

Missionary Families of Christ

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

This course is part of the formation program in MFC. It is available to MFC members starting on their second year in MFC. It is an optional course for members and household leaders, but is a required course for unit and chapter leaders.

GOALS OF THE SIX TALKS

1. To give MFC members practical teaching on how we can relate as true brothers and sisters to one another, by expressing our love for each other through honor and respect, speech, and even correction.
2. To correct ways of relating that are prevalent in society but which are not Christian.

TOPICS OF THE TALKS

1. Learning to love one another
2. Honor and respect
3. Taming the tongue
4. Correction
5. Working out difficulties in CFC
6. Relating with people outside CFC

CONTENTS

For each of the topics, the following are provided:

1. Expanded outline
2. Handout for participants

SCHEDULE

This course may be given in one day, or in two separate half-days, or over 3 nights (2 talks each), or finally over 6 sessions (one talk each). The course may be given by the MFC Pastoral Formation Office and/or by the respective chapters or areas.

A suggested one-day schedule is as follows:

8:00 am	Arrival/Registration
8:45	Worship
9:05	Course Introduction
9:15	Talk #1
10:00	Break
10:15	Talk #2
11:00	Break
11:15	Talk #3
12:00 nn	Lunch/Fellowship
2:00 pm	Praise time
2:15	Talk #4
3:00	Break

3:15	Talk #5
4:00	Break
4:15	Talk #6
5:00	Open Forum
6:00	Closing Prayer

(SG. Oct 7, 2019)

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

TALK No. 1 : LEARNING TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Expanded Outline

A. The World Situation Today

1. Society is changing rapidly.
 - a) Move from a slowly-changing, tradition-conscious, rural world into a high-speed, computer-equipped future.
 - b) Characterized by technological change, mobility and the individualistic ethos. These weaken the bonds that tie a person to a family, a community, a kinship network, a geographical location.
 - c) The moral consensus of the past on how people are to relate is disintegrating.
 - * Society provides fewer and fewer guidelines for relationships, and leaves large areas of life open for individual decision.
 - * But society also suggests more and more possible models. As various lifestyles and value systems assert themselves, many people find difficulty in directing their lives in a consistent way.
2. The result is a society without common values and without stable patterns of relationships.
3. Five aspects of personal life and relationships have been affected:
 - a) An emphasis on feelings. Feelings are too often allowed to determine how people relate to one another.
 - * Traditional Christian morality is rejected as arbitrary and impersonal.
 - * Modern society tends to admire the expression of feelings. While people in the past were largely concerned with whether behavior was right or wrong, many people today are concerned with whether their behavior is “real.”
 - * Guided by uncontrolled emotions and without confidence that they can handle their feelings, people drift passively in and out of depression, anger, moodiness.
 - b) Fear of commitment.
 - * In an age of uncertainty, people fear commitment in personal life. People like to keep their options open, and this attitude has carried over into personal relationships (e.g., not marry, just live together).
 - c) Poverty in relationships. Many people are lonely.

- * People have been moving away from living in relatively small, close-knit groups where relationships were strong.
 - * There is a great deal of superficial activity and sociability, but people still struggle with feelings of insecurity and find themselves unneeded and alone.
 - * Social media, especially cell phones, have kept people from personal conversation and deepening of relationships.
- d) Relationships lack expressions of affection and personal support.
- * Aside from erotic relationships or physical affection to small children, expressions of affection between adults are rare.
- e) Low self-esteem. People have a poor sense of self-worth.
- * Society values people according to standards of physical beauty, intelligence, productivity, material success, or youthfulness.
 - * People who don't "measure up" end up troubled with a sense of failure and worthlessness.

B. Relationships Today

1. As relationships among relatives, in neighborhoods and within the local church have weakened, a new ideal of personal relationships has come into focus. This ideal is two-fold: a sexual relationship, and a circle of close friends.
2. These types of relationships tend to be:
 - a) Exclusive. Within these relationships people may relate in an intimate, honest way, but with outsiders they tend to be cautious or indifferent.
 - b) Not bound by clear commitments. When feelings conflict or fade, relationships often give way.
3. Such relationships are often not successful.

C. The Christian Alternative

1. Jesus taught his disciples new ways to relate with one another.
 - a) Jn 15:12-13; Phil 2:1-8; Acts 4:32-35.
 - b) A recognition that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - c) The ways Christians relate to one another reveal something of the very nature of God.

- * Mercy, forgiveness, faithfulness, service love, compassionate authority, loyal obedience.

2. Characteristics of Christian personal relationships.

a) We should learn to make commitments to one another as Christians.

- * Need to join our lives together. Need to give our relationships some stability. MFC is our family.
- * Need to outgrow our fear of deeper commitments. Need to personally commit ourselves to love and serve one another as brethren.
- * Live out our covenant in MFC.

b) We should recognize a new basis for personal relationships: that we are brothers and sisters in the Lord, and we are to serve one another.

- * Not founded on attraction to one another, but rather our common desire to become what God wants us to be and our common commitment to serve Him.
- * Our relationship as brethren should be the primary relationship in our lives. We are children of God before we are husbands and wives, parents and children, friends.
- * Our personal relationships will then cease to be exclusive. We will be able to develop deep and important relationships with a variety of people, Christians with a common ideal and purpose.

c) We should learn how to handle our feelings in the right ways in our personal relationships.

- * When our feelings do not impel us to act lovingly, we must learn to subordinate them to the kind of behavior that God calls us to.
- * Difference between reaction and response.
(Note: A whole course on feelings in “The Christian and Emotions”)

d) We should become open and honest with one another.

- * Do not be defensive. Be willing to let our brethren know what is going on inside us. Set aside insecurity, shame, fear.
- * Be willing to discuss our struggles and difficulties with our brethren so that they can support and help us.
- * Jn 3:19-21.

e) We should express affection in our relationships. Both verbally and physically.

- * Personal greetings, warm smiles, edifying words, handshakes, brotherly hugs, sisterly kisses.
- * Especially to those closest to us (spouse, children, household members).
- * Not based on our feelings, but on the other person's need to experience God's love through us.

D. Conclusion

1. The kingdom of God is not just a system of beliefs, but a new social order. We in MFC are to be a family conformed to God's ways and transformed by His love.
2. We need to rely on the power of God so we can change.
God wants to place His love within us. Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22; 1 Jn 4:19.
3. Be faithful to our life together in MFC.
 - a) A body of brothers and sisters in the Lord.
 - b) A support environment with resources of teaching, formation and pastoral care. A place where new patterns of relationships can develop.
4. Let us obey Jesus' command. Jn 15:12.
"Let us love one another, because love is of God" (1 Jn 4:7).

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

TALK No. 1 : LEARNING TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Participant's Handout

A. The world situation today.

1. Society is changing rapidly.
 - a) Move from a slowly-changing, tradition-conscious world into a high-speed, computer-equipped future.
 - b) The moral consensus of the past on how people are to relate is disintegrating.
2. The result is a society without common values and stable patterns of relationships.
3. Five aspects of personal life have been affected:
 - a) An emphasis on feelings.
 - b) Fear of commitment.
 - c) Poverty in relationships.
 - d) Lack of affection and personal support.
 - e) Low self-esteem.

B. Relationships today.

1. A new worldly ideal: a sexual relationship and a circle of close friends.
2. Such relationships tend to be exclusive and not bound by clear commitments.

C. The Christian alternative.

1. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ.
Jn 15:12-13. Phil 2:1-8. Acts 4:32-35.
2. Characteristics of Christian personal relationships.
 - a) Learn to make commitments to one another.
 - b) Recognize a new basis for personal relationships: that we are brothers and sisters in the Lord.
 - c) Learn how to handle our feelings in the right ways.
 - d) Become open and honest with one another. Jn 3:19-21.
 - e) Express affection in our relationships.

D. Conclusion.

1. The kingdom of God is not just a system of beliefs, but a new social order.
2. We need to rely on the power of God so we can change. God wants to place His love within us. Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22; 1 Jn 4:19.
3. We need to be faithful to our life together in MFC.

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

TALK No. 2 : HONOR AND RESPECT

Expanded Outline

A. Introduction

1. People in modern society no longer show honor and respect in personal relationships.
 - a) Honor and respect are considered old-fashioned.
 - b) Reflects problems in society:
 - * General breakdown in relationships.
 - * Poor self-image.
 - * General negativity and cynicism. There is nothing to value.
2. Modern society does show some honor for accomplishments or attributes such as wealth, beauty, physical prowess.
 - a) But these are not rooted in honor for the person.
 - b) Often focused on things which are not of value for Christians, e.g., sex appeal, power, ruthlessness, etc.

B. God's Way: Honor and Respect

1. Honor and respect are part of God's way.
 - a) God calls us to bestow honor and respect in the Ten Commandments.
 - * Toward Himself, His name, the Lord's day.
 - * Towards parents, and by extension other authorities.
 - b) God is Himself the source of honor.
 - * Ps 8:4-6. God has crowned us with glory and honor by calling us to be His children in Christ.
 - * When we give honor and respect, we are acting in accordance with our nature as God's children.
2. God wants us to show honor.
 - a) Honor = value or worth.
Showing honor = speaking or acting in a manner which demonstrates value.
 - b) Rom 12:10 "Love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor." Honor is one of God's basic instructions for relationships.
 - c) It is possible to love or be affectionate without showing honor.

- * being chummy with buddies.
 - * cuddling a puppy.
- d) We honor our brethren because they are made in the image and likeness of God, are His children, and have true worth.
3. God wants us to show respect.
- a) Respect = in English, often used as synonymous to honor.
= Hebrew and Greek words are better translated as “fear” or “reverence.”
- b) Respect has to do with authority.
- * Scripture applies this not only to God, but to other authorities He establishes.
 - * Seen as an extension of God’s authority.
Rom 13:1-2. Eph 5:21-22.
 - * Respect for authority is not dependent on one’s person or degree of expertise.
Such respect is an acknowledgement of God’s authority.
- c) Many people do not like to show respect.
- * Because they do not want to acknowledge authority.
 - * Because of false ideals of independence and self-sufficiency.
 - * Because of popular hero stereotypes, who might be disrespectful or slightly rebellious but who get the job done.
- d) We need to take on the mind of Christ, the man of obedience and respect for the Father.
- e) Respect or “fear” is not incompatible with love and closeness.
- * E.g., Jesus and the Father
God and us
Parents who set clear limits for their children
- f) There is a reciprocal honor which authorities are to show to those under their care, just as God bestows honor on us.

C. Honoring One Another

1. Basic expressions of honor.

Note: What follows is not an exhaustive list. Nor are they presented as rules or laws. Rather, they can be described as simply “good manners.”

- a) Greet people when we encounter them.
 - b) Introduce new people to others.
 - c) In conversation,
 - * pay attention to others when they speak
 - * give them a response to what they say
 - * do not interrupt
 - * do not dominate conversation
 - d) Do not use dishonoring humor, such as insults, mimicking, putting down, snide remarks.
 - e) Be ready to serve others as a sign that they are important to you.
 - f) Speak directly to them of the honor you hold them in. MFC culture of honoring.
2. Receiving honor (or respect).
- a) People sometimes find difficulty or feel uncomfortable in receiving honor.
 - * We don't want to seem to be putting on airs; we fear that people will think we are trying to be something special.
 - * Or because we lack self-esteem. We have little self-respect and feel uncomfortable with others giving us respect.
 - b) We should not discourage others from showing us honor. Nor should we simply shove the honor aside.
 - * Realize that people showing honor are obeying the Lord's command.

D. Expressing Respect

- 1. Respect is to be expressed to those over us in the Lord, i.e., those placed in authority over us.
- 2. Relationship in which we should show respect:
 - a) Younger to older. 1 Tm 5:1-2.
 - b) Children to parents.
 - c) Wives to husbands. Eph 5:33.
 - d) Subordinates to leaders/heads.
- 3. Respect for leaders in MFC.
 - a) We are to submit to those over us in the Lord. Heb 13:17. Leaders bear the Lord's authority and are accountable.

b) 1 Pt 5:5. We submit to elders, yet both are to show true humility in the relationship.

- * Respect is combined with deep love.

4. Some elements of respectful relationships:

a) Look to the leader to take initiative and set direction.

- * Not all initiative and direction, but the basic direction. You take responsibility to follow up on their lead.

- * Respond readily. E.g., come to order quickly.

- * If you are not the leader, you should be careful about directing things.

b) Give the leader's thoughts or advice serious weight. Don't treat such as of less value than your own.

c) Make yourself available to serve your leaders (elders, parents).

- * You should recognize that leaders do a great deal to serve you, and you should desire to serve them in return in whatever ways you can.

- * Serve not only when asked, but look for opportunities.

- * If we are not eager or even reluctant to serve, then something would seem to be lacking in our respect.

5. Leaders should honor subordinates in return.

a) Speak about them with honor.

b) Give them commendation whenever deserved. Be eager to do it.

c) Build esteem for them among others. See that they are honored by others.

d) Speak to subordinates respectfully and with consideration (e.g., parents to children).

E. Conclusion

1. God has given His people a new way of life which reflects His nature and what he values. God is creating a new culture among us.

2. One element of this new life is honor and respect, so basic that it is a significant part of the Ten Commandments.

3. Let us make honor and respect for one another a hallmark of our relationships in CFC.

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

TALK No. 2 : HONOR AND RESPECT

Participant's Handout

- A. People in modern society no longer show honor and respect in personal relationships.
- B. Honor and respect are part of God's way.
 - 1. God is Himself the source of honor. Ps 8:4-6.
 - 2. Honor = value or worth.
Showing honor = speaking or acting in a manner which demonstrates value. Rom 12:10
 - 3. Respect = "fear" or "reverence."
 - a) Respect has to do with authority.
 - b) Human authority is an extension of God's authority. Rom 13:1-2. Eph 5:21-22.
 - c) Respect or "fear" is not incompatible with love and closeness.
- C. Honoring one another.
 - 1. Basic expressions of honor. Often described simply as "good manners."
 - 2. We should also be able to receive honor from others.
- D. Expressing respect.
 - 1. Respect is to be expressed to those over us in the Lord.
 - 2. Relationships in which we should show respect.
 - a) Younger to older. 1 Tm 5:1-2.
 - b) Children to parents.
 - c) Wives to husbands. Eph 5:33.
 - d) Subordinates to leaders/heads.
 - 3. Respect for leaders in MFC.
 - a) We are to submit to those over us in the Lord. Heb 13:17.
 - b) 1 Pt 5:5. We submit to elders, yet both are to show true humility in the relationship.
 - 4. Some elements of respectful relationships.
 - a) Look to the leader to take initiative and set direction.
 - b) give the leader's thoughts or advice serious weight.
 - c) Make yourself available to serve your leaders.
 - 5. Leaders should honor subordinates in return.

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

TALK No. 3 : TAMING THE TONGUE

Expanded Outline

A. The Christian Ideal

1. James 3:2-10.

a) Tremendous power of the tongue.

- * Can be used for blessing, honor, encouragement.
- * Far too often used for evil and destruction.
 - Sowing mistrust
 - Dishonoring
 - Causing bitterness and resentment

b) Much wrongdoing is committed with the tongue.

- * The problem is not only with malicious speech, but also unbridled, undisciplined or careless speech.

c) Wrongdoing in speech can be very harmful to our unity and loving relationships in MFC.

2. The modern climate.

a) Hostile to the notion of controlling speech.

- * Freedom of speech; freedom of information.

b) Communicate your feelings. Say what you feel. Wrong to “bottle things up.”

3. The Christian ideal.

a) Eph 4:29

- * No evil talk.
- * Speak only that which imparts grace, favor, help, honor.
- * A part of not grieving the Holy Spirit (v.30).

b) Having speech in order is a vital aspect of love.

- * Love must be communicated. This is done not only through service, but also through speech. Prv 12:18.

- * This is often neglected these days; we have become used to bad speech. Yet how we speak is crucial in people's lives. Prv 18:21a.
- c) Having speech in order is a crucial aspect of righteousness. Ps 15:1-3a.
- d) Having speech in order is a vital aspect of our relationships in MFC.
 - * Jas 3:5-6. It has the power to harm, cause resentment, foster antipathy.
 - * But at the same time, it has the power to build up, to increase faith, hope and love.

B. Some Key Problem Areas

1. Slander or “speaking against.”

- a) Definition: The dictionary defines slander as the utterance of false charges or misrepresentations which defame or damage another’s reputation.
 - * In Scripture, the focus is less on the truth or the falsehood of the charge but more on the appropriateness of making the charge. Thus slander includes saying things that are true but which cause harm to others. It is making personal accusations and charges that one has no authority to make.
- b) “Speaking against” is condemned in Scripture.
 - * 2 Cor 12:20. Rom 1:29-30.
 - * We are forbidden by Scripture to speak of one another in a way that destroys another’s reputation or questions his basic righteousness or competence, except in very few specific and limited situations.
- c) Destroys trust and undermines committed personal relationships. Bad for our life in MFC.
 - * Never speak in a way that causes brethren to mistrust one another.
 - * Don’t speak in a way that stirs up quarreling or conflict.
- d) How do we handle problems of wrongdoing or incompetence? Proper way: Mt 18:15-17.
 - * Go directly to the person concerned.
 - * If necessary, talk to his household leader or other MFC leader who has responsibility for him (Unit Servant, Chapter Servant, MFC elder).
 - * It is possible to talk to another mature person in order to get help in knowing how to handle the matter. In this case, do not name names.

- * Other than that—keep quiet!
- e) “Exceptions” to the general rule of not speaking against:
- * When we reprove people (Lk 17:3).
 - * When we have a dispute with someone that we cannot resolve and we lay the matter before MFC leaders who have the authority to resolve the matter (1 Cor 6:5).
 - * When we tell a person’s head that we know of or have heard of something wrong the person has done (Mt 18:17). We should be willing to be identified.
 - * When a head responsible for someone warns others against that person in order to protect them or MFC (1 Tm 1:19-20).
 - * When we give witness in some judicial proceeding (Lv 5:1).
 - * When we speak against someone’s public stand.
 - * We can speak against someone’s competence to the electorate if he/she is running for or holding public office.

2. Gossip.

- a) Gossip is information shared without constructive purpose or in an inappropriate way (with wrong people or in the wrong time). Gossip is useless, silly and critical speech about other people, speech that subtracts from the respect and esteem one’s listeners have for them.
- b) When we do talk about others:
- * It is OK to talk about others’ good qualities or successes.
 - * It is OK to share about good things that have happened.
 - * It is OK to pass on neutral information, i.e., “news.”
 - * It is OK to talk about problems which do not at all reflect upon the person’s character or competence.
 - * We should not normally share another’s problems or temptations. Prv 11:13.
- c) We should not listen to gossip. Prv 17:4.
- d) We are all called to live in the light with one another. Eph 5:8-13.
- * We should be open to sharing things with those close to us, especially in our household. We should not let shame hold us back.
 - * Our brothers and sisters should know that we will treat what they share with us respectfully. We have the principle of confidentiality in our households.

e) Confidentiality.

- * Many things we should not speak about when they are told to us unless we have a clear responsibility to do so.
- * Leaders can talk about the life of a person they are caring for with other leaders who also have responsibility for the person (Household Servant with Unit Servant, and so on).
- * We should not ask others to promise us to keep something we have told them secret. If we do not trust them to use information wisely, we should not tell them in the first place.
- * We should not promise anyone to keep something secret before they tell us what it is. Nor should we promise afterwards. We may have a responsibility to reveal it once we know it.

f) There are times when we are clearly responsible to speak about what we know:

- * When we know about wrongdoing in the life of someone in MFC that is not being handled properly.
- * When the law of the land requires it and the interests of the Lord do not require that we keep it secret.

3. Busybodies.

- a) Definition: taking on matters which are not our responsibility or concern. Actively prying into others' affairs in order to offer unwanted advice.
 - * Investigating, communicating, instigating.
- b) We are to take responsibility for our responsibilities and trust others to do the same.
- c) If it is a serious matter, go to the appropriate authority and then leave it with them.
- d) Don't let yourself be drawn into this by other's complaining. Tell them to deal with it directly themselves.
- e) Don't: pass on another's criticism.
 evaluate something you were not involved in.
 reprove people for things you did not witness.
 inquire into the affairs of others unless you have responsibility for them.

4. Negative humor.

- a) Sometimes the humor we engage in is based on something negative about another person.

- * Laughs are purchased at somebody's expense.
 - * "Slapping with a smile." Using humor to actually insult or attack another.
- b) It seems innocent to us, but it can be hurtful, even if only slightly.
- c) Negative humor is usually a poor attempt at expressing something positive. Often intended as a sign of affection or an indirect personal correction.
- * We can have the genuine thing (real affection) and not have to settle for this.
 - * E.g., honoring, not "roasting."

C. Speech that Strengthens

1. Our speech should increase love and trust and respect for the person spoken about.
 - a) Our speech should increase trust and not stir up mistrust or quarrels. Build up and not tear down.
 - b) We should take problems to the appropriate person (to the person itself or to that person's leader), so healing can result.
 - * In doing so, still speak respectfully.
2. Our speech should increase faith and hope.
 - a) Our speech should indicate to others that we have an active faith and hope in the Lord. Our speech should help dispel anxiety and despair.
 - b) We should not slip into negative, despairing or hopeless speech.
 - * We can share difficulties as difficulties.
 - * We can and should ask for help when needed.
3. Our speech should express love, affection and support.
 - a) For God, for the things of God, for the things God values.
 - b) For our brethren.
 - * Learn how to express affection and personal support verbally.
 - * Learn how to share the positive things as well as the problems in our life.
 - * Take interest in the lives of others.

D. Conclusion

1. Mt 12:36-37.
2. Let us learn how to speak so that everything we say will impart grace to those who hear.

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

TALK No. 3 : TAMING THE TONGUE

Participant's Handout

A. The Christian ideal.

1. James 3:2-10. The tremendous power of the tongue.
2. The ideal: Eph 4:29. No evil talk.
 - a) Speak only that which imparts grace, favor, honor.
 - b) Having speech in order is a vital aspect of love (Prv 12:18), righteousness (Ps 15:1-3a), and our relationships in MFC. (Jas 3:5-6).

B. Some key problem areas.

1. Slander or “speaking against.”
2. Gossip.
3. Busybodies
4. Negative humor.

C. Speech that strengthens.

1. Our speech should increase love and trust and respect for the person spoken about.
2. Our speech should increase faith and hope.
3. Our speech should express love, affection and support.

D. Mt 12:36-37.

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

TALK No. 4 : CORRECTION

Expanded Outline

A. Introduction

1. Eph 4:17-24. Renewal in Christ.
 - a) Christian life involves more than a change in our relationship with God. It involves a change in our way of life. We are to put on Jesus Christ.
 - b) We need to unlearn some things, and learn others.
 - c) Change comes about in many ways:
 - * Our realizing the need.
 - * God speaking or acting in our lives.
 - * Help of brothers and sisters—through correction.

B. Our Attitude to Correction

1. Prv 12:1. We should love correction.
2. Jn 3:19-21. We should want to have our wrongdoing or things we don't do so well exposed.
 - a) Old nature: hide our wrongdoing or things not done well.
 - b) But the mind of Christ is to bring these to light, so there can be positive change and healing if necessary.
 - c) It is OK not to be perfect.
 - * Wrong attitude: I'll straighten it out first, then I will tell you.
 - Right attitude: Ask brethren to help out now!
3. Have the right response to correction.
 - a) For wrongdoing: repent and ask forgiveness, make restitution, make the necessary change.
 - b) For something not done well (but not wrongdoing): Be eager to learn, make the change.
 - c) Don't be defensive (I didn't do it; it wasn't wrong; it wasn't my fault).
 - d) Be grateful and thank those who correct us.

- * Prv 25:12. Correction is valuable.
- * It is often hard and even costly for others to give correction.
- * Correction is a sign of one's love for us. Not a putdown or rejection. Prv 3:11-12.

C. How Do We Give Correction?

1. Two different approaches.

a) The worldly approach.

- * Complain (why are you always late?)
- * Nag (if I've told you once I've told you 1000 times).
- * Pressure (if you don't stop nagging, I won't come home).
- * Criticize (you are one of the sloppiest people I know).
- * Make feel guilty (I guess you just don't care that I've been here waiting for you all this time).
- * Manipulate (wife is late so sit in car waiting with the engine on).
- * Indirect communication—hints, snide remarks, jokes (must be hard for a busy man to keep track of all his meetings).

b) The Lord's way: speak directly.

- * Lk 17:3-4. Simple, straightforward and merciful.
- * Steps : State the matter clearly.
 Talk it through (sometimes there is another side).
 Bring it to resolution.
 Reestablish and reaffirm the relationship.
- * Have the steadfast love to deal with it 7 times a day and the mercy to forgive each time.
- * Don't merely criticize (indirect, to a third party, with no goal of change). Rather, deal directly in love with the intention to bring change.

2. Various ways of correcting.

- a) Lk 17:3. Reprove, Rebuke.
- b) Col 3:16b. Teach, admonish.
- c) 1 Thes 5:11. Exhort, encourage, build up.

3. Understanding the different types of problems.

- a) Differences among: right and wrong (sin and wrongdoing)
 better and worse (good and bad)

personal preference

- b) Correction is for wrong acts or badly done acts (the first two). It is not just for things which I didn't like or was bothered about.
- c) Don't expect repentance/forgiveness for good/bad.

Note: More in next talk.

4. Correct differently according to the relationship.

a) Parents and leaders in MFC to those under them.

- * Prv. 13:24; Eph 6:4; 1 Thes 5:14.
- * Have an ongoing responsibility to correct those under them.
- * Do it lovingly, but authoritatively.

b) Peers.

- * Unless it is for wronging you, offer correction as something helpful, not authoritative.
- * It is not always necessary to pursue the matter if it is minor. One can forbear.

c) To those older or over us in the Lord.

- * Offer correction respectfully.
- * Do not do it publicly.
- * Accept their judgment, unless it is a very serious matter.

5. Correct differently according to your growth in wisdom or experience. Be prudent and discerning.

6. Major ongoing correction is normally reserved for Unit Heads and up.

- a) This is not the role of brothers and sisters in a household for one another. Their place is rather to be supportive and encouraging as the other seeks to change.
- b) Household leaders may take this on according to their capability, but always under the oversight of the Unit Head.

7. The overall context for correction should always be kindness, rejoicing in (not grim or burdened), encouragement.

D. Conclusion

1. Our underlying attitude towards our brothers and sisters should be to become channels of favor and grace. We need to manifest real love, and a desire to see them move on in the Lord.
2. Satan is the accuser of the brethren, while the Holy Spirit is the paraclete, the advocate.
 - a) Let the Holy Spirit change us to be like Him.
 - b) We need to: be “for” our brothers and sisters.
come to their defense.
encourage them.
show kindness, patience, forgiveness.
3. Col 3:12-14.

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

TALK No. 4 : CORRECTION

Participant's Handout

- A. Eph 4:17-24. Renewal in Christ.
- B. Our Attitude to correction.
 - 1. We should love correction. Prv 12:1.
 - 2. We should want to have our wrongdoing or things we don't do so well exposed. Jn 3:19-21.
 - 3. Have the right response to correction.
 - a) For wrongdoing, repent, ask forgiveness, make restitution, make the necessary change.
 - b) For something not done well, be eager to learn and make the change.
 - c) Don't be defensive.
 - d) Be grateful to those who correct us.
- C. How do we give correction?
 - 1. Two approaches:
 - a) Worldly: Complain, nag, pressure, criticize, make feel guilty, manipulate, indirect communication.
 - b) The Lord's way: speak directly. Lk 17:3-4.
 - 2. Various ways of correcting.
 - a) Reprove, rebuke. Lk 17:3.
 - b) Teach, admonish. Col 3:16b.
 - c) Exhort, encourage, build up. 1 Thes 5:11.
 - 3. Understand the difference among right/wrong, better/worse, and personal preference.
 - 4. Correct differently according to the relationship: parents and leaders in MFC, peers, those older or over us in the Lord.
 - 5. The overall context for correction should always be kindness, rejoicing in, and encouragement.
- D. Our underlying attitude towards our brethren should be to become channels of favor and grace. We need to manifest real love, and a desire to see our brethren move on in the Lord. Col 3:12-14.

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

TALK No. 5 : WORKING OUT DIFFICULTIES IN MFC

Expanded Outline

A. The Biblical Standard: Peace

1. Eph 4:1-3, 25-27, 29, 31-32.
 - a) Love and unity are important for our life in MFC. Peace binds us together.
 - b) Peace is a function of right relationships.
Relationships will be right if there is:
 - * Humility, meekness, patience, tolerance.
 - * Dealing with difficulties quickly.
 - * Proper speech.
 - * No bitterness, anger, slander, malice.
 - * Kind, compassionate, forgiving.
 - c) Peace is not just the absence of fighting, but refers to good and positive relationships, which bring good for all involved.
2. However, we are still not fully formed.
 - a) We will occasionally fail in righteousness.
 - b) We will still encounter difficulties, conflicts and misunderstandings.
3. Our goal is peace.
 - a) To enable us to experience the fullness of God's life in and through MFC.
 - b) To enable us to move as a united army that will carry out massive and rapid evangelization. Lk 11:17.

B. Speaking the Truth

1. Eph 4:25b.
 - a) Not just avoiding lying, but to do something, to speak. We should not withhold the truth from one another.
 - b) We should communicate openly about whatever is significant in our relationships.
2. Confront difficulty that affects relationships negatively. Be reconciled.
 - a) When we have a charge against others. Mt 18:15-17.
 - b) When others have a charge against us. Mt 5:23-24.
 - c) In either case, we should take the initiative.

C. Working Out Conflicts

1. We need to distinguish if it is a matter of right or wrong (sin and righteousness), a matter of better or worse, or simply a matter of personal preference.
2. Matters of right and wrong.
 - a) Ask forgiveness for your part.
 - b) Reprove your brother/sister for what he/she did wrong.
 - * Do it in a straightforward way. Not apologetic or circuitous. Kindly and without animosity.
 - c) Resolve it.
 - * Normally by talking it through.
 - * If you can't resolve by yourselves, go to and get judgment from a leader/elder.
 - * Restore the relationship.
3. Matters that are clearly a question of better and worse (e.g., how one performs a particular service).
 - a) Speak to the person directly. Make the correction.
 - * Do this authoritatively when you are in charge.
 - * Give it as a suggestion if you are not in charge.
 - b) Be eager to learn and to improve. Agree to change.
 - * Don't be defensive.
 - * Realize that correction is not criticism but an expression of love.
 - c) There is no need for repentance for matters of better/worse (not wrongdoing).
4. Matters that might be a question of better or worse, but are not clearly so. E.g., child rearing practices; use of money.
 - a) Arises from different opinions or expectations.
 - b) Resolve by coming to an agreement.
 - * Establish common understanding where none existed before.
 - * Openly discuss merits of different positions.

- * Be willing to compromise or even give in for the sake of peace.
- * Agree clearly. Check to see if you understand it the same way.
- * Call one another to your agreement.

5. Matters of personal preference. E.g., roll or squeeze toothpaste tube.

a) Small stuff, mannerisms, preferences.

b) Put up with what's not wrong. Col 3:13a.

- * Not always make a big deal over what is difficult for you.
- * General attitude: Col 3:12.

c) Sandpaper ministry.

- * Often the Lord puts us together with others with the purpose of taking the rough edges out.
- * Give up wanting things always done our way.
- * Not have to have own way before one can be happy.
- * Learn to appreciate differences. Be sensitive to how we do things.
- * Develop a sense of humor. The more we are attached to our preferences, the sillier we are.

d) When forbearing, do so without resentment or self-pity, but willingly and eagerly.

- * Right attitude: Col 3:14-15a. Love and peace of heart.

6. “The Personality Conflict”

a) We use being different from others to rationalize our own selfishness, self-will, intolerance.

b) Our differences are never an excuse not to love.

- * The greatest personality conflict is between God and us! Yet God loves us.

c) The right attitude:

- * Set yourself on love. Lay down your life for them.
- * Be thankful for the “trial.” Jas 1:2-4. “No pain, no gain.”

D. Conclusion

1. Conflicts in MFC are normal.

- a) We are still imperfect. We are still learning.
 - b) We do not need to be overcome by these conflicts. Instead we can overcome them in Christ.
 - c) We can be thankful for the opportunities that conflicts bring for us to grow in loving one another.
2. Our goal is to let the Lord change us to be His kind of people.
- a) Meek, patient, forgiving. Peacemakers.
 - b) Just like Jesus himself.

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
TALK No. 5 : WORKING OUT DIFFICULTIES IN CFC

Participant's handout

A. The Scriptural standard: peace.

1. Eph 4:1-3, 25-27, 29, 31-32.
2. Peace is a function of right relationships.
3. Peace is not just the absence of fighting, but refers to good and positive relationships, which bring good for all.

B. Speaking the truth. Eph 4:25b.

1. Not just avoiding lying, but not withholding the truth.
2. Confront difficulty that affects relationships negatively.
 - a) When we have a charge against others. Mt 18:15-17.
 - b) When others have a charge against us. Mt 5:23-24.

C. Working out conflicts.

1. Distinguish if it is a matter of right/wrong, better/worse, or simply personal preference.
2. Matters of right/wrong.
 - a) Ask forgiveness for your part.
 - b) Reprove the person for what he/she did wrong.
 - c) Resolve it.
3. Matters of better/worse.
 - a) Speak to the person directly.
 - b) Be eager to learn and to improve.
 - c) No need for repentance.
4. Matters of personal preference.
 - a) Put up with what is not wrong. Col 3:13a.
 - b) Sandpaper ministry.
 - c) When forbearing, do so without resentment or self-pity. Col 3:14-15a.

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

TALK No. 6 : RELATING WITH PEOPLE OUTSIDE MFC

Expanded Outline

A. Introduction

1. The last talk was about conflicts inside MFC. This one is about relating to people who are not in MFC.
2. We are in the world, and we have to relate to many others.
3. Our ongoing, significant relationships are: family (beyond spouse and children), friends, neighbors, co-workers.

B. Relating with People Outside MFC

1. We have to relate well with people both inside and outside MFC.
 - a) Inside: 1 Pt 1:22
Outside: Col 4:5-6
 - b) Relate with wisdom and tact, with charm and wit.
Look to these times as opportunities to draw others to the Lord.
2. We often have to relate in a different way than in MFC.
 - a) Because of a lack of common agreements, unlike in MFC where we have our covenant and formation courses.
 - b) Many things that work inside MFC will not always work outside. For example:
 - * Reproof or correction.
 - Outsiders can't distinguish between correction and criticism. They may experience this as "me against you."
 - They often cannot see correction as love.
 - * Asking forgiveness.
 - Liberating for us, but can irritate those not used to it.
 - Often others can't receive it, or don't know how to.
 - * Often we can't be free in expressing affection because we may be misunderstood.
 - c) We need wisdom and sensitivity.
 - * Not just one way of relating to people.

- * Our ways in MFC can sometimes be helpful, or sometimes may not be received well.
3. Thus, in MFC, because of our commitment and trust relationship, we can be more direct and handle things more clearly. This is not the case outside MFC.

C. Dealing with Conflict Situations

1. Be men and women of peace. Rom 12:18.
 - a) In MFC, everything can be worked out. Outside MFC, not necessarily so. Only “if possible.” Because living in peace with others is not entirely up to us.
 - b) Titus 3:1-2. Bend over backwards to avoid conflict and to establish peace.
 - c) Have a non-judgmental spirit. Rom 2:1-4.
 - * Avoid self-righteousness. Remember we too related badly. We didn’t do any better before on our own either. We were in the same situation. Put ourselves in their place. Don’t be quick to condemn.
 - * We’re where we are now not by our deeds, but by God’s mercy. Thus we should not be proud, but grateful and humble.
 - * Rely more on kindness, patience and forbearance. Be aware that the grace of God is what they also need to change.
 - d) Be cooperative.
 - * Obedient and ready for service. Not have the attitude of “let somebody else do it.”
 - * Do something good for them.
 - e) Be non-violent.
 - * Don’t “bad mouth” people. Speak no evil.
 - * Avoid quarreling. Be gentle. Show respect to all.
 - f) Yet be firm and bold.
Be ready to make a defense for the hope within us. 1 Pt 3:15b-16a.
2. Put up with as much as it is right to.
 - a) Our first concern is to establish a good relationship with people.
 - * We can be more forbearing with people outside MFC than with our brethren.
 - * Our aim is to bring them to the Lord.

- b) Sometimes we are called on to be heroic. Mt 5:38-42.
- 3. If it goes beyond what is right, we can decide to separate to the necessary degree.
 - a) E.g., quit job; see friend less often; move out of dorm.
 - b) Separation does not mean a lack of love. It simply means that just at this time and circumstance, it does not make sense to try to keep on relating the way we have been.
 - c) We rarely make a complete break. It is either temporary or just to a limited degree.
 - d) Is it right for Christians to separate from such a situation? Outside MFC, yes. It may even be the best thing to do.
- 4. Do not fight back. Rom 12:14, 17-21.
 - a) A hard teaching, but the Lord's way.
 - b) Applicable to instances when we are persecuted and instances when we're tempted to take revenge. (Note: we're talking not of self-defense but of retaliation).
 - c) We're bound to experience a lot of evil in the world.
 - * But we're called on not to fight fire with fire, to act in the same wrong way, to be overcome by evil.
 - * Rather, be persistently good. Be able to overcome the evil that besets us.
 - d) Have faith that the power of God's goodness in us is stronger than the power of evil in others. Good shall triumph.
 - e) The Lord has not called us to experience peace (Lk 12:51-53) but to be men and women of peace.
 - * Be the kind of people whose heart and soul and behavior are set upon making peace with those around us.
 - * We may not experience external peace, but there will be peace in our heart and being.

D. Conclusion

- 1. We are in the world, so we need to relate to many people outside MFC.
- 2. We need to relate well, though in ways different from the way we relate to our brethren. We are to be peaceful, patient, forbearing, etc.
- 3. By the ways we relate, we are to be a light to the world.

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
TALK No. 6 : RELATING WITH PEOPLE OUTSIDE MFC

Participant's Handout

A. Relating with people outside MFC.

1. We have to relate well with all.
 1 Pt 1:22 (in MFC). Col 4:5-6 (outside MFC).
2. We often have to relate in a different way to outsiders than in MFC.
 - a) Because we lack common agreements as we do in MFC.
 - b) Many things that work in MFC will not always work outside. E.g., correction, asking forgiveness.

B. Dealing with conflict situations.

1. Be men and women of peace. Rom 12:18.
 - a) Titus 3:1-2. Bend over backwards to avoid conflict and to establish peace.
 - b) Have a non-judgmental spirit. Rom 2:1-4.
 - c) Be cooperative.
 - d) Be non-violent.
 - e) Yet be firm and bold. 1 Pt 3:15b-16a
2. Put up with as much as it is right to.
 - a) Our first concern is to establish a good relationship with the person.
 - b) Sometimes we are called on to be heroic. Mt 5:38-42.
3. If it goes beyond what is right, we can decide to separate to the necessary degree.
4. Do not fight back. Rom 12:14, 17-21.
 - a) Have faith that the power of God's goodness in us is stronger than the power of evil in others.
 - b) The Lord has not called us to experience peace (Lk 12:51-53) but to be men and women of peace.