



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 15.10.2023

“Relationship Expectations”

Preachers

Joel & Sharon Chelliah

Scripture

“Without oxen a stable stays clean,
but you need a strong ox for a large harvest.”

Proverbs 14:4 (NLT)

Thought

Strong relationships are important - for us, for our communities and for the Church. If we build strong relationships, we build strong communities, and if we have strong communities, it builds a strong Church. The same is true of marriage. Strong marriages lead to strong families which builds a strong Church.

No matter what type of relationships we have - whether friendships or work associates or mentors or marriage - learning how to build a solid foundation is vital for our flourishing and that of the world around us. We need our hearts and minds revived, renewed with a fresh approach and view of relationships, yet this revival doesn't start from the outside - it starts from the inside out.

The first place we should see transformation is not in our work or our ministry, but in our homes. It's in our closest relationships, our every-day, take-for-granted relationships where the greatest training takes place.



In proverbs, we read a rather odd verse about Oxen and stables, yet the truth of this verse has far reaching implications.

Life can be messy. Relationships can be messy. In fact, it's almost impossible to journey life with others and keep our stables clean. Life happens, things become chaotic, we're constantly cleaning up after ourselves and after others and we might well wish that we could just enjoy the solace of an empty stable without all the mess, yet the truth of this verse is that if we want a harvest, if we want the strength that relationships bring, there is going to be mess.

So often when we approach relationships, we have unrealistic expectations. We don't expect the mess. We picture a clean stable, we imagine everything neat and tidy and lined up perfectly - but life doesn't happen this way, and until we're ready to roll with life's punches, we might just be missing out on the growth that comes with the chaos.

Disappointment is the gap between our expectations and reality. It builds frustration, it leads to disconnection. We fill this gap with our own self-talk; "They don't love me", "See, they don't care for me!". And yet, the onus is on us to check that what we are expecting from a relationship is healthy and correct. If we want an abundant harvest, we're going to have to put up with messy mangers.

This applies to every relationship we have - including marriage. Whether we're married, not married, or on the other side of a broken marriage, it's wise to set healthy expectations of what a relationship looks like.

There is no such thing as a perfect relationship, and there's no such thing as a perfect marriage. Perfection is simply the wrong unit of measurement. We often think that a healthy relationship doesn't involve disagreement or friction, yet it's actually more beneficial to engage in healthy conflict than it is to live with faux peace. Friction smooths our edges, it's the challenges that refine us. Conflict isn't the issue, rather modelling healthy resolution is the key. To work through our differing expectations and to come to a healthy outcome is infinitely valuable.



As we persevere through the highs and lows of relationships, as we build healthy rhythms of communication, as we refine and reset our own expectations of what productive relationships look like, we will start to see strength build, and in the end, we will see a great harvest.

It takes time. It takes honesty and reflection, and above all, it takes commitment. Commitment to walk the journey through the mess, commitment to rely on God's strength and His refining of our hearts and minds, and grace to ourselves and others in our lives as we learn this art of setting healthy expectations in every relationship we build.

Discussion Points

1. What are some of the different relationships I have in my world?
2. If frustration is a sign of mis-matched expectations, does this point to some areas of relationship in my life that need God's fresh guidance and grace? (Consider pausing and pondering on this now, and as scenarios come to mind, lift them to God in prayer).
3. How then, even this week, can I be intentional about building healthy relationships, having healthy conversations and growing in the midst of the mess?

Personal application + Prayer

Lord,

You understand my heart, and you know the messiness that comes with life. You also know everything that my heart desires and what I long for. Help me to find my fulfilment in You and You alone, and to redefine my expectations of others in a way that brings you glory. Help me, Father, to grow in the art of living life with others, of being less focused on my own needs, for I know that You care for me and will never leave me. I place my trust afresh in You. Lead me in your ways.

Amen.