

A recent national survey revealed that 80% of the people who are fired from their jobs were fired because they could not effectively relate to people! Peter Drucker, a legend in business leadership, recently told a large group of CEOs, that the number one trait of an effective CEO is that he or she must enjoy the people he works with.

An inability to effectively relate to the people in our lives can destroy the joy in our marriage, our office, our church, and our friendships.

Philippians 1:3-11 gives us four principles that will enable us to enjoy the people in our lives. The first principle comes from Philippians 1:3-5. *"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now."*

#### **Be thankful for the good in people.**

You may read this and think "Be realistic. You don't know the people in my life!" You might say to the apostle Paul, "Sure, you can be thankful for these people, the Philippian church is your favorite one. They supported you, prayed for you, and remained loyal to you when all the others deserted you. You wouldn't say this about a problem church like the Corinthians." But take a look at I Corinthians 1:1-9, and you will discover his letter to this divided, sinful, compromising church was marked with thankfulness. He discovered something to be grateful for and expressed it.

The Bible teaches that all men are sinful, but they're not as bad as they could be. The Bible also teaches that everyone is created in the image of God. The issue is which do we choose to focus on, the sinfulness of man or the image of God imprinted on every soul?

When Paul expressed his gratitude for the good he saw in Philippian Christians, he may have well thought of the wealthy lady named Lydia who was one of the founders of the church. Perhaps he remembered the jailer that trusted

Christ with his whole family. Paul is saying, "When I think of you, I think of the good I see in you because of Christ and I praise God for it." That's one of the keys to enjoying the people in your life.

Pleasant memories are a choice. You can choose to focus on pleasant memories or you can become a "pain collector." You can spend your time rehearsing the hurts that have bruised your soul and the negative circumstances that have frustrated you, or you can choose to see the hand of God in your life and focus on the good that has come your way. The key to enjoying the people in your life is to focus on the best in people and let the grace of God cover the rest.

Unfortunately, some people have mastered the art of nursing their hurts. Two single sisters lived in the same small house on a meager income. They got into a heated argument over some insignificant issue. The house was so small they slept in the same bedroom in separate beds. The conflict between the sisters developed to the point that they put a chalk line down the middle of their bedroom, out the door, across the top of the fireplace, across the table, literally dividing the house in half! As the years went by they refused to speak to one another. They set at the same table at night and would not speak. They slept in the same bedroom, hearing each other breathe at night and refused to speak. They chose to nurse the hurt and build a wall of unforgiveness between them. Their unforgiveness robbed them of their joy and polluted their perspective on life.

Think of the person in your life that's hardest to enjoy. Make a list of at least ten good qualities this person possesses. Allow them to come into your mind when that difficult person crosses your path.

The second principle comes from Philippians, chapter 1, verse 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."*

#### **Be patient with the progress in people.**

This verse illustrates the principle that once you've come to Christ, God continually works on your character until He takes you home to heaven. He began the good work in you at salvation. He will perfect it in an ongoing process of growth until the day of Christ Jesus; until your last breath.

Notice that Paul says "I am confident of this." Paul could enjoy people because he was certain that God was working in their lives. Every one of us are comers. Mentally place a sign around people's necks that reads "under construction". Follow the PBPWGMGIFWY principle. That stands for "Please be patient with me, God is not finished with me yet."

Choose to focus on how far a person has come instead of how far they have to go. Are you a "when and if only" person? A "when and if only" person cannot enjoy others. They always think "when you change this part of your life", or "if only you were different" I could enjoy you. "When and if only" people never enjoy others because the list of "whens" and "if onlys" never stops!

"When and if only" people would say "Amen" to the following poem:

*Believe as I believe, no more, no less.  
That I am right, no one else confess,  
Feel as I feel, think only as I think.  
Eat what I eat, drink what I drink.  
Look as I look, do always as I do,  
And then, and only then,  
Will I fellowship with you.*

The third principle for enjoying people in our lives comes from Philippians 1:7-8: *"For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus."*

#### **Love people from the heart.**

The apostle Paul loved the Philippian Christians. Ten times in Philippians, he mentions how he feels about them. If people are not in your heart they are on your nerves! The apostle Paul was not ashamed to say I love you from the heart. And the source of his love was Jesus Christ.

- I Peter 1:22 *"Love one another from the heart."*
- I John 3:14 *"By this we know we have passed out of spiritual death into spiritual life because we love the brethren."*
- I Peter 4:8 *"Above all be fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins."*

Don't you enjoy being around people who overlook your faults and love you anyway? If you are married, have you learned to love your partner from the heart? Sometimes your mate may say "I'm discouraged, I feel down." You respond by giving them fourteen reasons why they should not feel that way. In times like this that we need to remember that God gave us two ears and one mouth. Translated, that means we should listen twice as much as we speak. Others often need our ears and shoulders far more than they need our mouth.

Jesus Christ modeled loving people from the heart. In John chapter 17, Jesus Christ is praying for His disciples. In chapter 1, verse 6, He makes an astonishing statement about them to God the Father. He says, "Father, they (referring to his eleven disciples) have kept Your Word." The first time I read this I was amazed! I wanted to say "Jesus, are you praying about the same guys mentioned in the New Testament? You mean to tell me Peter kept your word? Peter denied you three times! Are you ignoring things about him?"

Jesus looked at His disciples through the eyes of grace and He loved them from the heart. If He loved them only from the head, He would have said, "Look, you guys blew it, you messed up, and you're out!" By loving them from the heart, He looked at the slope of their life, the intention of their heart and He could say "Father, they have kept Your Word."

Loving people from the heart begins when you truly understand them. An assignment I give to couples in

premarital counseling illustrates the principle. I ask a couple to get two brown paper bags and a set of crayons. On the brown paper bag I ask them to draw the dinner table they grew up around. Draw it as if they are on the ceiling looking down at the table and place the different family members around the table. Color code it to illustrate the different personalities and the mood reflecting the family interaction. I then ask them to write on an 8 ½ X 11 sheet of paper, using only the front and back, an outline of their personal life history, starting with their birth up to the time they met each other. Then go on a date and share their bag and their history with each other. They are to ask lots of questions. Countless couples who have gone through this exercise have shared that they have gained a greater understanding of their mate and with understanding comes compassion and love from the heart.

I'm so grateful as a pastor that I have a wife who loves me from the heart. Every week I go through PMS. PMS for me is "pre-message syndrome". Every pastor goes through this weekly. I also get SNP, that's "Saturday night panic" before Sunday's sermon. My wife has learned to love me from the heart during this time. She doesn't lecture me, she doesn't remind me of how many years I've been doing this. She just loves me from the heart. The fourth principle for enjoying the people in your life is rooted in Philippians 1:9-11. *"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."*

#### **Practice specific praying for people.**

One of the quickest ways to turn a bad relationship into a good one is to practice specific prayer for the person who robs you of your joy. Paul gives us four specific things to

pray for people so that we can learn to enjoy them.

The first is pray that the person will grow in love. That's the essence of what he's saying in Philippians 1:9, *"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment."* His prayer is that people will grow in discerning love. Growing in discerning love is extremely important. For example, the book of Proverbs in the Old Testament gives over 60 different kinds of people: the fool, the wise man, the sluggard, the scoffer, etc. The book also tells you how to relate to each of these people. Paul is reminding us that love is tough and tender. It has a hard and a soft side. We need discernment to know which kind of love to show people. Pray that people will grow in discerning love.

Second, pray that they will make wise choices. This comes from Philippians 1:10, *"so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ."* It's very easy to be influenced by the world's system we live in instead of approving the things that are excellent, learning to separate the good from the bad.

Third, pray that they will do the right thing, Philippians 1:10b, *"in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ."* Paul uses the word "sincere" and "blameless". The word sincere means literally "without wax". In Paul's day people would sell cracked vases to unsuspecting customers. They would put wax in the crack and paint over it. The only way to tell if it was full of wax or not was to hold it up to the light. When a piece had no cracks in it, it was stamped "sincere" or literally "without wax". Paul is saying, pray that people will have the kind of character that stands up to the light of Christ, there are no cracks or cover-ups, they're genuine and real.

The final prayer is in Philippians 1:11: *"having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and*

*praise of God."* Pray that they will live for the glory of God.

Think of the sandpaper personalities in your life, the people that rub you the wrong way and apply Paul's formula for enjoying the people in your life. Begin to pray for them every day and pray these specific prayers.

The four principles for enjoying the people in your life build upon each other. If you first are thankful for the good in people, your attitude will change. And if your attitude changes, you'll find that you are being patient with the progress in people. And being patient with the progress in people helps you love them from the heart. And loving people from the heart motivates you to pray specifically for them.

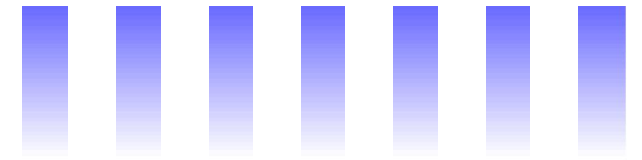
Learning to enjoy the people in your life is rooted in loving them. One principle I've learned is that human love wears out, it dries up. It always comes to the end of its rope. But God's love never ends! God has given the believer in Christ a unending source of love for other people. Romans 5:5: *"The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."*

Do you really want to enjoy the people in your life? Then follow the four principles from Scripture: (1) be thankful for the good in people; (2) be patient with the progress in people; (3) love people from the heart; and (4) pray specifically for people.

Think of the people in your life that are hard to enjoy. Picture at least one of them and apply these four principles today. Trust God and learn to enjoy the people in your life!



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# *How to Enjoy* **THE PEOPLE** *In Your Life*

*By Pastor Steve King*

