



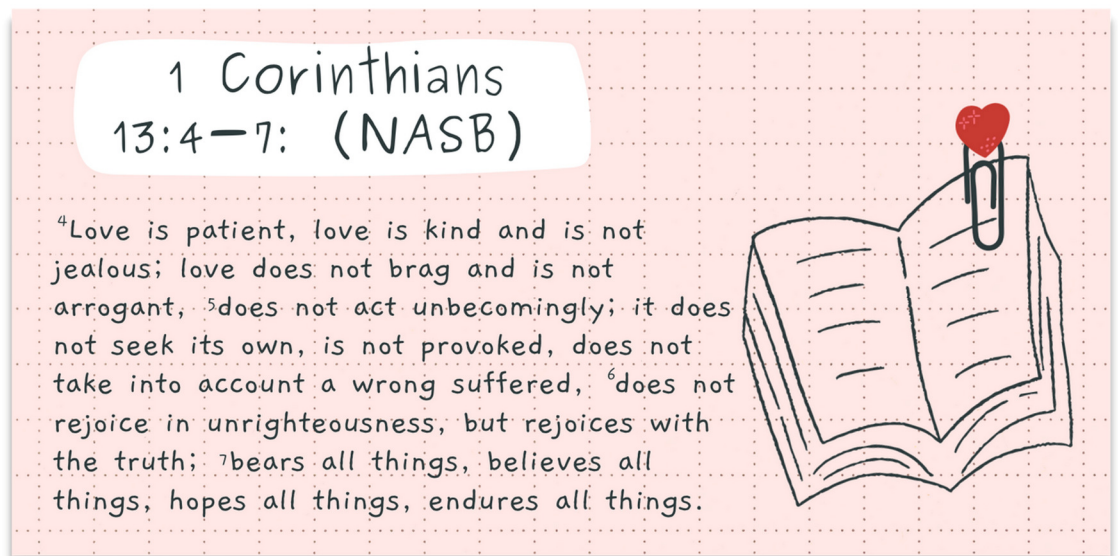
## How Strong Are My Relationships? (Part III)

**1 Peter 1:22: (KJV) Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.**



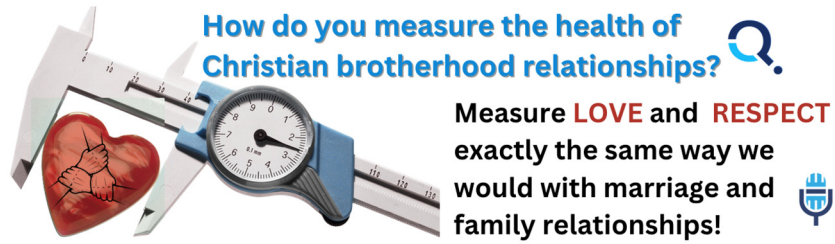
Human relationships are a key factor in human survival and well-being. We need them and God has designed humanity in such a way as to thrive when healthy relationships are present. In Parts I and II of this three-part series, we drilled down into marriage relationships as well as family and close friend relationships. We found striking similarities in the “how to” of making these relationships stronger. Much of our input came from 1 Corinthians 13, commonly called the “love chapter.” In our final episode of this series, we now look at our relationships with fellow Christians - the brotherhood. Though the principles remain the same, we will find some significant differences and challenges unique to our calling to Christ.

**This is our basic source for direction and answers:**



We will consider the following questions as we discuss our Christian brotherhood relationships:

- Q. How do you measure the health of Christian brotherhood relationships?
- Q. What are the most important foundations to build Christian brotherhood relationships upon?
- Q. What are common areas of weakness in Christian brotherhood relationships?
- Q. What should I always bring to the table in my Christian brotherhood relationships?
- Q. How can I contribute to my Christian brotherhood relationships even if others seem distant or uninterested?



### How do you measure the health of Christian brotherhood relationships?

Measure **LOVE** and **RESPECT** exactly the same way we would with marriage and family relationships!

**Love:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #25 *agapaō*, #26 *agapé*; to love (in a social or moral sense):-(be-)love(-ed)

This is the highest form of love. It is a selfless and benevolent love that gives with no thought of reciprocation. It is only concerned with the well-being of the receiving person.



**Respect or Honor:** To be respectful of someone is to show them honor, to lift them up to a higher and cherished position for the purpose of having a relationship with them.



How well does my life reflect this selfless love and respect for the brotherhood? While I may think that I live these things, can others see what I believe I am living?

We want to learn to see things through the eyes of others.



### What are the most important foundations to build Christian brotherhood relationships upon?

We suggest that selfless love and respect are obvious, and that we need to add the highest and most pure intentions we can. It all starts with Jesus and HIS example to his disciples.

Both selfless love and respect or honor were plainly explained by Jesus to his disciples the night before his crucifixion. His explanation boldly showed us the absolute foundation of Christian brotherhood.

This is important! We need to pay careful attention to the teachings of Jesus. The more we focus on the what, how, where, when and why he taught it, we can begin to understand. It takes intentional focus.

We will reflect back at some of his profound teachings.

We begin right after Jesus spoke the Parable of the Vine and the Branches. In this parable, Jesus explained how each of his disciples, as branches, were directly connected to him as the vine.





## He explained that God oversees this relationship for the purpose of the branches producing God-honoring fruit:

**John 15:9-11:** (NIV2011) <sup>9</sup>As the Father has (selflessly) **loved <25>** me, so have I (selflessly) **loved <25>** you. Now remain in my (selfless) **love <26>**. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commands, you will remain in my (selfless) **love <26>**, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in His (selfless) **love <26>**. <sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.



Love appears five times in these verses, and the point is that selfless love brings joy IF we let it.

## Think about how selfless love motivated Jesus:

**Hebrews 12:2:** (KJV) *who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and as sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Just from these few verses in John and Hebrews, we see that selfless love is the foundational theme. It begins with God, is expressed through Jesus and it is to grow within us. This selfless love grows in us so that the joy of Jesus' service to God can flourish and be complete in us as well.



## Jesus continues:

**John 15:12-15:** (NIV2011) <sup>12</sup>My command is this: **Love <25>** each other as I have **loved <25>** you. <sup>13</sup>Greater **love <26>** has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's **friends <5384>**.

Now we are tasked with treating one another with the same selfless love that Jesus lived! There are three more "loves" in these two verses. Jesus says here that it is now our responsibility to have this same love towards one another.

## With this powerful foundation clearly in place, the respect and honor of our relationships can now be made clear:

<sup>14</sup>You are my **friends <5384>** if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup>I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you **friends <5384>**, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.



**Friend:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #5384 *philos*; properly, dear, i.e. a friend; actively, fond, i.e. friendly (still as a noun, an associate, neighbor, etc.)

There is a big change here. Jesus calls the apostles his *friends*. This is different; it is a new level of relationship. He tells them they are no longer servants - he is putting them at a higher level. He set the foundation of love and then lifted them up to a position of honor they did not have before.

Jesus clearly elevated his disciples to close friendship. They would be treated not only with selfless love but would also be honored and respected now as those who were personally close to him.

In the last two episodes we have talked a lot about *love and respect*. Here it is very plain, Jesus says: "I selflessly love and respect you."



## How much more of an invitation can we get than Jesus, the night before his crucifixion, explaining his beautiful calling of the disciples:

**John 15:16-17:** (NIV2011) <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup>This is my command: **Love <25>** each other.

Jesus said this is a command, so it is not just a suggestion! It is a commandment. Selfless love is not natural; it is hard work. If this is a command to rise to that level, not just a suggestion, then we need to treat it as our responsibility and our job.

This highly honored position of friendship was not given to the disciples because of anything they did. He **CHOSE THEM** which means he **CHOSE US** to be in this same high, lofty and privileged position.



We know this because in **John 17**, Jesus not only prayed for the disciples who were with him then, but also for those who would later follow him through the writings of the New Testament. That is us!

This is exciting - it sets a foundation for our relationships with one another. Look at the way Jesus treated us and how he said this is what **WE** need to do.

Here is the template for our response to and treatment of one another as honored disciples:



**1 Peter 1:22:** (KJV) *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto **unfeigned <505> love of the brethren <5360>**, see that ye **love <25>** one another with a **pure <2513> heart fervently <1619>**.*

**Unfeigned:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #505 *anypokritos*; undissembled, i.e. sincere: without dissimulation (hypocrisy)

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: without hypocrisy, unfeigned, undisguised, sincere

**Love of the brethren:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #5360 *philadelphia*, from #5361 *philadelphos*: brotherly love - fraternal affection, fondness

**Pure:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2513 *katharos*; of uncertain affinity; clean (literally or figuratively)

**Fervently:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1619 *ektenos*;

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) earnestly, fervently, intensely

Let's rephrase **1 Peter 1:22** - *So with a sincere brotherly affection, see that you selflessly love one another from a clean heart with great intensity.*

Peter is combining both types of love here. This scripture shows Peter's growth and maturity. Peter's approach was intense, and his intensity was poured out in this text. He is speaking of a full commitment to all Jesus taught us and to what Peter is passing on to us that he learned at Jesus' feet.





### Revisiting, Refocusing and Reestablishing My Relationships:

Discipleship in its mutual relationships clearly and fully depends upon following the personal example of Jesus.

Because of our blatant imperfections, we need to add liberal amounts of our purest intentions of Christlikeness to the already proven mixture of selfless love and respect.

We have challenges and imperfections, so our purest intentions are necessary to overcome these imperfections and show our willingness to follow Jesus to the best of our ability.

We are just beginning and we are already deeply involved in life-changing challenges. The question is, will we accept them?


**It is obvious that we should love each other intensely, but why does Peter specifically tell us to do it with a pure heart?**

The answer here is not only fascinating, it is powerful as well. To understand Peter's focus on a pure heart, we first observe that our example, Jesus, always had a pure heart. We, on the other hand, need to develop that purity. In the areas of life such as marriage or family, that purity of intention of putting the other person first can be easier to develop because we are already connected. However, with the brotherhood, that connection may be harder to find because we are more diverse.



### What are common areas of weakness in Christian brotherhood relationships?

1 Corinthians 13:4-6: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>Love... is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup>does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, <sup>6</sup>does not rejoice in unrighteousness...

 Just as with marriage, family and close friendships, issues among the brotherhood arise from things like jealousy, bragging, arrogance, acting immaturely, being self-centered, being easily provoked, keeping score and accepting unrighteousness.

For more detail on common areas of weakness in relationships, see Part I of this series. This three-part series is meant to be studied together, what we are covering in this episode may not have been discussed in the previous two. When put together, there is a relationship approach that is scripturally sound which works successfully if we are willing to put in the work.



	<b>Episode 1268: How Strong Are My Relationships? (Part I)</b>
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Identifying the foundations, problems and practices of marriage



The call to follow Christ goes out to an amazing variety of people. Think about it. Those in the brotherhood are all wired differently, but even with our differences, we still have to sit at the same lunch table together (we will return to this example later). Each of these different individuals from different walks of life is called away from their old lives into this new fellowship built on the gospel and Jesus' example. No wonder we can have such issues getting along!

The word for fellowship is well known:

**Fellowship:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2842 *koinonia*; partnership, i.e. (literally) participation, or (social) intercourse, or (pecuniary) benefaction

"koinonia" =



FRIENDSHIP  
SHARING  
COMMUNION  
PARTNERSHIP  
PARTICIPATION

We may not realize that this common word for fellowship, *koinonia*, first appears in the New Testament only after Peter speaks at Pentecost.

**Guided by the holy spirit, Peter's words moved many to believe - here is what happened as Peter finished speaking at Pentecost:**

**Acts 2:41-42:** (NASB) <sup>41</sup>So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. <sup>42</sup>They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to **fellowship <2842>**, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

True Christian fellowship began at Pentecost. Why?



True Christian fellowship began at Pentecost.

- Jesus was risen and the price was paid.
- The gospel message was now in full force and God's spirit became the comforter and guide that Jesus promised would come.
- This began a new era that would eventually call disciples from everywhere.

This was brand new. Everything changed. This fellowship is not just an association; it is much more than that. It is a partnership and participation with one another. The body of Christ is dependent upon this type of spiritual fellowship with individuals that come from all walks of life. A partnership includes interdependency. This is what Christian fellowship is meant to be.

**Despite this miraculous ingathering, Christians still had issues with their imperfect humanity:**

**James 4:1-2:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? <sup>2</sup>You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

Humanity in its natural, imperfect form does NOT naturally fit in with the precepts of the call of Christianity.



James is saying: “There is no place for this in Christ.” He is describing selfishness and a fleshly focus - the dark side of humanity.



Early in my business career, I attended a meeting where there were two groups of us. The groups overlapped in their sales territory and did not get along. The meeting was called by the higher-ups to bring these two “warring” factions together.

In the morning session, there was a lot of name-calling and finger-pointing by many in the two groups. I did not participate in that because that is not my style, but I was watching and it was not looking good. Just before lunch, the gentleman who was running the meeting chose the loudest and most critical individuals from each side to go to lunch together in pairs for an hour with the admonition to, “just talk to each other.”

The afternoon session was entirely different, because they got to know each other, realized that they all worked for the same company and that they could do better than this! It was such wisdom to make them talk to each other that this has stuck with me for many, many years. If people in the world can do that, Christians, certainly, should be able to do that.

Even when we are not fighting with the vile side of our nature, challenges are still present. Further issues can develop as we each apply what we believe are Christian principles to our lives because Christianity is a very personal thing.

**We personally apply our Christianity with different individual guidelines.**

**This can bring friction:**

**Romans 14:1-8:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. <sup>2</sup>One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

The apostle is saying there are very different opinions on what is proper to eat - they differed on whether to eat meat that had first been offered to idols and then sold for eating. Some in the early church were bothered by this; others were not.

<sup>3</sup>The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. <sup>4</sup>Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Here the apostle continues and says the one with the broader perspective is not to look down on the one with the narrower perspective. And the one with the narrow perspective is not to look with contempt upon the other. They are both trying their best to serve God.

There is a “no judgment zone” at the lunch table. We are unified. We might have personal differences, but we can eat and work with each other and get along. God has accepted each of us.





**We apply our Christianity in a public sense with different guidelines. This also can bring friction:**

*<sup>5</sup>One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup>He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.*

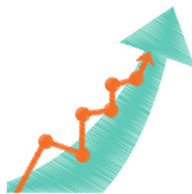


We need to be sensitive not to come down on others. If they are wrong, they might grow out of it. When I look back on my early days as a Christian, I grew out of many wrong ideas. I was a slow learner.

However, being a learner is important. The apostle says we may see things very differently outwardly, declaring one way or another to be the right way. But each is giving praise to God in their stance. Let us manage and respect that, allowing the learning process to happen.



We can disagree with one another and still have clear consciences! We are working to honor God while on two or more sides of an issue. Obviously, knowledge with one or more parties is NOT clear. Everybody cannot be right if we see the exact opposite. Somebody is wrong, or both parties are wrong. But both cannot be any more than partially right!



We all need to grow up in Christ. Maybe we are right on an issue, but maybe we are wrong in the way we approach our being right. If our attitude is wrong, it is a sin. That is hard to admit, but we can be 100 percent right in our position and still have the sin of a poor attitude in our approach to our brother.

**Whether cloudy or clear, here is the bottom line:**

*<sup>7</sup>For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; <sup>8</sup>for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.*

We can be right in our wrongness and wrong in our rightness! We need to be careful when we are dealing with relationships. We are seeing all these common areas of weakness in the body of Christ. They can be matters of conscience that we are trying to grow through.

**The friction we are challenged with can be better handled by applying principle over passion:**

**Romans 14:13-15: (NASB)** <sup>13</sup>(Principle) *Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. <sup>14</sup>I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself.*

The apostle is saying that although he may know he is right, he will not put an obstacle in a brother's way. This is a principle.

(Your brother's passion) ...but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

His brother's passion or understanding might not let him do something the apostle knows is okay. Even if the brother is misguided in his ideas, we must have respect for his view.

(Your passion) <sup>15</sup>For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love...

Principle over  
Passion







This is harsh. If we say, “too bad” to this person, we *are no longer walking according to love*. Our passion has led us astray.

(Principle) *...Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.*

This lesson is an example for all kinds of personal preferences. We are not talking about moral difficulties here - that is an entirely different discussion.

The principle is that we must not destroy our brother with our passion if we have differences. We need to remember we all have weaknesses.

### Revisiting, Refocusing and Reestablishing My Relationships:



There is not an area of life that is exempt from potential friction as we walk in fellowship with other disciples. Emotions, preferences, past experience, tradition, scriptural interpretation and scriptural application can all bring us closer or divide us.

Let us **be always alert** to these challenges and **be always reaching for selfless love, respect and purity of heart as we walk together in Christ.**

Purity of heart is essential when applying selfless love and respect. Purity of heart allows us to understand and work alongside others in the brotherhood even if we do not entirely agree with each other.

No matter where we turn, trouble and discord can be right around the corner. It is a good thing we have Jesus to follow.

**With so much possibility for issues to arise, how can we best arm ourselves against falling into these traps?**

When we just focus on the issues and potential challenges, all we will see are issues and challenges. Fortunately, our example of Jesus and our reliance on God’s word and application of His spirit can, if we let them, change our focus. The key is getting out of the way long enough and often enough for God’s path for us to be made clear!



The times of greatest success in my challenges in life, are the times when, by God’s grace I get out of my own way. That changes everything!



**What should I always bring to the table in my Christian brotherhood relationships?**

1 Corinthians 13:4,6-7: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>Love... <sup>6</sup>...rejoices with the truth; <sup>7</sup>bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.



Answers abound as to what we can do daily and practically to enhance our Christian brotherhood relationships. Selfless love and what it brings is an obvious starting point, but let’s not forget the critical importance of ALWAYS



bringing brotherly love along with it. We will be using Romans 12:9-13 to reinforce this connection.

As a practical way to apply these things, we want to look at how Jesus handled the experience of being taken prisoner in Gethsemane. What we will see is the principles of 1 Corinthians 13:4,6-7 and Romans 12:9-13 being applied in a very difficult and volatile situation, the Gethsemane experience.

We will be quoting from a combination of the four gospels in one reading - Matthew 26:47-56, Mark 14:43-52, Luke 22:47-53 and John 18:1-12. We assembled these verses from the four Gospels with our best efforts to accurately reflect the order of events. Any inadvertent errors in details are our own.



Each part of this narrative will have a selfless love principle as its theme message.



**Love...rejoices with the truth - Selfless love is happy with God's truth being THE truth:**

John 18:1: (NASB) *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which he entered with his disciples.*

After preparing his disciples for his crucifixion, Jesus led them to the peaceful solitude of the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had finished speaking the words the Father had given him to speak to the apostles this night and now he led them to the serenity of the garden.

We also must, to the best of our ability, have our rejoicing in truth rather than preference to be able to meet our challenges. Notice, Jesus led them to the garden. Even though there was danger approaching - and Jesus knew this - he went before them! This is the way we handle the dangers that come into our lives. **Love rejoices with the truth.**



**Love...believes all things - Selfless love is faithful in all experiences:**

John 18:2-3: (NASB) <sup>2</sup>Now Judas also, who was betraying him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with his disciples. <sup>3</sup>Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees...

Mark 14:43: (NASB) *and the scribes and the elders...*

John 18:3: (NASB) *...came there with lanterns and torches and weapons (Mark says swords and clubs).*

Luke 22:47: (NASB) *...and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them...*

Mark 14:44: (NASB) *Now he who was betraying him had given them a signal, saying, Whomever I kiss, he is the one; seize him and lead him away under guard...*

Luke 22:47-48: (NASB) *...<sup>47</sup>and he approached Jesus to kiss him. <sup>48</sup>But Jesus said to him, Judas, are you betraying the son of man with a kiss?*

Matthew 26:49-50: (NASB) <sup>49</sup>Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, Hail, Rabbi! and kissed him. <sup>50</sup>And Jesus said to him, Friend, do what you have come for...

This betrayal was a very emotional moment.

Even though Jesus knew his disciple Judas would betray him, he stepped up, met and gently challenged him. *Judas, are you betraying the son of man with a kiss?* He allowed Judas to do this; he was not taken by surprise.

Then Jesus says, *Friend, do what you have come for.* He still calls him “friend”! Why? Earlier that evening in John 15, he told the disciples they were no longer servants, they were his friends if they would do what he would have them to do. Judas was there. Jesus held to his earlier statement and continues to call him friend.

### Talk about a pure heart - selfless love, loves all, even Judas:

Romans 12:9-10: (NASB) <sup>9</sup>Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

Jesus showed all of these things; *love...without hypocrisy, abhor what is evil, cling to what is good.* What does this say about him? The selfless love of Jesus was pure. We also must strive to bring its purity to any and all of our relationships, while always abhorring evil.

As Jesus stood in front of his disciples, he showed his honor for them. He stepped forward in a protective way when they were threatened by the soldiers in Gethsemane. See John 18:8.



Do we step forward in a protective way as Jesus did?



Are we to protect the brotherhood even when they are wrong? Do we not want to be protected when we make a mistake? Of course we do. Jesus said, *In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you.* We want protection and the benefit of the doubt when we make a mistake.



This is why Jesus asked Judas a question. “Are you really doing this?” Jesus gave him an opportunity to not go through with the betrayal. Judas, unfortunately for him, did not take the opportunity. We see how Jesus responded to the *friend* who betrayed him. We need to learn how to respond to challenges in the ways Jesus did. **Selfless love is faithful in all things.**



### **Love...bears all things** - Selfless love thatches, covers, protects or preserves in all experiences, like a thatched roof covers and protects:

John 18:4-9: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon him, went forth and said to them, *Whom do you seek?* <sup>5</sup>They answered him, *Jesus the Nazarene.* He said to them, *I am he.* And Judas also, who was betraying him, was standing with them. <sup>6</sup>So when he said to them, *I am he,* they drew back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup>Therefore he again asked them, *Whom do you seek?* And they said, *Jesus the Nazarene.* <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered, *I told you that I am he; so if you seek me, let these go their way,* <sup>9</sup>to fulfill the word which he spoke, *Of those whom you have given me I lost not one.*

Jesus not only stepped forward, he protected plainly and powerfully. By God’s power, the people coming after him *drew back and fell to the ground.* Jesus



was not defending himself; he was stating that they would not touch his disciples.

Romans 12:11: (NASB) *not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*

We can see Jesus *being* these things in this scripture! Is our protectiveness of our brotherhood relationships noticeable?



Can someone looking at us see how caring and protective we are of our brethren? Are we fervently caring for the brotherhood as a manifestation of our service to God?

Is our love bearing (covering, protecting and preserving) all things?



**Love...hopes all things - Selfless love has positive expectations in all experiences:**

John 18:10-11: (NASB) <sup>10</sup>Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus. <sup>11</sup>So Jesus said to Peter...

Luke 22:51: (NASB) *...Stop! No more of this...*

John 18:11: (NASB) *...Put the sword into the sheath...*

Matthew 26:52-53: (NASB) <sup>52</sup>...for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. <sup>53</sup>Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

This scene could have gotten out of control with emotion and retribution. When emotion takes over like Peter wanting to defend his Lord, this situation might have escalated with the other apostles jumping in as well. Yet, Jesus was able to stop it. He would not let an emotional outburst hinder his fulfillment of God's will.

**Even when things got out of hand, he put them back in order by his focus on God's will alone:**

Romans 12:12: (NASB) *Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.*

Do we selflessly and prayerfully pursue righteousness even if some of our brethren are caught up in a moment? Do we add fuel to a raging fire or do we diffuse the volatility with God's grace and power?



It is hard not getting caught up in the moment. A text that helps me is Proverbs 15:1: *A soft answer turns away wrath...*

Selfless love hopes...has positive expectations in all things.



**Love...endures all things - Selfless love perseveres under the weight of all experiences:**

Matthew 26:54: (NASB) *How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?*





John 18:11: (NASB) *...the cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?*

Luke 22:51: (NASB) *...and he touched his ear and healed him.*

**Jesus reminded all that he would do his Father’s will at any and every cost:**

Romans 12:13: (NASB) *contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.*



Are we ready, willing and able to support our brotherly relationships in accordance with God’s will no matter what the cost may be?

(John 18:4-6) Imagine what the soldiers were thinking: “What’s happening here? We were knocked over, which we can’t explain, and now the prisoner just healed one of us?” They would have been befuddled. They were following orders and this is not what they would have expected, but Jesus was never what people expected! We should bring to our Christian relationships the principles that Jesus brought.

*Revisiting, Refocusing and Reestablishing My Relationships:*



After seeing Jesus in such a dramatic protectiveness and God-driven approach on behalf of his disciples, let us be inspired to be a positive and contributory influence with the body of Christ.

We are **privileged** beyond our understanding to have this brotherhood.

**LET’S LIVE THAT PRIVILEGE!**

Let’s look at a practical example of how we can protect the brotherhood. When someone’s loved one dies, the brethren try to huddle around those that are hurting and grieving by visiting, praying with them, bringing them meals, encouraging them with Scriptures and God’s promises so that they stay strong in the Lord and can cope with their loss.



It takes a lot of work to be in the brotherhood. Let’s face that fact. We need to apply ourselves beyond what we would naturally do.

Jesus truly did show us how to serve and protect God’s chosen ones. Now it is up to us to follow our leader no matter the cost.

**Even though we can never live up to Jesus’ example, what can we do to build others up especially when they are down?**


Because our brotherhood relationships are based on God bringing us together for His work and His plan, we want to absolutely make the best of whatever circumstances we may face. When one of us is down or ill or going through trials and trauma, we want to really set our hearts and minds to simply be helpful, hopeful and prayerful. We want to engage in a way that a family would engage - in the way Jesus did this.



## How can I contribute to my Christian brotherhood relationships even if others seem distant or uninterested?

**1 Corinthians 13:8:** (NASB) *Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.*

**LOVE  
NEVER  
FAILS**

 We purposely have not used this verse in this three-part series until now. This says that selfless love always conquers.

Though selfless *love never fails*, WE can fail selfless love. To help those in need, those who are distant, discouraged, uninterested or just out of sorts, we need to do the following:

✓ **Reassess our own sacrifice and transformation.**

**How can we lift someone out of the mud if we are sinking in it?  
Always remember selfless love, respect and a pure heart:**

**Romans 12:1-2:** (NASB) *<sup>1</sup>Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*



Approach those who are struggling in the strength of the realization that we must be always sacrificing.

We approach with the sense that we want to lay down our lives for them as Christ laid down his life for us. Our approach should not be out of emotion or frustration, but out of the giving nature that Jesus showed us.

**We have the privilege to contribute to others who are called of God:**

**Matthew 25:40:** (KJV) *...Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me.*

This verse makes it personal and real. Our fellowship is hard because we are so different, but it is so rich and so worth our effort because we are so different.

✓ **Realize that all of those called are on equal footing before God through Christ:**

**1 Corinthians 12:12-26:** (NASB) *<sup>12</sup>For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup>For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one spirit. <sup>14</sup>For the body is not one member, but many.*



Approach those who are in a tough spot with encouragement and equality.



Equality is key! We are equally called because we are equally sinful.



Jonathan: You know, Rick, we would never have been friends in high school. We were SO different. I was overwhelmed in high school, small and shy. I would hide in the choir room. After high school, I became a partier and a drinker and did drugs to hide from the world. There is no way you would have befriended me.

Rick: Yeah, we were both short, but you grew and I didn't! You are right, we were very, very different back in those formative years. But what about now?

Jonathan: Our friendship in Christ is totally different. When we first met, we had a zeal to serve the Lord, and a desire to do something special that would honor the Lord. We had that in common.

Rick: We had no idea what that would be. But we would talk about it all the time. What drew us together by God's grace was the desire to serve God. What we were personally was not of great importance. That desire to serve together has been a tremendous bond through all of these years. There is no place I want to go without my brother Jonathan with me. It means so much to me because we can work together.

Even though we have different talents and different abilities, there is an equality in Christ. It is a beautiful thing.

Jonathan: Amen!



**Realize that those who play different and potentially less focused-on roles are VITAL to the body:**

*<sup>15</sup>If the foot says, Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body, it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.*

There is a potential resentment towards those in similar but more observable "doing" roles.

*<sup>16</sup>And if the ear says, Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body, it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.*

Again there is another potential resentment of those in similar but less observable roles. Both the "eye" and the "ear" are important.

*<sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?*

The Apostle Paul is wisely describing a unification, not a competition. Every member has value and we need each other.



**Approach those who are challenged with absolute respect for whatever their part is in the body.**

This can help lift them out of a lethargy, frustration, providing an opportunity for refocus if they are depressed. The sin of comparison is a poison. This



cannot be a competition, but a unification through recognizing the value of whatever role each plays.

✓ **Realize there is a grand equality AND a grand individuality within the body of Christ:**

<sup>18</sup>But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. <sup>19</sup>If they were all one member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>But now there are many members, but one body.



How do we show our appreciation for others? Can we do better?



We should let others know that we value their qualities. We all need encouragement. An impressive thing in this verse is the phrase that *God has placed the members... just as He desired!* Who are we to look down on another that God put there just as HE desired? Are we going to tell God we are smarter than He is? We do not want to go there!



Approach those who are weary with the realization that we collectively and individually are God's workmanship, and His work always ends in a masterpiece!

✓ **Realize that those in positions of relative honor are NOT in any way or under any circumstance better than or exclusive from the less obvious members:**

<sup>21</sup>And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. <sup>22</sup>On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; <sup>23</sup>and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, <sup>24</sup>whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked.



Why are the weaker honored more?



Because there is greater glory given to God in what He is able to do for those who lack. When we look at someone with lots of talent and someone with little talent as they both glorify God, we see them given the same reward - being part of the body of Christ. And we might say, "That person made it?!"

Yes, God's glory shines brighter when we are weak. This should be an encouragement among those not in a good situation.



Approach those who may feel small, insignificant and without use by reminding them of their highly honored position of respected and needed inclusion.

✓ **Realize that God's intention in setting up the body of Christ this way was and is to have a fully functioning, unified and healthy body that would always unite to accomplish the next task at hand:**

<sup>25</sup>...so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.





Approach those who are weary and heavy laden with the good news of not needing to feel or be alone in their struggle. If one suffers, all of us suffer. When one is honored, we all rejoice.

No one in the body of Christ should be alone! When those in the fellowship are feeling down and out, we can reach out and encourage them with the picture and the principles and the doctrine of the body of Christ and how it all works together. This is what Christian fellowship ought to look like on a regular basis. This is not easy but this is Christian fellowship doing what Jesus did.



*Revisiting, Refocusing and Reestablishing My Relationships:*

It is hard to sum up our brotherly relationships better than the way the Apostle Peter himself does.

1 Peter 3:8-9: (NASB) <sup>8</sup>To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; <sup>9</sup>not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

This is what we are called to do. This is what our brotherly Christian relationships should be producing. How are we doing in following Christ? How are we doing in following Peter and Paul's examples? How are we doing in being selfless and pure in heart?

Contribute to the brotherhood!

*So, how strong are my relationships?  
For Jonathan, Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



**PODCAST**

Join us next week for our podcast on March 6, 2023

Ep. 1271: Am I Throwing Away My Life's  
Greatest Privilege? (Part I)



## Bonus Material and Study Questions

**Romans 12:14-18:** (NASB) <sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. <sup>17</sup>Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup>If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

God's love as expressed in and through Christ Jesus has built into His plan the body of Christ. This body is diverse by design.

**It will, against the odds, flourish and grow, and our working on personal interactions is a big part of this growth:**

**Ephesians 2:13-22:** (NASB) <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup>For he himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, <sup>15</sup>by abolishing in his flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in himself he might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, <sup>16</sup>and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. <sup>17</sup>and he came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; <sup>18</sup>for through him we both have our access in one spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup>So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, <sup>20</sup>having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the corner stone, <sup>21</sup>in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup>in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the spirit.

**A few more examples of how *pure* is used. Remember, purity is not natural for sinful humanity:**

**1 Timothy 1:5:** (KJV) Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned...

**1 Timothy 3:9:** (KJV) Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

**A pure heart and a pure conscience is to be striven for:**

**Galatians 5:16-17:** (NASB) <sup>16</sup>But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the flesh sets its desire against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

**1 Thessalonians 4:6-12:** (NASB) <sup>6</sup>and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. <sup>7</sup>For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. <sup>8</sup>So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His holy spirit to you. <sup>9</sup>Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; <sup>10</sup>for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, <sup>11</sup>and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, <sup>12</sup>so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

**1 Peter 3:8-12:** (NASB) <sup>8</sup>To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; <sup>9</sup>not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup>For, the one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. <sup>11</sup>He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. <sup>12</sup>For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.



**1 Peter 2:16-20:** (NASB) <sup>16</sup>Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. <sup>17</sup>Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, **honor the king.** <sup>18</sup>Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. <sup>19</sup>For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup>For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

**Romans 12:10:** (KJV) Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

**1 Corinthians 12:23-24:** (KJV) <sup>23</sup>And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. <sup>24</sup>For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked...

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# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep. 1270: How Strong Are My Relationships? (Part III)

See:



<https://christianquestions.com/character/1270-christian-relationships-part-iii/>

All questions are based on 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

1. How do we measure the health of a Christian brotherhood relationship? What is *agape* love? How do we show respect for someone? How well does your life reflect selfless love and respect for the brotherhood?
2. What is the foundational theme for the brotherhood? How do we know this? To what new level of relationship did Jesus raise his disciples? How will this influence how Jesus treats them? How does Jesus talk about his invitation to his disciples? (See John 15:9-17, Hebrews 12:2)
3. What command did Jesus give his disciples in John 15:17? How do we know this also applies to us? How does Peter tell us to treat others in the brotherhood? What else do we need to add to make up for our imperfections? (See John 17, 1 Peter 1:22)
4. What causes common weaknesses to arise in Christian relationships? Who makes up this new fellowship in Christ? Why did true Christian fellowship begin at Pentecost? (See 1 Corinthians 13:4-6, Acts 2:41-42)
5. Why do we, as Christians, still have issues with each other?  
*In general:* (James 4:1-2) *Individually:* (Romans 14:1-4) *Publicly:* (Romans 14:5-6)  
Even if our position is correct, how can we be wrong? Why is this important? (See Romans 14:7-8)  
Explain the concept of “principle over passion” in Romans 14:13-15.
6. What should I always bring to the table in my Christian brotherhood relationships? How does love:  
*rejoice with the truth?* (See John 18:1)  
*believe all things?* (See John 18:2-3, Mark 14:43-44, Luke 22:47, Matthew 26:49-50, Romans 12:9-10)  
*bear all things?* (See John 18:4-9, Romans 12:11)  
*hope all things?* (See John 18:10-11, Luke 22:51, Matthew 26:52-53, Romans 12:12, Proverbs 15:1)  
*endure all things?* (See Matthew 26:54, John 18:11, Luke 22:51, Romans 12:13)
7. How can I contribute to my Christian brotherhood relationships even if others seem distant? How can we fail love if love never fails? How should we approach our brethren when they are struggling according to 1 Corinthians 12:12-26? (See 1 Corinthians 13:8, Romans 12:1-2, Matthew 25:40)  
Consider and comment on sacrifice, equality, respect, God’s workmanship, inclusion, communal suffering.
8. How are you doing in being selfless and pure in heart? Are you a blessing to your brethren? What are you contributing to your Christian brotherhood? How can you improve? (See 1 Peter 3:8-9)