

Relating To Unsaved Relatives

Introduction

The focus of this study is to answer the question: “How do we relate to our relatives, specifically, our unsaved relatives?” We are to relate to them as we would to anyone else. And when we do so, we are to exercise the fruits of the Spirit:

Galatians 5:22 - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

Because our unsaved relatives are in another kingdom, we cannot expect them to love the “new” us, the new creatures in Christ that we become when God saves us. Also, we will find it difficult to love them unconditionally, because they will probably exercise the fruits of the flesh very often, sometimes subtly and sometimes very openly:

Galatians 5:19 - “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

How can we expect our relatives to respond to us becoming saved?

The people who will probably hate us the most when we become saved are our relatives:

Matthew 10:34 - “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36 And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. 37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

It is a shock for our families to witness their members becoming a stranger overnight, a stranger to sin and a stranger to the sins that they still like to commit. But we have no choice. Once saved, we belong to an entirely different kingdom than our unsaved family members:

Colossians 1:13 - "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"

The Bible refers to the unsaved as to those who are *without* (i.e. outside of) the kingdom of God:

Colossians 4:5 - "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."

1 Thessalonians 4:12 - "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing."

We see in Colossians 4:5 that we are to walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time. We do this by sharing the Gospel with them and all of God's word with them, since that is where all true wisdom comes from.

Proverbs 2:6 - "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

Will our unsaved relatives appreciate our concern for their souls? Not very likely, because they like being sinners:

Proverbs 13:19 - "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil."

They will want us to change back to the way we used to be before God transformed us into His ambassadors and into vessels of honor who hate sin and love righteousness.

If our relatives are very self-righteous and very religious, they will hate the narrowness of true Christianity and they will feel insulted that their strict adherence to rituals and religious traditions is not acceptable to God. They will think that we are judgmental for making definite statements about the rightness or wrongness of religious practices and beliefs.

Matthew 10:21 - "And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. 23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. 24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. 25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the

servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?"

Did you notice verse 25? "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" So, what are we to do if our relatives will be so hostile to us when we become saved?

We are to endure to the end:

Matthew 10:22 - "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

We are to turn the other cheek and to go the extra mile:

Matthew 5:39 - "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. 41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

We are to remain faithful to God:

Revelation 17:14 - "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

1 Corinthians 4:2 - "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

What do we have to talk about in order for our unsaved relatives to want our company...

the weather

the news

politics

sports

travel & vacations

cars, houses, other material things

science & technology

movies & TV shows

food & restaurants

worldly music

our other relatives

our jobs

our health

false religions (so long as it is not our relative's religion)

anything but Christ, anything but the Bible, anything but the Gospel.

What things does God want us to talk about:

Psalms 34:3 - "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together."

Colossians 3:2 - "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

What kind of talk is acceptable to our unsaved relatives:

gossip

complaining

slander

cursing

mocking

lying

foolish jesting

idle chatter (meaningless trivia)

boasting

anything but that which gives glory to God.

What kind of talk is acceptable to God:

Philippians 4:8 - "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Colossians 3:16 - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Will we ever have the kind of fellowship with our unsaved relatives that we have with our best friends in the Lord? Not unless they become saved. A Christian hates every false way:

Psalms 119:104 - "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way."

Does someone who is lost hate every false way?

Should all we do is preach to our lost loved ones?

Should we badger or antagonize our unsaved relatives with Bible preaching? No, we need to be doers of the word not just hearers and not just preachers. We need to be quick to apologize to loved ones when we say or do something we should not. We need to set things straight that we do wrong. We need to be caring, kind and considerate. Our love should be sacrificial:

1Corinthians 13:4 - "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Ephesians 4:32 - "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Should we suppress who we are in Christ?

Should we suppress who we are in Christ so that we do not offend our lost loved ones?

Matthew 6:24 - "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Rather than dreading spending time with our lost relatives, perhaps we should be more persistent in inviting them into our homes and to homes of our Christian friends to see how we live, to study the Bible, etc. Chances are they will decline, but at least we have taken the initiative to reach out to them, not on their terms, and yet we have let them know that they are welcome in our homes. This does not mean that they can do whatever they want in our home such as smoke, use bad language, watch TV, or drink alcohol. We are to be up front about what we approve of and do not approve of and explain the reasons for our rules in a tactful and loving way, not a self-righteous way. And we should explain rules of behavior before our relatives get to our house.

Should we shake the dust off our feet?

What about the passages that speak of shaking the dust off our feet when someone will not receive the Gospel? That would depend on the reaction we get from sharing the gospel with those who are lost.

Matthew 10:14 - “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.”

Mark 6:11 - “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.”

Luke 9:5 - “And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.”

Acts 13:50 - “But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. 51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.”

What about the verses that speak of a prophet not having honor in his own country?

It means we should not expect our gospel message to be warmly embraced by our family members and other relatives.

Matthew 13:57 - “And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.”

Mark 6:4 - “But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”

Luke 4:24 - “And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.”

John 4:44 - “For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.”

What does it mean to be all things to all people?

When Paul said he was all things to all people, did that mean that he acted like the unsaved when he was around unsaved people. Not quite:

1Corinthians 9:16 - “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory

of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! 17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. 18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. 19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."

Paul related the Gospel to people from a perspective that they could best understand. You would not necessarily share the Gospel with an atheist the same way you would explain it to a Muslim or an orthodox Jew. If your lost loved ones are Catholic and already understand the concept of sin and the existence of God, you might want to explain the difference between God's saving grace and the grace that the Catholic church teaches.

The importance of compassion

When we are grieved and persecuted continually by our lost loved ones, it can wear us down and we can surely be tempted to lash back in retaliation or to avoid those who hurt us. Yet, we must remember to be compassionate anyway, just as Christ was compassionate to those who would soon turn on him and shout "Crucify him! Crucify him!" (Luke 23:21 & John 19:6).

Matthew 9:36 - "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

Matthew 14:14 - "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick."

Matthew 15:32 - "Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."

Matthew 18:23 - "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had,

and payment to be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. 28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? 34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

Matthew 20:34 - “So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.”

Mark 1:41 - “And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.”

Mark 5:19 - “Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”

Mark 6:34 - “And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.”

Mark 8:2 - “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat”

Luke 7:13 - “And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.”

Luke 10:33 - “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him”

Luke 15:20 - “And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

So how do YOU relate to your relatives and to those around you who may not be easy to love?

Luke 6:33 - "And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same."
