10-12)
- \_\_\_\_\_ behavior and actions do not yield trust.
- John Mark's action caused Paul to \_\_\_\_\_ him. (Col 4:10, Ac 11:27-30, 12:25, 13:5, 12-13, 15:37-41)
- Barnabas helped John Mark to become a \_\_\_\_\_ and useful man. (1 Cor 4:1-2, Eph 2:10, Phil 1:6, 2 Tim 4:11, 2 Tim 2:2, Philemon 1:23-24)
- Faithful people are faithful in \_\_\_\_\_ . (Luke 16:10)
- Faithful people are faithful with \_\_\_\_\_ . (Luke 16:11, 2 Cor 9:10)
- Faithful people are faithful with that which \_\_\_\_\_ to others. (Luke 16:12, Pr 20:6)

#### 3. Words of Truth (Jeremiah 9:4-8)

- Truth (Emeth, H571) means \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
- To be members with one another we must \_\_\_\_\_ . (Eph 4:24-25)
- Truth (Aletheuo, G226) means nothing \_\_\_\_\_.
- If we want people to trust us, there cannot be any \_\_\_\_\_ in what we say. (Mark 11:24, 8:22-25)
- For people to trust us, we must be \_\_\_\_\_ . (Gen 2:24-25)
- We can always trust God, because He \_\_\_\_\_ what He says. (Num 23:19)

### Conclusion

- Regaining trust involves \_\_\_\_\_ . (Jeremiah 9:7-8)
- People need to see a \_\_\_\_\_ in behavior.

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