

1/9/11

Relationships: A Mess Worth Making (Introduction)

Introduction: [QUOTES in **BOLD** are on the Study Guide but not always on PowerPoint]

1. I'm excited about the NEW YEAR in our ABF Ministry – specifically our YOUNG FAMILIES ABF!
2. I'd like for us to begin our time by answering the following question (1st Input Q)
 - then, I'd like for us to break up into SMALL GROUPS of 4-6 people and answer the remaining questions as a SMALL GROUP
 - THEN we'll come back together and review the answers that you came up with in your group
3. I'd like for us as an ABF to do more of the 'interacting' in smaller groups than for me to stand up here and just 'teach' you for 40 minutes
 - that's part of the teaching process from time to time, but . . .
 - I'd like to BALANCE that out more for a lot of reasons
 - > one is 'getting to know each other better' and building 'unity' in our ABF
 - > another reason is VARIETY – we don't want to get in a rut of always doing the same thing
4. So let's begin with an open discussion to this question:

Input: What does a new year bring to the table of our lives, families, and ministry?

[Key words or phrases] – various answers

- 1) Fresh start – putting the past behind you (2010) – it's over!
 - ***Philippians 3:13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.***
 - 2) Anticipate God's blessing – we don't deserve them, but God is a god of GRACE
 - 3) New challenges (our 2011 initiatives)
 - 4) New theme for think about & a new ABF study & theme
5. **Our 2011 theme for our church is: *Living Life Together***
- Steve presented that in our worship service
 - we'll split up into SMALL GROUPS and ask your group to answer the following Q:
 Q: When you hear that phrase, *Living Life Together*, what comes to your mind?
6. In additions, TODAY we begin a NEW ABF SERIES: ***Relationships: A Mess Worth Making!***
- this is taken from the book (same title) by Dr. Timothy Lane & Dr. Paul Tripp
 - Tim: Executive Director of CCEF, a faculty member and counselor for 25 years
 - Paul: President of Paul Trip Ministries, speaks around the world, on pastoral staff at Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, and a well known author of many books
 - encourage each couple to purchase a copy of the book from the Ministry Resource Center
 - we will do our ABF study week-by-week, dealing with 1 chapter per week

- the other question we want your small group to answer is this:

Q: When you hear *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making*, what comes to your mind?

NOTE: For both of these, we're looking for KEY WORDS or KEY PHRASES

7. IMPORTANT: Split up into groups of 4-6 people and answer the INPUT questions:

NOTE: Allow about 10-12 minutes in the SMALL GROUPS

[RETURN TOGETHER]

> let's answer these 2 questions together . . .

Input: When you hear that phrase, *Living Life Together*, what comes to your mind?

[Key words or phrases] – various answers

1) Unity ('together') –

NOTE: Satan hates unity because God is perfect unity – God the Father, Son, & Spirit!
Satan will do whatever he can to bring disunity to a marriage, family, or church, etc.

2) Body of Christ working ('living')– doing something, not just 'talking' about life

3) Progress (living)

4) Sharing ('together') – that implies during the good times & bad

> to 'rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep'

5) Accountability ('together') – what I do affects you, what you do affects me, so we need to hold each other accountable in our relationship with the Lord, spouse, family, etc.

OTHERS:

8. One of the ways to help us develop that theme is our **ABF Ministry**:

- **Adult** (persons – variety of classes and small groups)
- **Bible** (source of truth & our focus)
- **Fellowship** (process & product)

Fellowship = koinwni,a (*koinonia*) = a close mutual relationship; participation, sharing in; partnership

9. Now, let's go to our 2nd question (and the title of our NEW SERIES)

Input: When you hear *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making*, what comes to your mind?

[Key words/phrases – various answers]

1) Challenges – "A Mess" – nobody is perfect

2) Value – 'worth making' – in the end, it will bring glory to God and help us grow

3) Risk – you have to try to make it work (by following God's truth about relationships)

OTHERS:

- in referring to their efforts to co-author this book and work together, Tim & Paul wrote:

"What resulted from our collaboration is not just an examination, but an actual example of broken people in broken community experiencing the reconciling grace of God. We have

written as flawed people in close relationship who have experience God's grace in daily life and ministry. We have not written out of the wisdom of success, but out of the wisdom of striving."

- Explain how Tim was hired by CCEF to help Paul – they had known each other from a distance, but now they were working in the same room . . .

"It became apparent that, although we shared a vision, we had very different personalities and gifts. It didn't take long for sin, weakness, and failure to rear their ugly heads. Minor offences and major misunderstandings began to get in the way of our mutual appreciation—and work God had brought us together to do."

Q: Does that describe ANY relationships you ever had?

Examples – people can share about how God used a person & that relationship to INFLUENCE their life!

- I want to close our time this morning by sharing with you . . .

10. Our goal or purpose of this study is 3 fold:

#1: To glorify God as He works in us and through us.

- we want to give the right opinion of God as 'we give him the opportunity to work in us so that he can work through us'

- **1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**
- **2 Corinthians 5:9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.**

"We want you to know that the men who wrote this book are just like you in both struggle and potential. We are sinners with the capacity to do great damage to ourselves and our relationships. We need God's grace to save us from ourselves. But we are also God's children, which means that we have great hope and potential—not hope that rests on our gifts, experience, or track record, but hope that rests in Christ."

#2: To show how all of us are in the process of progressive sanctification

"This side of heaven, relationships and ministry are always shaped in the forge of struggle. None of us get to relate to perfect people or avoid the effects of the fall on the work we attempt to do. Yet, amid the mess, we find the highest joys of relationships and ministry."

> that is true here at FBC (give some examples)

#3: To reveal the benefits of building strong relationships

"What the book has to offer is not the wisdom of two men who have arrived, but the worship of two needy men who want to point you to the unfathomable and accessible resources of the God who has been with us and is with you. He is near, with, and in you. This means there is hope for you, even in relationships that leave you confused and disappointed."

Conclusion:

- the question we're asking NEXT WEEK in our 1st study is:

Q: Why Bother?

- Why bother with relationships?
- Why go through the process & effort it takes to build strong relationships

Answer: Because God wants us to, and we need to build those relationships!

- read the following quote from the book:

“You have not become who you are all by yourself, which is why relationships are so important. They are inescapable and powerfully influential. The difficulty is that sin and grace coexist in all of them. Sin gets in the way of what grace can do, which grace covers what sin causes.”