

## Relationships: A Mess Worth Making Chp 1-3

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Small Group Discussion Guide--Some questions are taken from "Change and Your Relationships: A Mess Worth Making"

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Note to Discussion Leader: There are two sections below depending on your group preference—Book Discussion or Bible Discussion. Of course this is your guide to mix and match and modify as you see fit. I believe there is too much information to go through all the questions, so focus on what you think is best for your group.

## Opening Question

What comes to mind when you hear the word “Relationships”?

## Book Discussion

Page 8

“In our human wisdom, we would settle for relational détente, but God wants to bring us to the end of ourselves so that we would see our need for a relationship with him as well as with others. Every painful thing we experience in relationships is meant to remind us of our need for him. And every good thing we experience is meant to be a metaphor of what we can only find in him.”

Q1: According to the authors what are we prone to want in our relationships? How is that different from what God wants in our relationships?

“To quote C. S. Lewis again, this primary vertical relationship is foundational to everything the Bible says about relationships.

When I have learnt to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now. In so far as I learn to love my earthly dearest at the expense of God and instead of God, I shall be moving towards the state in which I shall not love my earthly dearest at all. When first things are put first, second things are not suppressed but increased.”

Q2: Is our relationship with God connected to our relationship with others? How?

Pages 9-13

On these pages you find 8 Biblical facts about relationships.

Q3: Which one struck you the most? Why?

Pages 16-17

Q4: What do the scenarios on p.16 have in common?

Q5: Is it ok to keep to ourselves so that we don't get hurt and don't hurt anyone else?

Page 23

"That evening in the grocery store parking lot, my problem was not just that I didn't love my family as I should. My problem was that I didn't love God as I should. That weakened my love for my family. My panic was about more than being overwhelmed in my responsibilities; it revealed a lack of trust in God. We can't move toward community with one another until we have been drawn into community with God."

### **1 John 5:2 ESV**

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

Q6: How does this change the way people tend to look at problems in relationships?

Page 26-27

"John Calvin said, "For errors can never be uprooted from human hearts until a true knowledge of God is planted therein." If there are problems in your relationships, the solution starts with God. Typically, we start with what we want. But starting with yourself and your own perceived wants and needs will bring you into collision with another person doing the same things....Only when we start with God—someone bigger than ourselves—can we escape the destructive results of our own selfishness."

Q7: What does "our own selfishness" look like and how does it contribute to destructive results?

## **Bible Study—Our Communal God**

Read John 17:20-26

Q:1 For whom and for what is Jesus praying in this part of His prayer?

Q2: What is the model for community Jesus sees for His people?

Q3: If God himself is a community, what does it mean to be human, made in God's likeness?

Q4: In Christ's prayer, what is one of the purposes for human community?

Q5: Why do we need Christ to be praying for us?

Q6: Christ not only prays for our unity with one another but that we would also have community with whom?

Q7: Is there anything else about this prayer and its background that shows God's deep commitment to creating true community?

Q8: Think about the stages of a person's life beginning from birth. What can you identify that shows we were designed to be in community with others?

## Prayer Focus

Page 12 "What happens in the messiness of relationships is that our hearts are revealed, our weaknesses are exposed, and we start coming to the end of ourselves. Only when this happens do we reach out for the help God alone can provide. Weak and needy people finding their hope in Christ's grace are what mark a mature relationship. The most dangerous aspect of your relationships is not your weakness, but your delusions of strength."