

MODULE 3: RELATIONSHIPS

Your right relationship to God comes first. It drives your interactions with others to the highest of places. Through the support of the Holy Spirit (God), our “Fruits of the Spirit”—such as love, joy, peace, and patience—result in strong, pure, and loving relationships with those around us. This module examines the origin of healthy relationships and how they can be sustained.

SESSION 1: A NEW IDENTITY LEADS TO A NEW WAY OF LIVING

Key Ideas for This Session:

- Your body, soul and spirit are three distinct but interrelated parts.
- Your soul is what makes you, you. Your spirit is how you relate to God.
- You are not a spirit; You have a spirit.
- When you are “reborn” into a right relationship with God, your spirit is renewed.
- Key verse: 1 Thessalonians 5:23:

May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Human Beings Are Made Up of Different Parts Including Body, Soul, and Spirit:

Once we begin to understand these three distinct parts as both independent and interrelated, we will start to see our relationship to God in a whole new way. We will see that when our yearning for the Holy Spirit is satisfied, it impacts our soul and body. We will understand how to prioritize the things we value, in keeping with a heart for God.

Before we dig into defining these parts, how do you see them as different or the same?

The body is the tangible part of you—your earthly container. The way you treat your body can affect your soul for better or for worse. The Bible refers to your body as extremely valuable:

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your bodies.

The soul of a person is usually understood to be the unique make up of a person—the thing that makes you different from every other person. This includes your intellect or thought processes, your mind, your will, as well as your emotions and personality. The soul is what makes you, you—it is how you understand yourself and how you relate to others.

The spirit is the spiritual or immaterial being or life of a person as distinct from the body and the soul. A person is not a spirit but has a spirit. The spirit is how you relate to God. The word spirit comes from a Greek word that means breath or wind. The original state of human beings was their spirit in close relationship to God who created life. The state of human beings as a result of sin is their spirit out of relationship with or separated and alienated from God. Sometimes the Scripture uses the word heart in referring to the spirit—the heart of a person is his or her spirit and that spirit affects the soul—what a person believes and thinks and how a person relates to others.

John 3:5

Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

If you are in right relationship with God through Jesus Christ, your spirit is renewed or revitalized.

Read the following Scripture verses:

Ezekiel 36:26

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

When you are spiritually renewed and reconnected with God, the Holy Spirit gives you a new desire to be in relationship with God and to live according to His ways. You are a new “creature” and the new perspective from which you view the world and everyone around you will change.

Read the following verses:

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.

Ephesians 4:22-25

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body.

What do these verses tell us about the mindset of people who have come into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ? Please explain your answer.

Whose responsibility is it to renew your mind?

Does this renewed mindset make a difference in how we relate to other people?

Why does the Bible warn specifically against “falsehood” (lies) and encourage truth?

Even if we have a new heart or renewed spirit, we don’t receive a new soul (mind and emotions) in the same manner, according to the Bible. Our thoughts and attitudes about things and people around us have to change. We have spent years learning a lot of bad habits; now we need to learn the thoughts and behaviours that come from a renewed relationship with God or a right relationship with God.

The Bible gives us clear instruction on how to properly think about other people, and ultimately, how to treat them. These are referred to as basic spiritual principles—the things we believe and know to be right according to Scripture. It seems like it would be easy (and a joy) to follow these. However, our principles will often come into conflict with our emotions—our feelings or gut reactions in response to something.

How would you define these words in your own words?

Principle:

Emotion:

Where do our emotions come from, or what part of ourselves do they represent? (See the first part of this of this session)

Principles are often defined as the core values that we know should govern our lives and guide our actions. Do you think we create our own principles or do we adopt principles that are from outside ourselves?

Principles do exist apart from how we feel and what we think. There are good and healthy principles and there are also unhealthy and negative principles. We believe that good principles ultimately come from God and that these are spiritual principles that are given to us by the Holy Spirit. Scripture refers to these principles as the “Fruits of the Spirit.”

Using your Bible, look up Galatians 5:22-23 and list each of the “Fruits of the Spirit.”

Each of these fruits represent principles for “right” living. In certain situations, our emotions may go against these principles. There will be a disconnect between how we should respond (the principle—which is connected to our spirit) and what we are feeling (our emotions—which are connected to our soul).

Do the “fruits of the spirit” change?

Do our emotions change?

Read Jesus’ words below. Keep in mind that He said these things at a point when He knew what was about to happen to Him and the suffering He was about to experience.

John 12:25-26

Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.

Mark 14:32-36

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³ He took Peter, James and John along with Him, and He began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴ “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” He said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.” ³⁵ Going a little farther, He fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from Him. ³⁶ “Abba, Father,” He said, “everything is possible for You. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what You will.”

How do the verses describe how Jesus was feeling?

How is this an example of tension between principle and emotion?

Should a person’s life be controlled or governed by emotions or by principles? Another way of looking at this question is by asking ourselves, “who is

ultimately in charge of my life?” Am I the final authority so that I can do as I feel and desire? Or is God my authority and therefore I live by the help and strength of His Spirit according to God’s way for me?

If people live according to God’s authority, what can they do when their emotions lead them to act or respond in a way that is contrary to the spiritual principle?

ROLE PLAY

In this scenario, Kate is irritating Jen with her repetitive questioning.

KATE: Are you going to the grocery store tonight?

JEN: You asked me that already. The answer is the same—yes, after I have tidied up in the kitchen.

KATE: Oh, ok because I was really hoping you are going because there are a couple of things I absolutely need. You are going for sure, right?

JEN: UGH!!! I am so done. Go to the grocery store yourself and leave me alone!

Repeat the role play but this time, have Jen respond with an answer that reflects the fruits of the spirit principles.

What was the difference in the above situation when Jen followed her principles versus her emotions?

Read John 14:24 and 5:16-17.

²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. ¹⁶ So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute Him. ¹⁷ In His defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I too am working."

By whose authority was Jesus speaking?

Read Jesus' words in John 17:4, Mark 14:36 and John 19:30, in anticipation of His death:

I have brought You glory on earth by finishing the work You gave me to do.

³⁶ "Abba, Father," He said, "everything is possible for You. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what You will."

³⁰ When He had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

We read that Jesus said "...not what I will, but what You will." We understand from this that Jesus not only set aside His personal feelings in order to obey God, but that His authority to act came from the Father and He was in agreement with the Father's plan.

What does this have to do with relationships? If we make decisions based only on emotions, we will tend to make selfish decisions. If we make decisions based on God's way (as we learn from Scripture), we will live in right relationship with God and with people. When the Bible teaches us to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 19:19), we can trust that when we love others, we are doing so on God's authority and that we have His power to do so.

Break into small groups and discuss the following if there is time, or consider these topics this week:

- *How can you treat your body as "a temple" in your relationship with others?*
- *Knowing that following a principled life is God's way, how do you manage your immediate emotional response to a situation?*

- *If God requires of you, that you renew your mind, what steps might you take? How might you go about it?*
- *Which of the “fruits of the Spirit” do you find hardest to follow? Pray this week for God’s help in these areas.*