

Getting the Rocks out of Relationships

Intro: Relationships are a lot like car engines, when they begin to knock it is an indication of some trouble internally and it is headed for the rock pile if not corrected.

Do you sometimes find your relationships with other people knocking internally and headed for the rocks of despair and you wonder how it happened and what you can do to repair them?

The goal is **repair**, not **despair**, so I would like to think about that very subject of rocks in relationships with you for a little while today.

I. The cause of the rocks in relationships

Nothing matters more than relationships. Our relationship, first to God and second, our relationship to other people.

I Corinthians 13:1,2 reminds us of this when we read it If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody.

It is also amazing as to how much these two intertwine. If our relationship is good with God and bad with other people then our relationship with God is probably in trouble as well. It has been said this way, "Two brothers cannot be at war with each other and both of them be at peace with their father."

Someone has observed that we are often like porcupine Christians. We all have many good points but we can't get close to one another. So relationships are of the utmost importance yet we must also remember that these relationships are never easy because we are all sinners.

Hear the Word of the Lord Ecclesiastes 7:20 says *There is not a single person in all the earth who is always good and never sins.*

Galatians 5:17 reminds us The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict.

There are no perfect relationships because there are no perfect people and yet every human being wants to have meaningful relationships.

Every human being has a desire to be fully known and to know others fully, to be understood and also to understand. So we try to get along with one another, develop deep relationships and understand each other, but most of the time it just doesn't work out. Why is this?

What's the real problem in our relationships? What is the biggest rock that puts relationships on the rocks? When you boil it all down, the rock at the root of every problem is **self-centeredness**.

James 4:1-2 *"Do you know where your fights and arguments come from? They come from the selfish desires that war within you. You want things but you do not have them so you argue and you fight."*

Thought: Every area of our lives is stained with self-centeredness. It is not my nature to think of you nor yours to think of me. Probably not one of us was staying up late this last week worrying about someone else's problems were we? We may be able to clean up our behavior so we look respectable in society but inside there's still a core of self-centeredness that stains everything we do.

Jesus said this in Matthew 15:18 *"The things that come out of the mouth come from the heart and these make a man unclean."*

It's not outward behavior that makes us unclean; it's the stuff that comes out of our heart. Self-centeredness is extremely destructive. It destroys homes, children, marriages, long time friendships, churches, communities, and if not careful, it can even destroy nations.

Sad to say, we're seeing the decline of our great nation right now. A nation that is consumed with self-centeredness. What's in it for me? I couldn't care less what happens to anybody else. What's in it for me? What are the U S interests in each nation we deal with.

If self-centeredness is the rock we are stumbling over, how can we become more other-centered?

1. I HAVE TO FACE UP TO MY SELFISH SINFUL NATURE.

I have to fully and freely admit just how selfish I really am most of the time. I'm so selfish and it's just so natural to me. But the Bible says I have to admit it. 1 John 1:8 says *"If we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."*

If we want better relationships then we're going to have to ask God for a deeper awareness of our own self-centeredness. We need to pray and say, "God, help me this next week to see how self-centeredness stains every area of my life." Even the good parts.

Please help me to be aware how much my own self-centeredness enters into the things I do, the things I say, the things I feel, the way that I interact and react to other people in circumstances."

A good prayer to pray is Psalm 139:23-24 *"Search me, O God and know my heart Try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any wicked way in me. Lead me in the way everlasting."*

2. I HAVE TO FACE UP TO MY DISAPPOINTMENTS IN LIFE

Face up to the ways that I've been disappointed and hurt in life. What does that have to do with self-centeredness? A lot.

We can't deal with self-centeredness without dealing with disappointments, as we will see, but we should not be surprised that we have trouble.

Jesus tells us why in John 16:33. He says *"In the world you will have trouble."* Life is not fair so we might as well get on with living it anyway. To be gut-level honest about the disappointments we've had in life it is actually the way for us to grow. Face them in order to deal with them.

Some people are disappointed in a husband or a wife. Some are disappointed in a child because they didn't turn out the way you thought they were going to and deep inside you really secretly think, man does this make me look bad. Some folks are deeply disappointed in a parent even to the point that they may even be ashamed of them. Maybe you have had friends who disappointed you, or even a pastor.

Life is disappointing! It is not a perfect world and it isn't always fair. So, why should I face up to my disappointments as a way of removing rocks from relationships? A couple of reasons.

When we really face up to our disappointment we discover the real root of it. We've actually been expecting other people to meet the needs that only God can meet.

When that happens we are setting ourselves up for disappointment. "How dare you not meet my needs! I married you. I'm a part of your family. How dare you not meet my needs!" What is that at its root? **Self-centeredness**. "I deserve better than this! Disappointment is saying, "You let me down!" I'm not thinking about your needs but mine.

We also need to face up to our disappointment because, until we deal with it, we will always use our disappointments and hurts as an excuse to justify our own selfishness.

There is no excuse for self-centeredness no matter how much we've been hurt. This in no way minimizes our pain, belittles it, or try to negate it because some of you have had massive heartache and pain, major hurts, hurts that no human being should ever have to deal with. We feel bad for you and God also hurts with you. But there is an issue that is far more damaging to our soul than anything anybody else can ever do to us - even worse than abuse. **It's self-centeredness.**

It is this very thing that puts constant rocks in future relationships or makes the relationships we are presently in, miserable. So not only are we hurt from the past but we are hurting in the present and will continue to hurt in the future

When we are self-centered, we become just like the person who hurts us because when they were hurting us, they were expressing their own self-centeredness. So I have to let go and forgive.

3. FOCUS MORE ON THE HOPE OF HEAVEN

You may be asking, how does that relate to the rocks in our present day relationship troubles? The fact is selfishness is always rooted in (Here and Now) thinking. When I think all that matters is the here and now and if I never think about eternity, I tend to be more self-centered.

That's when I forget that this life is nothing more than the warm up act, the kindergarten or dress rehearsal - of my forever. The fact is, when I can put any relationship problems in light of my forever then I can find a lot fewer rocks to trip over in this life

The strongest antidote to self-centered living, or that big stumbling block, in most relationships is to live in light of eternity.

4. FOCUS MORE ON GOD'S GRACE TO ME.

The bad news is: I'm always blowing it. The good news is: God is always forgiving me..

Colossians 2:14 *"God canceled our debt [it was paid for by Jesus] which listed all the rules we failed to follow. He took away that record with its rules and nailed it to the cross."*

He now puts His Spirit inside of us when we open our heart to Him and that gives us the power to do things you've never been able to do - for instance things like, stop being selfish and throwing rocks into the paths of our relationships.

I Corinthians 10:13 says *But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.*

So every time I am feeling selfish and think about a relationships problem then I need to stop quickly and think about God's grace to me in my relationship with Him, and then apply some of that grace to the person I am having a problem with. That will help remove some of the rocks that might presently be hindering that relationship.

5 . FOLLOW THE SPIRIT'S LEADING.

Galatians 5:25,26 says *If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or irritate one another, or be jealous of one another.*

What's the result for when I follow the Spirit in my life? The Spirit produces these things, the nine fruit of the Spirit: love and joy, peace and patience, kindness and goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Question: Do you think our relationships would have fewer rocks in them if we had these fruit in them all along? I believe they would.

Compare that to the list of the works of the flesh which says when I'm living selfishly, I'm hating, making trouble, being jealous, getting angry, getting selfish, making people angry with each other, causing division, feeling envy etc.

We see that to help remove the rocks that cause so much problem in our relationships, we need to do some work but it is well worth it. The difficult part is to stop and see our personal selfishness as the main culprit and then try and follow some of these suggestions to overcome that.

Lets try and remove rocks instead of throwing them and we will find a lot more joy and peace as we live together in this world.

In closing, we need to remember that without Jesus in our life there is no relationship and that puts a big rock in our way. To remove this rock, read these next few lines and follow the instructions and you will be assured of a relationship you will be eternally grateful for

Realize you are a sinner Romans 3:23

Understand that the payday for sin is death or eternal conscious separation from God.
Romans 6:23a

Know that there is a way of escape for you. Romans 6:23b and John 1:12

Desire to escape and pray this or a similar prayer.

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them]. Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

On the _____ day of _____ I became a Christian by inviting Jesus Christ into my life to forgive my sin.

Signed: _____

If you have further questions or have chosen to do this, be sure to let us know so we can help you, pray for you and encourage you in your new life.

You can reach us at lapeerchurch@gmail.com Subject line: (Salvation)