

Committed to Positive Relationships (CPR)

Building Christ-Centred Relationships that Last

Introduction

Our Commitment

- We can disagree, have different opinions, and even experience conflict—while still being godly.
 - Different perspectives are not a threat. God created each of us uniquely.
 - The goal is not simply **communication**.
 - **The goal is CONNECTION.**
 - Positive relationships create **shared meaning**, trust, and deeper friendship.
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Marriage Application

Healthy marriages intentionally focus on:

1. Becoming better friends and increasing positive feelings toward one another.
2. Learning healthier ways to handle conflict.
3. Building shared meaning and creating opportunities to connect.

These same principles apply to friendships, families, ministry teams, work colleagues and every significant relationship.

Biblical Foundation

1 Corinthians 13

Love is patient and kind...

1 John 4:19

We love because He first loved us.

John 13:35

By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.

Philippians 4:8–9

Whatever is true...
Whatever is noble...
Whatever is right...
Whatever is pure...
Whatever is lovely...
Whatever is admirable...

Think about such things...

Then the God of peace will be with you.

Research on Healthy Relationships

Studies of happy, stable marriages found:

- During conflict, they maintain approximately **5 positive interactions for every 1 negative interaction (5:1)**.
- Outside conflict, the ratio increases to approximately **20:1 positive interactions**.

The strongest predictors of relationship breakdown are four destructive behaviours known as:

The Four Horsemen

These principles apply to **every relationship**, not just marriage.

1. Criticism	2. Contempt	3. Defensiveness	4. Stonewalling
Complaints are normal. Criticism attacks a person's character. Examples:	The most destructive relationship behaviour.	An attempt to protect ourselves that often shifts blame. Examples:	Emotionally checking out. Signs include: • Silence • No eye contact

• "You're so forgetful." • "You just don't care." • "Why are you so selfish?" • Name-calling. Antidote: Use a gentle or softened start-up. Address the issue—not the person.	It communicates superiority. Examples: • Sarcasm • Cynicism • Mockery • Eye-rolling • Hostile humour • Name-calling Contempt communicates disgust. Antidote: Build a culture of fondness and admiration.	• "Why are you blaming me?" • "There's just no pleasing you." • Playing the innocent victim. Defensiveness escalates conflict. Antidote: Take responsibility—even for your small part.	• No listening cues • Emotional withdrawal Antidote: • Self-soothe • Stay emotionally connected • Return to the conversation when calm
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Understanding Anger

- Anger itself is not the problem.
- Anger is a normal human emotion.
- Anger alone does not predict healthy or unhealthy relationships.
- However... When anger combines with the Four Horsemen, relationships become highly vulnerable.
- Remember: **Anger is acceptable. Abuse is not.**

The Sound Relationship House

Today we focus on the **Friendship System**.

Four foundational levels:

1. Build Love Maps
2. Share Fondness and Admiration
3. Turn Towards Instead of Away
4. The Positive Perspective



Why Love Matters

- Three things remain - Faith. Hope. Love. The greatest of these is Love. (1 Corinthians 13)
 - Our goal is becoming more like Christ.
 - We are called to:
 - Belong
 - Believe
 - Become like Christ
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Level 1 – Build Love Maps

Key Question

How well do we really know one another?

Healthy relationships continually update their knowledge of each other's inner world.

Know:

- Dreams
- Worries
- Pressures
- Hopes
- Fears
- Current life changes

Love Maps must be continually updated throughout life's transitions.

St Francis of Assisi

Seek first to understand, rather than to be understood.

LEVEL 1 - Building Relational Maps

Instructions

- Sit facing one another.

- One person selects a card.
- Read the question aloud.
- Answer what you believe your partner or friend would say.
- Your partner confirms or gently corrects.
- Swap roles.

This is **not** a competition.

The goal is curiosity, understanding, and connection.

Love Map Questions

Open-Ended Questions

Instead of asking questions with “Yes” or “No” answers, ask open ended questions.

Closed question: "Did you call the plumber?"

Open question:

"If you had unlimited money, what would your dream home look like?"

Open questions reveal someone's inner world.

Examples include:

- How has work been affecting you lately?
 - What are you excited about right now?
 - What worries you most?
 - What dreams do you have for the future?
 - How have you changed over the past year?
 - What adventure would you love to have before you die?
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Pit Stop

Our Goal is to first understand

Don't immediately relate everything back to your own experience.

Instead:

- Listen carefully.
- Validate feelings.
- Ask more questions.
- Stay curious.

The goal is **connection**, not fixing.

Biblical Culture

Culture shapes communication. Some cultures communicate directly. Some may feel it is foreign to speak words of life or affirmation. For example in Asian culture many things are not spoke out. Even disagreements and feelings are buried, so that people can just move on. Often a form of resolution happens around a meal.

However, as Christians our primary identity is not our ethnicity. Our primary identity is in Christ. We cannot use our culture as an excuse for not communicating or connecting.

Remember God's Word (made flesh) is our final authority.

Examples:

- The Father spoke identity over Jesus: "This is My beloved Son."
- Speak the truth in love.
- Do not grow weary in doing good.
- Forgive freely.
- Die to self.

SECRET SAUCE in RELATIONSHIPS is HUMOUR –

The joy of the Lord is our strength. Joy strengthens relationships. Never underestimate humour and laughter.

Level 2 - Share C.A.R.E.

Relationships flourish through:

- Compassion
- Appreciation/ Admiration
- Respect

- Encouragement

These attitudes build an atmosphere where people feel safe and valued.

They are the antidote to contempt.

Emotional Bank Account

Relationships operate like bank accounts.

Every interaction is either:

- A deposit Or a withdrawal

Healthy relationships make **small deposits often**.

Level 3 - Turn Towards Instead of Away

Throughout every day we receive "bids" for connection.

Examples:

- "Guess what happened today?"
- "Can I show you something?"
- "How was your day?"

We can:

- Turn Toward
- Turn Away
- Turn Against

Couples who consistently turn toward one another remain connected over time.

Family Conversation Starters

Ask questions that build positivity.

Examples:

- What was the best part of today?
- What mistake helped you learn today?
- Who inspired you today?
- What could have gone better today?

These conversations train us to notice God's goodness.

Matching Emotion

- People don't always need solutions.
 - They need someone who understands.
 - Match emotion with emotion.
 - Celebrate joy. Comfort sadness.
 - Sit with disappointment.
 - Connection comes before correction.
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Repair

Every relationship experiences mistakes and arguments.

Healthy relationships repair quickly.

Look beneath anger.

Often the deeper emotion is:

- Fear
- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Hurt

Repair restores connection. (We will talk more about REPAIR in week 2 and 3)

Level 4 – The Positive Perspective

When the first three friendship levels are healthy...

The fourth level develops naturally.

We begin giving one another the benefit of the doubt.

When friendship weakens, we enter:

Negative Sentiment Override(NSO)

- We begin expecting disappointment.
- We interpret neutral events negatively.
- We rewrite the history of the relationship through a negative lens.
- Watch for words like:
 - "Always" & "Never"
- These are warning signs.

Romans 12 reminds us:

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Healthy relationships intentionally retrain their thinking.

Looking Ahead

Next session: Forgiveness & Boundaries

Managing Conflict

- Not every disagreement can be resolved.
 - Many conflicts are **perpetual**, some are **solvable**.
 - Our goal is not to eliminate conflict.
 - Our goal is to manage conflict with wisdom, grace, and love. We will deal with managing conflict in Week 3.
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Final Challenge

Be committed to positive relationships.

Seek first to understand.

Love deeply.

Choose appreciation over contempt.

Turn toward one another.

Become more like Christ.

Because... **People will know we belong to Jesus by our love for one another.**