

The Relationship Series: Week 2 Devotions

In week 2 of the Relationship Series we explored the relationships with ourselves.

Day One

Read:

30 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'[a] 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'[b] There is no commandment greater than these." [Mark 12:30 - 31]

Explore:

The single period in our lives is the most important phase of our life and should be treasured the most. It's during this season that God gets to work on you, and helps you become whole within him, because you're not focused on anyone yet.

During your single time, you get to know yourself better and truly love yourself, embracing your insecurities.

It took God putting my life on pause, for 2 complete years (and there was literally nothing I could do about it) for me to actually stop and get to know who I am. I had to learn to be confident in who I am and I got to fix the things (well some of them) that I did not like about myself. That time was important, because had I gone forward with the way I was living, I would have gotten lost within the crowds.

These days it's so hard to find time to reflect on your day, and see how you are doing mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. We get so busy with work, school, family and social media, so much so that we forget to have some 'me-time'.

Not being able to have me-time is unhealthy because you begin to lose yourself in other people's lives and that eventually leaves you feeling empty,.

Take the time to reflect, each day –be it 30 minutes or an hour... And get to know who you are and what your purpose on this planet is. It might sound crazy, but a little crazy never hurt anyone. Especially if it's for your own good.

Day Two

Read:

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32 NIV

Explore:

I've been known to hold on to past hurts. I can still name the different people who hurt me years ago, even though they probably don't remember me at all.

In elementary school when I told my class I wanted to be an actress, one boy said the closest I would come to being an actress would be playing a stunt dog for Lassie.

I had two choices: let it go or live under the burden that will come from holding onto that hurt. Unforgiveness is an ugly bitterness that festers inside us. And often, when you have hurt and bitterness buried deep inside you, it consumes you and is ultimately what comes out of your mouth toward others.

Forgiving people who have hurt you isn't saying it didn't happen or that it doesn't matter or that it's ok. It also doesn't mean assuming guilt or shame for something we didn't do and didn't cause. Forgiving others is an act of kindness toward yourself so you can heal and move on.

Some people can forgive everyone who ever hurt them, but they struggle with forgiving themselves. That's not what God intended. If God says our sin is in the bottom of the ocean, we shouldn't wear it every day like a cloak.

Regardless of the source of your hurt - inflicted on yourself or from others - forgiveness helps us step away from circumstances that weigh us down and step into what God has for us. I refuse to live under the labels spoken over me, and so should you.

I believe you can actually stonewall a future that God has planned for you because you're so distracted by what is in the past. If you allow unforgiveness to identify who you are, it can easily turn into something that keeps you from moving forward.

Did I go on to be a famous actress? No. But that's not what God intended for me. If I'd held onto that hurt and tried to prove him wrong by chasing after an acting career, I might not be leading Changed Women's Ministries today and seeing women's lives changed by sharing God's truth.

Don't miss God's purpose for you because you can't forgive. Understand that what you've done or what was done to you doesn't define you. Choose to live in freedom, ready for God to reveal His purpose for your life to you.

Day Three

Read:

I think deep down we all have the desire to belong and be accepted.

I played flute in high school and was actually pretty talented. I was chosen to be first chair in the flute section of band my freshman year.

I believe I had a gift.

However, at my school, being in the band was not popular. Kids would actually call us names and make fun of us. One of the names they called us was a derogatory term: "Band Fags."

Basically, I was bullied because I had the gift of music.

I had a gift that I believe God gave me; however, I felt so much pressure and desperately wanted to fit in with my peers that I ended up quitting band after my freshman year. To this day it brings tears to my eyes thinking about the missed opportunities and all I gave up simply because I wanted to belong.

I had so much God-given potential, but I allowed the rejection of others to impact the course of my life.

I hid.

I shrunk back.

It reminds me of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14–30. The person who had been given one talent said, “I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground” (Matt. 25:25).

I think so many times the same thing happens with us: we are afraid and so we hide.

We might be afraid of rejection. We might fear becoming an outcast. We might fear failure.

I believe each one of us has been given gifts from God.

My theme verse for my business is Matthew 5:14–16, which says,

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Why must we let our light shine?

We let our light shine so that everyone will praise our heavenly Father.

It is not about being self-centered or prideful. It is about giving God the glory and the praise He deserves from the gifts He has given us.

Some days we feel we are not enough. Other days we feel like we are too much.

However, I want to encourage each one of you today to be willing to give your gifts to God anew. Find your acceptance in the One who created you. You are loved.

You are not defined by the opinions of others.

You are not defined by your past mistakes.

You are not defined by your successes or failures.

In Christ:

You are enough.

You are valuable and loved.

You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Be willing to step out of the shadows. Even if you still feel rejected. Even if you have made many mistakes. Even if you still doubt God's love.

You have been hiding long enough.

It is time to let your light shine!

Day Four

Read:

Growing up, I was really good at hiding my brokenness. I thought that if people knew who I really was on the inside, they would reject me.

As a result, I felt a deep ache and an emptiness that nothing seemed to fill. No matter what I did, the ache would not go away.

Eventually, God gave me an illustration of my life – I was a broken cup.

Several tragedies in my life that represented cracks in my cup and the brokenness that came into my life. However, instead of bringing my broken cup, my pain and brokenness, to God for healing, I was trying to deal with it myself.

And so the illustration is this: I was trying to fill my broken cup with water from several sources to fill the emptiness I felt inside. But no matter what I did, it did not satisfy because my “cup” was equipped to hold only one kind of water, the living water of Jesus. The kind of water I tried to fill it with would simply drain out over time. So although I would feel temporary satisfaction, it never lasted.

I sensed God saying to me, “Shelley, you have committed two sins: you have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and no matter what you do, you will never be satisfied apart from me. I want you to come to my spring of living water that never runs dry.” (paraphrase from Jeremiah 2:13)

I am sure some of you have felt the same way.

I walked through a season in my life when God asked me to surrender my brokenness, my broken cup, to Him for healing. It was a painful season as I began to face some deep wounds from my past. However, over time, as I surrendered my broken cup to God, He put all my broken pieces inside His cup, His cup that no longer had any cracks and was able to hold water. As I chose to come to Him each day for His living water, my emptiness was replaced with true satisfaction in Christ.

If you put a mug underneath a waterfall, what will happen?

The cup will fill with water and then eventually overflow.

And that is what began to happen in my heart. As I was filled with Christ each day, I was not only satisfied in Christ but His Spirit in me began to overflow.

Instead of being needy and going to other people to feel good about myself, I actually had something to give to others. I had love to give. I had joy to give. I had encouragement to share.

Psalm 23:5 says, "My cup overflows."

I love how the Amplified Version, Classic Edition (AMPC) says it: "My [brimming] cup runs over." This is a wonderful picture of having more than enough.

Day Five

Read:

Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ. (Ephesians 4:31-32)

You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. (Colossians 3:12-13)

Forgiveness contributes to a healthy relationship with yourself. There are so many people who have hurt us and said things about us. We choose to either forgive or avenge. I say forgive and here's why.

When I was in high school, I was deeply hurt by two of my best friends and I hurt them too. One of my friends was deeply hurt by what I did; we didn't speak for a year. A whole year, 365 days, 52 weeks. This of course hurt me really badly. At the end of last year, I walked out of a friendship. I was deeply hurt and of course the other person was hurt.

The first thing I had to do was run to Daddy God and ask for forgiveness. If I'm to be honest, if I had adhered to Daddy God things would be different. Daddy God forgave me. The next thing that I had to do was accept the forgiveness that God had given me. I am forgiven!

We all know that harboring hatred towards someone is really bad but as it is written in Ephesians 4:31-32, we should forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us.

Unforgiveness is likely drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.

Accepting God's forgiveness allows you to move forward. Accepting God's forgiveness means that you have realised that you have made mistake and realising that a pity party won't get you far in life.

Forgiving other people makes room for new beginnings. New beginnings could mean better relationships with those around you.

The relationships that we find ourselves in have a huge impact on the relationship that we have with ourselves.

So forgive the people that have hurt you. Show them that you love them even though they hurt you.

Besides bitterness and rage are not good for the Spirit man and are far from being godly.

As Paul writes in

Philippians 4:8 New International Version (NIV)

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Think about accepting God's forgiveness and forgiving others. Forgive as God forgave you through Christ.

Day Six

Explore:

What do you want most out of life? Most of us would rank healthy relationships high on the list. Except for knowing Christ and having eternal life, healthy relationships make life enjoyable perhaps more than anything else. Even if your health isn't the best, if you have loving relationships, you can enjoy life. You can make a pile of money, but if your relationships are broken or shallow, your life will be empty. A poor man with a loving family and good friends is far richer than a rich man who is poor relationally.

The Bible ranks healthy relationships as the most important thing in life. A Jewish religious expert asked Jesus (Matt. 22:36), "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied (Matt. 22:37-40):

"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

A loving relationship with God is of first importance; but loving relationships with others is second. The Bible is all about these two important relationships.

Because the Bible emphasizes healthy relationships so highly, it's sad that there are so many believers who have hurting or broken relationships. In our text, Paul gives the prescription for healthy relationships. If you'll consistently practice these qualities, you'll have healthy relationships. But maybe you're thinking, "But healthy relationships also depend on others, don't they? It's virtually impossible to have a good relationship with some people!" True. Paul acknowledged this when he wrote (Rom. 12:18), "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." Sometimes, no matter what you do, some people are hard to get along with. But often if you treat a difficult person with the qualities that Paul enumerates in our text, he will change for the better in how he relates to you. But even if some relationships never improve, if you relate to others as Paul describes here, most of your relationships will be healthy.

But this isn't easy medicine to take, because to develop these qualities, you've got to kill all immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (Col. 3:5). You've got to put aside all anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech, and lying (Col. 3:8-9). And, you've got to put on "a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

bearing with one another, and forgiving each other” (Col. 3:12b-13). The reason you should do this is because God has graciously chosen and loved you. Paul is saying,

God’s gracious, loving treatment of us is the basis for our treatment of others.(by Stephen J.Cole)

Having healthy relationships with others can help us maintain a healthy relationship with ourselves.

Day Seven

Read:

“.... For whatever is in your heart determines what you say. A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart.” Matthew 12: 34-35 NLT

The relationship we have with ourselves is very important. What we say to

1. Ourselves
2. Others
3. Situations we face

depends on what is in our hearts. Think about it, the one person I spend most of my time with is me. Everywhere I go, boom! There I am!

Ourselves

I have learnt that what I say to myself is based on how much love, kindness, grace, forgiveness and care I give to me. After all, aren’t these the very things we bring into relationships that are important to us, with people we value? When I bring these into my relationship with me then I’m saying to myself I’m valuable, I matter and I am worthy of good things. God already sees us as valuable (Isaiah 43:4) so that settles that matter, now let us settle it in our hearts. The choices and decisions I then make will also follow this standard – watch how it changes my life for the better!

Others

God commands us to love others as we love OURSELVES! We can’t get away from cultivating a good relationship with ourselves. It’s not just that, it also affects how I respond to what others say or do to me. When I view myself as invaluable I am open to easily being offended by others. But when I have settled my value in my heart, I don’t see what has been said or done to me as an attack on me. I can filter it according to the truth about me. Healthy relationships with others start with healthy relationships with ourselves

Situations

Oh how little control we have over what comes our way! But we hold the control on how we respond to these. Jesus was not moved by the storm, He spoke to it with authority. You know why? Because He knew who He was; and what power and authority He holds. His value was settled in His heart. He had such a great relationship with Himself that He often left the crowds and disciples to go be with Himself and His Father (Our God). It is no different for us if we want to be able to speak to “storms” we may face.

Go on... love YOU!