



12 Seeds for Successful Relationships

Revised & Expanded Edition

BIBLICALLY BASED PRINCIPLES FOR LIFE





12 Seeds for Successful Relationships
Revised and Expanded Edition

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**“We were not born to be alone.
God created us for relationship.”**

– Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker*





The twelve principles presented here, if reviewed periodically and practiced daily, will help you enjoy more excellent relationships in every area of life.

12  *Seeds*™



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Introduction

The quality of a person's relationships reflects the quality of a person's life. A person may have good physical health and vast wealth, but if relationships are poor, such a life is not really very healthy or very rich.

What is a family without good relationships? Or a team, a church, a business, or a community? What are friendships without good relationships?

Are you aware that Jesus Christ is very much interested in relationships? He spoke often of them. When He was asked to identify the greatest commandment, His answer had a lot to do with relationships. He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself." Mt 22:37


12 BIBLICALLY BASED PRINCIPLES FOR RELATIONSHIPS

The 12 Seeds are Biblically based principles for building and maintaining relationships based upon love. Some or all of the principles may be familiar to you. However, familiarity with principles is not the primary result we seek. In fact, familiarity may actually keep a person from studying and mastering all twelve.

There are people who assume they understand and know how to practice all of the principles. The truth is that many people are confused about what the principles actually mean and how to apply them in daily life. It's common to encounter people who may think they know about principles like *respect*, *integrity* and *synergy*, but their behavior suggests otherwise.

The 12 Seeds are not a magic formula for life. Instead, we present them as some of the guiding values that will, when applied in our lives with the Lord's help, produce





the full harvest we seek: loving behavior that glorifies the Lord, blesses others, and enriches all of life.

ABOUT THIS BOOK


The purpose of this book is to help you better understand and practice twelve relationship-building principles. We believe that many benefits come to everyone involved when all twelve are learned, reviewed periodically, and practiced daily.

We originally published the 12 Seeds in 2000 as a small pocket-size booklet called *12 Seeds of a Prime Quality Relationship*. In 2001 we revised and reprinted the booklet, adding a Bible verse for each seed. In 2002 we published a larger-size 56-page study book, with the title: *12 Seeds for Growing Relationships*. That book was well received and stimulated engaging discussions in classes and groups. This new revised edition takes the core of that book and expands it with material from discussions and workshops we've led, and from other research.

We hope this book will be a practical guide for you to use throughout your life. Each “seed chapter” in Part I helps you better understand each principle and how to apply it in your life. Each chapter includes a number of practical applications – prayers, thoughts, words, actions, and discussion questions – to help you grow each seed.

Part II further equips you to plant and cultivate the seeds in daily life. It offers practical help to actually grow the seeds. Part III offers additional help in using the twelve seeds for transformational impact in your life with the Lord and with other people.

Our prayer is that you'll reap abundant harvests throughout your life in all your relationships!





**“Behold, a sower
went forth to sow . . .”**

From the Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13:3 KJV





PART I

The 12 Seeds

Principles for Successful Relationships



Relationship:

A continuing attachment or association between people who have dealings with each other; a dynamic connection between individuals, or between an individual and a group.

RESPECT

REGARD, ESTEEM, HONOR

**Honor one another
above yourselves.**

– Romans 12:10

Respect is regard for the existence, ideas and opinions of other people. To respect others is to treat them with dignity and honor. The word “respect” is from the Latin word *respectus*, which means to look at, to regard. Regard, or consideration, is a basic form of respect. Esteem is a higher level of respect, and honor is an even higher level of respect.

Respect involves thinking of others, having consideration for them. It is being thoughtful of others, treating them with courtesy.

OTHER WORDS FOR RESPECT

- attention
- esteem
- consideration
- honor
- deference
- regard

RESPECT: IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD

Our relationship with the Lord is, of course, the most important relationship we have. In relating to Him there should be a level of respect that goes beyond regard, beyond esteem, beyond honor. The word that describes this highest level of respect is: worship. The Scripture mentions the word “worship” more than 150 times. The dictionary defines worship as “reverent honor, adoring reverence or regard.” This highest level of respect should be reserved only for the Lord.

“ . . . **this highest level of respect is: worship.**”

The “fear of the Lord” in the Bible involves this high level of respect. Someone has called the fear of the Lord “supreme respect.” The book of Proverbs declares that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”^{Pr 9:10} This fear of the Lord, this “supreme respect,” is not only a gateway to wisdom, but also to a growing relationship with the Lord.

And as we increasingly consider – *think of* – the Lord, our respect for Him grows into ever greater worship of Him. Our relationship with Him also grows.

We are fortunate that the Lord has regard, a form of respect, for people. In the Old Testament He was constantly thinking of people and interacting with them. In the New Testament He even became human and lived among us. When we look at the life of Jesus, we see Him displaying consideration for everyone. Even while suffering on the cross – *for others* – He asked one of His followers to tend to the needs of His mother.

Besides regard or consideration, the Lord also gives even higher levels of respect to His people. He declares, “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word.”^{Is 66:2} And also, “Those who honor Me I will honor.”^{1Sa 2:30}

RESPECT: IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Respect is one of the most powerful positive principles in life. Besides being a gateway to our relationship with the Lord, respect is also a gateway to civil relationships with others. In fact, *respect forms the basis for civility in a group and in a society.*

Respect helps meet the human need for *significance*. We all want to feel important, to feel that our lives have meaning, that we count for something. When we respect others, we remind them of these things.

Besides being the gateway to relationships, respect is also the gateway to the practice of the other principles of the 12 Seeds. For example, in order to encourage someone, we first have to have some regard for them: we need to have some thought or consideration of them before we are likely to say or do anything to encourage them.

Respect is a major ingredient in the growth of successful relationships in any family, friendship, group, team, church, business or community.

Symptoms and consequences . . .

HOW TO TELL WHEN RESPECT IS WEAK OR MISSING

In a self-centered world, showing respect for others is often neglected or dismissed. Some people think of respect as just an optional nicety, or an outdated tradition that was forced upon them by people in their past. Others view respect as a social tactic to be used when it serves to advance a personal agenda.

The failure of so many people to grasp the importance of respect and to practice it regularly has brought many tragic consequences for them and for the people around them.

Always make the other person feel important.

– Dale Carnegie

The lack of respect, *disrespect*, is characterized by *disregard*, *dishonor*, lack of attention, lack of esteem. People tend to ignore one another, acting at times as if others don't even exist. Necessary interactions are uneasy, stressful, even at times confrontational. Rudeness is common. Courtesy is neglected. Politeness is forgotten. People are *inconsiderate*.

Unfortunately, disrespect is a way of life for some people. They know very little about respect. They seldom give it; they seldom receive it. And they may not even realize when they are disrespecting others. Even their humorous little quips and pranks may be thoughtless and disrespectful of others.

Young people sometimes refer to disrespecting or dishonoring a person as “dissing.” It has precipitated individual acts of revenge and even gang retaliations. The highway behavior known as “road rage” is probably linked to a disrespect for other people. Disrespect has caused marriages to break up, friendships to dissolve, customers to never return, churches and groups to dwindle, communities to become cold.

Possible reasons . . .

WHY PEOPLE FAIL TO RESPECT

If respect is so important, and the lack of respect so tragic, why don't we give more of it? Let's look at a few of the possible reasons.

First of all, we are by nature self-centered. We tend to think first – sometimes *only* – of ourselves. Also, we fail to follow our Lord's example. We tend to watch the world so much, with its many examples of disrespect, that we take our eyes off the One who was always concerned about people, always thinking of others.

In a world that tends to degrade people it can be easy to regard people as insignificant. We may come to think

of them as either nuisances who get in our way, or as tools we can use to further our own interests.

Some people excuse themselves from giving respect because they think that others have not yet met their criteria for deserving or “earning” it. They may feel that how they treat others should be dictated by the way people behave. However, this can lead to a downward spiral of ongoing disrespect.

There are people who, unfortunately, know more ways to disrespect others than they know ways to respect them. These people may have never been taught about respect, or how to practice it. Or, they may have been raised in – or now live and work in – environments where there are no consistent examples of respect being expressed or demonstrated.

The good harvest that results . . .

WHEN RESPECT GROWS

When we respect others, it helps them *feel* important. Even more essential, it reminds them that they *are* important. If the Lord treated people as important and valuable, then so should we. Respecting others can have a dramatic and positive effect upon them, and upon their behavior.

When respect grows, people think more highly and more often of others. People feel cared for and loved. It is said of William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, that the last word he uttered on his deathbed was “others.”

Overall quality of life increases when respect grows.

**To have respect for ourselves guides
our morals; and to have deference
for others governs our manners.**

– Laurence Sterne

There is a “common courtesy” among people. People are blessed, since respect is a pleasant thing to give and receive. Here’s a summary of some of the blessings when respect grows:

- People are reminded that they are significant
- A proper self-image is nourished
- Overall quality of life improves
- Friendships are enhanced
- Other qualities (seeds) are able to grow
- Relationships grow
- Family life improves
- Teams become more effective
- Churches grow in size and effectiveness
- Businesses become more people-oriented
- Communities flourish

And the Lord is worshipped and glorified.

NOTE: The “Practical Applications” section on the next few pages is included in order to provide:

1. examples of practical ways to grow the seed
 2. additional material for further study and discussion
 3. a “menu” from which you can select specific items that you will add to your own personal practice
- Each “seed chapter” includes a similar section.

PRAYER

Some suggestions . . .

Dear Lord, please help me to have the highest respect for You. Help me to worship You in my thoughts, words and actions.

Dear Lord, thank You for having regard for people.

Dear Lord, please help me to treat people with dignity and respect.

THOUGHTS & ATTITUDES

Meditate on Scriptures like these . . .

Exodus 20:12

Proverbs 11:16

Romans 12:10

Romans 13:7

Philippians 2:3

I Peter 2:17

Affirm thoughts like these. . .

- The Lord is great, and worthy of the highest respect! I will worship Him!
- The Lord created people, and He loves them!
- People are important, including me!
- Even when they may appear otherwise, people are important.
- The people around me are important!
- _____ is an important person!
- I will treat _____ with respect!

(Put a person's name in the blanks above)

Other suggestions . . .

- Remember how the Lord respected people.
- Memorize the theme verse at the start of this chapter.
- Think about other people.
- Remember people's names.

WORDS

Suggested things to say or write to others . . .

- "You are important!"
- "_____, I respect your opinion."
- "What do you think, _____?"
- "I've been thinking of you."
- "I'd like to hear your ideas on this."
- "I'd like to know what's important to you."

ACTIONS

Suggestions . . .

- Look at the person who's speaking.
- Hold the door open for others.
- Dress appropriately and respectfully.
- Be on time – respecting a person's time is respecting them.

DISCUSSION

For personal reflection or group consideration . . .

1. What do the Scripture references in the Thoughts & Attitudes section say about respect?
2. Who should we respect? Why?
3. Do I respect others? How?
4. What can I do to show greater respect to others?
5. What will I commit to changing or doing?