

HANDLE WITH CARE!

Scripture used: [Psalms 55:1-2 \(NLT\)](#) & [Psalms 55:12-13 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

This week Pastor Hurmon built on the idea of relationships and their critical importance in our lives. We're starting out in a new year and a new decade. This is a chance for us to live better, which means more fully following Jesus. Pastor Hurmon reminded us that Jesus placed relationships at the center of everything. In [Matthew 22:36-40 \(NIV\)](#), Jesus answered the question of which commandments are the greatest: first, to love God; second, to love others. We can nod our heads when we read that Scripture, but living a relational life of love is far from easy. What does it look like to take care of the people in our lives? What do we need to do on a daily basis? And how should we treat those who mistreat us?

KEY POINTS

- 1) **Jesus saw everything in terms of relationships.** It didn't matter what He was doing. When He was teaching people, healing people, feeding people, and even arguing with people, Jesus did everything out of love, focusing on the relationship with the other person.
- 2) **Living our best lives means prioritizing relationships.** We tend to think about ourselves first, and occasionally others. We often see others in terms of their roles or how they can help us. We almost never think first about our relationship with each person. This is a big mistake because our highest and lowest moments are all experienced in terms of relationships.
- 3) **We must cultivate positive relational habits.** It is our responsibility to build and maintain positive relationships. That starts with treating people the way you want to be treated, as Jesus says in [Luke 6:31 \(NLT\)](#). Pastor Hurmon offered us five specific habits to develop so we can enjoy the fruits of loving, rewarding relationships.
 - a. **Look for the good.** Affirm the good in other people. Don't speak with a spirit of criticism.
 - b. **Listen first.** Be curious and ask questions. Don't jump to conclusions or just wait to say whatever is on your mind.
 - c. **Seek to persuade, not to control.** Don't emphasize logic too much. Instead share your feelings with other people and allow others to respond to your authenticity and honesty.
 - d. **Learn the stories of others.** Everyone is broken in different ways. Sometimes that brokenness causes others to lash out at us. Instead of being defensive, try to learn more. Help the person explore and share that pain.
 - e. **Assume the best until shown otherwise.** Give people the benefit of the doubt.
- 4) **We can even relate to difficult people in a relational way.** Maya Angelou said "[When people show you who they are, believe them.](#)" We must find sustainable ways to relate to the difficult people in our lives.
 - a. **Stop trying to change them.** It's up to each person, not us, how they decide to behave. Don't take on a responsibility that doesn't belong to you.
 - b. **Draw clear boundaries.** Avoid the situations when that person is most hurtful.
 - c. **Change expectations.** Look elsewhere for the type of fulfillment you were seeking from them.
 - d. **Grieve the loss.** Take some time to reflect and mourn, since it is a painful thing to appropriately distance yourself from someone who is no longer a positive part of your life.
 - e. **Focus on the positive.** Pray to God to help that person. Love well within healthy boundaries. Turn the situation over to the Lord. This is what Jesus tells us to do in [Luke 6:27-28 \(NLT\)](#).

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Which of your relationships do you prioritize? People in your family? People at work? Friends?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - What are the broken pieces of your story? How do they get in the way of your relationships with others? What would it feel like to share those broken pieces with others?
- 3) **DO** - Focus on a single relationship this week. This week's declaration to God is "I will bless and not curse!" Think about that one person and what it means to bless them no matter what he or she does. Then schedule a time to connect with them, ideally in person, to truly listen to his or her story.