

# BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

## 5 – Do What Love Demands

"Our scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness."

- Romans 12:20 THE MESSAGE

"In everything do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

- Matthew 7:12

If you were to think of your relationships as an Olympic event, what would it take to stand on the platform? Romans 12 has a number of principles for building better relationships—always looking for a “win-win” solution, using your words as a way of blessing and encouraging others, learning to empathize, and refusing the temptation to strike back when hurt. But it’s not enough to avoid revenge. Great relationships don’t happen by accident, but are the result of giving thought for another’s best interest, and then acting on it. This passage concludes with an encouragement to go for the gold!

### Welcome

What is one of the best practical jokes anyone has pulled on you? How did you try to repay them in kind?

### Word

#### Read Romans 12:17-21

1. Someone once said, “*Hurt people hurt people.*” Share an example of how you’ve seen this principle at work. What difference would it make to keep this principle in mind, especially when dealing with a difficult relationship?
2. Why is it important to remember that love is a matter of *choice*? A matter of *conduct*?
3. The phrase, “*be careful* to do what is right” (verse 17), literally means “*take thought beforehand*” or “*consider in advance.*” How does this differ from merely practicing random acts of kindness”?

#### Read Philippians 2:3-4

4. We’re encouraged to “look to” or literally, “scope out” the interests or needs of others. Are you good at “scoping out” others? Why or why not? What’s needed in order to be more attentive to the needs of others?
5. Reread verses 3-4 again, substituting the word “others” with the names of two of the people you are struggling to get along with at the moment. What specific changes in your attitude or actions would the Lord have you make?

### Works

Romans 12 provides some practical advice about building better relationships. But more importantly, the passage presents a challenging question: Are you going to live your life as *a reaction to people*, or as *a reflection of God*? In what way have you been challenged most by this series? What are you going to do about it?

### Worship

Philippians 2 reminds us of Jesus’ attitude, a mindset which should be our own. Spend time in reflective praise of Jesus’ example, and prayerfully consider how you could be less self-focused in various areas of your life—your family, job, church. “The Greatest Command” (448), “A Common Love” (705), “Bind Us Together” (704).