

# INSTRUMENTS IN THE REDEEMER'S HANDS

## Lesson 5 – Love I: Building Relationships in Which God's Work Will Thrive

### Concepts and Objectives

- Concept: God always changes people in the context of relationships based on love.
- Personalized: I must build relationships in which love provides a context for God's work of change.
- Related to others: Biblical love demands a higher agenda for my relationships than making myself and the other person happy.

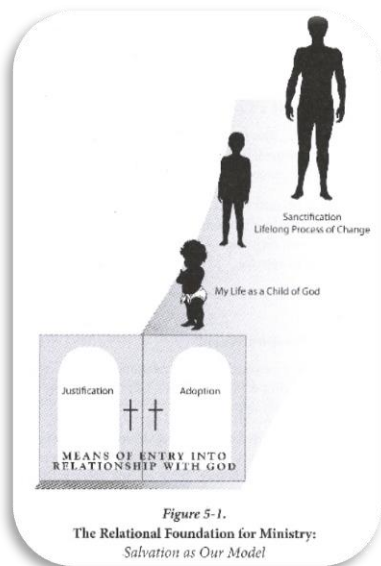
### Lesson Content

To say that God wants our relationships to be loving and redemptive means three things:

1. That he has a higher goal for our friendships than our present, personal happiness.
2. That he wants our relationships to provide a context for his ongoing work of change in and through us.
3. That we need to build relationships that promote and encourage this work of change.

### Our Relationship with God

- In justification by faith, God declares us to be righteous, granting us the righteousness of Christ.
- In adoption, God welcomes us into his family as his children.
- Our standing before God is secure in Christ.
- Our condition is that we need to be conformed to the image of Christ.
- That process of change is called sanctification.



- Only those who have a relationship with God through justification and adoption will undergo the radical change process of progressive sanctification (Romans 8:29-30)

### Summary:

- Redemptive activity always takes place in the context of relationships.
- God’s first step in changing us is to draw us into relationship with him.
- Our relationships are an essential part of the work of change God is completing in us and in others.

## Four Elements of a Loving Relationship

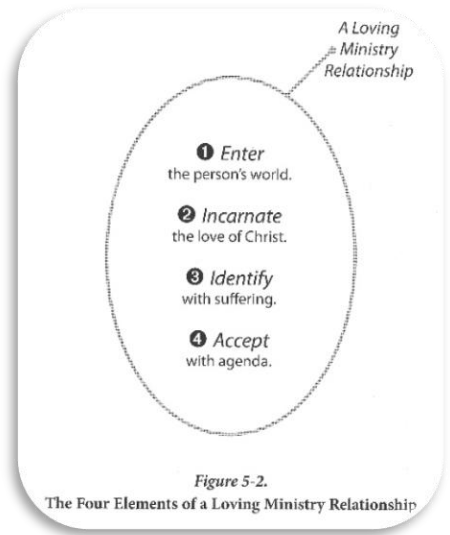
### 1. Enter the Person’s World

Recognize the entry gate God gives us.

An “entry gate” is this particular person’s experience of the situation, problem, or relationship.

To recognize the entry gate, we need to ask:

- What is this person struggling with in the midst of the situation?
- What has this person in its grip right now?



Three things result from recognizing and responding to the entry gate issue:

1. The building of horizontal trust.
2. The strengthening of vertical hope.
3. The beginning of a commitment to the process of change.

Three ways to identify the person’s particular struggle in the midst of the situation:

1. Listen for emotive words.
2. Listen for interpretive words.
3. Listen for self-talk.

Questions you could ask:

## 2. Incarnate the love of Christ.

God will transform people not only through what we say, but also through the way we display the love God has shown to us and to them.

In Colossians 3:15-17, we are called to have Scripture so deeply part of us that we are wise and thankful, and therefore constantly prepared to teach and admonish (confront) one another.

In Colossians 3:12-14, we are called to put on Christ (his character) as we minister to others.

Four reasons to “incarnate” Christ:

1. It offers a living example. We become the physical evidence of the very things we are speaking to others.
2. It keeps Christ central. We are not only incarnating truth; we are incarnating Christ to them.
3. It is a protection for you. The sin of the person we are ministering to will be revealed in our relationship (Gal. 6:1).
4. It gives evidence of what the Lord can do. We get to demonstrate the power of Christ’s transforming grace, maybe even by seeking forgiveness ourselves.

## The Big Question: Are you building relationships in which God’s work of change can thrive?

### Concepts

1. Change takes place in the context of relationships.
2. People’s struggles provide entry gates that help us build relationships promoting God’s work of change.
3. God uses not only what we say, but how we incarnate the love of Christ to encourage change in others’ lives.

## Personalized

1. Are my relationships motivated by a desire for personal happiness or a desire for God's work of change?
2. Do I search for (and take advantage of) the entry gate opportunities God gives me?
3. Do I seek not only to be a spokesman for the transforming power of God's grace, but the evidence of it as well.

## Related to Others

1. Right now, where is God revealing the struggles of others to me? Am I entering these gates of opportunity?
2. What motivates me most in my current relationships – God's work of change or my own idea of self-centered happiness?
3. In my current relationships, where is God giving me opportunities to demonstrate (by my character and my living) God's power to transform hearts.

## Make It Real

1. As you think about your Personal Ministry Opportunity, how might you revise your goals? In what ways have your goals been less than redemptive? In what ways have you either failed to accept the person or given up on a godly agenda for change? Make your responses a matter of consistent prayer.
2. What entry gates into the experience of the person or group have you chosen? Write down some questions that would help you enter the person's or group's world with understanding and love.
3. What might it look like for you to incarnate Christ's love to that person? Try to think of ways that don't involve words! What character qualities do you need to exhibit? Think about examples where others have done this for you.