

How To Bring Health To Your Relationships

Rich Nathan

October 28-29, 2006

Winning By Losing Series

Philippians 2:1-11

If you are at all in touch with 21st century American culture, you will find that there is an enormous appetite for information about relationships – how to find a relationship, how to keep a relationship, how to heal a relationship. I love the titles of relationship books. Here is a good title:

- *Men Are Like Fish: What Every Woman Needs To Know About Catching A Man*

When I first saw that title, *Men Are Like Fish*, I thought why is that? Because they are kind of stinky and need to be cleaned? Or is it because they will eat just about anything you throw at them?

Or how about this one:

- *Mr. Right, Right Now! How A Smart Woman Can Land her Dream Man In Six Weeks.*

Does it come with a money back guarantee? Or how about this one:

- *Love Smart: Find the One Your Want, Fix the One You Got*

Now, just from the title, I can tell that this is going to be wise counsel: How to fix another person; Dr. Phil would say, “How’s that working for you?” How about this one:

- *Stop Being Dumped! All You Need To Know To Make Men Fall Madly In Love With You and Marry “The One” In Three Years Or Less*

Three years? We haven’t got three years. Can’t you find a man or woman to marry, let’s say, by 7:00 p.m. tonight?

And then we have all the spins on the “he’s not that into you.” You’ve got:

- *He’s Not That Into You: The No Excuses Truth To Understanding Guys*
- *He’s Not That Into You: Be Honest, You’re Not That Into Him Either*
- *He’s Not That Into You: Your Daily Wake Up Call*
- *He Might Be Into You, If He Could Figure Out If You Could Be Into Him –*
[I just made that one up!]

It is not just in dating and love that we are seeking relational counsel. There are lots of books out now about the relationships among girls in school. Books like:

- *Odd Girl Speaks Out: Girls Write About Boys, Cliques, Popularity and Jealousy*
- *Girl Fighting: Betrayal and Rejection Among Girls*

Of course, there are literally dozens of dating services online:

- Match.com
- EHarmony
- Find Romance

There are more and more Christian dating services like:

- Big Church.com
- ChristianCafe.com
- Matchmaker.com

And all the dating and relationship reality TV shows like:

- Average Joe
- The Bachelorette
- The Bachelor
- Joe Millionaire
- Cupid

Here are TV shows that I think sound really intriguing. I've never seen these shows. But how about this one:

- My Big Fat Obnoxious Fiancé

That sounds like a relationship that is headed for long-term success. Or how about this one:

- Married By America

That sounds like a great idea! Americans, after all, have been wildly successful in picking our political leaders. Why not have the general public vote on who you should marry? Or how about the title of this show:

- Race to the Altar – 8 couples race to see who would get married first.

You wonder with such an abundance of great counsel for relationships, why people in America would be struggling at all. But all of these books and websites and reality TV shows are all pointing out one obvious fact: Everyone wants healthy relationships. Would any of you deny that you want healthy relationships? Is there anyone here who would say, "No, I like lots of tension and being made to feel really uncomfortable around someone else? I enjoy bad communication and not being understood. I like being judged. Give me turmoil any day. Give me mistrust and suspicion and conflict and jealousy. There is nothing more enjoyable to me than losing friends and alienating people. And you

can pile on top of that a bitter divorce, or getting involved in a major lawsuit and you have made my day!"

For virtually all of us, there is nothing more draining, nothing more exhausting, and nothing more painful than having a bad relationship. I have a huge capacity for work. I really do not get tired working long hours. But throw at me a couple of bad relationships – folks who are near to me, in my family or friendship circle, or my work circle who are angry and upset, and it feels like the drain plug has been opened in my feet and all my energy is drained out.

How in this world of divorces and lawsuits and church fights and church splits and arguments between roommates, and sibling conflicts – how do we bring health to our relationships? Notice, I did not ask the question, "How can I maintain a healthy relationship," or "How can I discover a healthy relationship." I want to speak today to two groups of you: to those of you who have a relationship with someone close to you that is far less than ideal. There is strain and mistrust; misunderstanding and fighting. You have a relationship with someone who is close to you, someone you simply can't avoid forever, but the relationship is not good. How can you bring health to that relationship? And I also want to speak to those of you who have relationships which are reasonably good and say, "I want to bring even more health to this relationship. How can I make this relationship better than it is with my coworkers, my people in my small groups, and the people in my family, with my boyfriend or girlfriend?"

I've called today's talk, "How To Bring Health Into Your Relationships." Let's pray.

SLIDE – Phil. 2.1-4

¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

In bringing health to our relationships, we need to start with:

SLIDE

The source of healthy relationships.

That is what v. 1 is about the apostle Paul says. This is better translated,

SLIDE

Phil. 2:1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort of love, if any common sharing in the Spirit...

The apostle Paul mentions encouragement with Christ, comfort of God's love, sharing in, or more literally fellowship in the Holy Spirit. The source of healthy relationships is the Triune God. The Trinity, I believe, is mentioned here in Phil. 2.1

SLIDE

Phil 2:1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,

We have encouragement in Christ, comfort from God the Father's love, and fellowship with the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul very often refers to the Trinity when he talks about the source of our relationships with each other. If you want a good cross reference to this, take a look at 2 Cor. 13.14,

SLIDE

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

We bring health to our relationships by first starting with our own individual connection to God. Many people try to have healthy relationships, but they themselves are distant from God. Maybe you've tried that. But often you are attempting to give out of what you yourself do not have. That is why so many of the relationship books and so many counselors are so terribly ineffective, especially in the long-term. They provide you with a few action steps, with how to tinker with a relationship, they offer strategies for approaching people and models for understanding relational dynamics. Action steps are sometimes helpful and common sense wisdom is sometimes helpful.

But what the scripture is doing here is going to a much deeper root for health in relationships. The Bible is saying that you have no hope for a truly healthy relationship with another person unless you are personally tied into an intimate relationship with the Triune God. You see, we cannot give out of what we do not have. And we are not the source of healthy relationships. We can't give encouragement to someone else while we ourselves are discouraged. We can't comfort someone else in their pain while we ourselves are burned out and exhausted and irritated.

But you know, not only can't we give out of what we ourselves do not have, but often there is a great deal of un-health in our relationships because we are trying to get from other people what we are supposed to go to God for. Let's look at these phrases in Phil. 2.1 one at a time. The apostle Paul writes,

SLIDE

Phil 2:1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if

any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,

Let's be honest and say that we all need encouragement. We need to be affirmed. We need to be approved of. All of us need to be applauded and cheered on in the jobs we do, the efforts we make, in the kind of people that we are. There is a deep human need in all of us to be affirmed and to be approved of. But who is ultimately going to meet that need for affirmation and approval in you or me?

Should I be upset with you because you didn't come along and pat me on the back enough and say, "Attaboy, Rich. Nice job. You are doing great." Should you be upset with me or someone else because they didn't notice your effort? Because they don't cheer you on enough?

It is wonderful when someone cheers you on. It is wonderful when someone affirms your efforts and acknowledges your contributions. But I will never get enough encouragement from some other human being and neither will you to meet the deepest needs that I have for affirmation and acceptance. The only one that can encourage and affirm you and me at the levels we need is Jesus Christ.

Last weekend during our celebration, Bert Waggoner, the national director of the Vineyard spoke and said something at the end of his talk which caused many of us to tear up. He was talking about this church's efforts to reach out to our community and the joy of seeing the community center opened up. And Bert said, "I applaud you for your efforts here at Vineyard Columbus." He said, "The whole Vineyard around the world applauds you and, if you listen real closely, I believe you are going to hear the nail-scarred hands of Jesus Christ applauding you."

Friends, there is no applause – not from your parents, not the well-done you've always been seeking from your mother or father, brother or sister, spouse or boss, or your friends. There is no applause that will ever meet your ultimate need for encouragement and affirmation other than hearing the applause from the nail-scarred hands of Jesus.

We read the second phrase in v. 1,

SLIDE

Phil 2:1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,

I need comfort; you need comfort. There are places in our lives that need to be healed and fixed. Hurts that we have been dragging from childhood on into our adulthood. Places where we've been rejected. Pain, sometimes unspeakable pain, that we've suffered. Wounding words; sometimes grief from the loss of a loved one. Many places where we ourselves have suffered self-inflicted wounds. We will never receive the depth of comfort to fix and heal us from each other. I cannot come to you and you cannot come to me or to your relationships and say, "Here is a bill for my life because of what my dad did to me; because of what my mother, or my ex, or the girls in high school did to me – now fix me."

Only God the Father can give us what we need in terms of healing and consolation and comfort.

And we need fellowship. The apostle Paul says in v. 1,

SLIDE

Phil 2:1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,

Or more literally,

SLIDE

If any fellowship in the Spirit...

Again, we can't turn to one another and say, "I am lonely. You must relate to me. It is your job to relieve me of these intense feelings of loneliness."

I sometimes hear complaints from individuals who have gone to one of our small groups and said, "You know, I go to the group, but I still don't have the depth of relationship that I need. Oh, it was all very nice and people at the group seemed kind, but I need more. I'm still lonely."

I want to tell you, brothers and sisters, that no amount of human relationship can ever touch that place of inner loneliness in us that is designed for fellowship with the Holy Spirit alone. Theologians call our experience of loneliness apart from God cosmic loneliness. At some level, every single relationship here on earth will disappoint us. Even the very best relationships, even the greatest marriage is only a pointer, a sign post, for the ultimate relationship that you and I are designed for – a relationship with the Triune God.

Now, you can deny that you have a need for encouragement. You can say, "I'm the kind of person who doesn't need the applause or approval of anyone else." You can deny that you have any need for comfort. "I don't need to be fixed. I'm not dragging any baggage from my past." You can deny that you ever get lonely.

You may be the kind of person who utterly denies your feelings, compartmentalizing them off, one who keeps plowing ahead. But, friend, you have been designed for more wholeness, more health, and more life than you are allowing yourself to experience.

And it is going to take a risk of being vulnerable with God in order to experience the kind of life that is always intended for you. Until you are vulnerable with God, you will never bring the health to your relationships that God intends. It is a risk for you to go to God without anyone else around, without any other human props, without the radio on and the TV playing. It is a risk to be alone in a silent room and to say to God the things I've been saying to you:

O God, I need to feel at the deepest level of my being that you truly approve of me; that I could be a person who might hear the applause of the nail-scarred hands of Jesus. O God, there are so many places of hurt, so many wounds, so many self-inflicted wounds and I need you, Heavenly Father, to reach into my being and begin to touch those wounds. I need to be able to take all of this baggage – baggages of guilt, baggages of shame, baggages of hurt – and I need to be able to nail all of it to the cross of Jesus and leave it there and walk away free. O God, I am intensely lonely. I have been searching for love in all the wrong places. And I want to know what it feels like to really experience your presence in my life. God, I'm so afraid that you aren't going to come and meet my need.

So many of us are unwilling to be that vulnerable with God, especially at the point of our deepest need. We continually try to get from others – boyfriends, girlfriends, parents, spouses, other Christians, what we ought to get from God because we are convinced that God will not come through for us. Friends, there is no other way to have your deepest needs met other than to take a risk on God, to come before God, to be alone with God, to confess to God your doubts that he really will come through for you, that you could ever really find encouragement from him, any comfort from him, any relief of loneliness from him.

But God, and God only is the source of any health that you might bring to a relationship. You will never be able to get that health from another human being. You must go to God.

The apostle Paul goes on in v. 2 to speak about,

SLIDE

The standard for healthy relationships.

What does a healthy relationship look like?

SLIDE

Phil 2:2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

You know, there is a great temptation in our relationships, just like in the rest of our lives, to lower the bar in terms of what Christ calls us to in the Christian life. So we see that the Bible calls us to keep purity of heart, but we say to ourselves, "That's impossible to have a really clean heart. We'll just eliminate the flagrant sexual sins" All the while living inside with the radioactive waste of a continual lustful feeling.

Or maybe you have a really foul mouth and you say, "Well, I'm going to eliminate the really awful words. I'll just curse with less awful words." We love the bar and attempt to do what is doable in our own strength and in our own power.

Let me offer you what may be for some of you a really novel thought: the Bible is not meant to be doable apart from God's provision of power through the Holy Spirit. You see, this book is not a book of helpful principles that you can just take out to the world and say, "Hey, hey, America, this is the way you need to live; go out and do it." Have you ever actually tried to put into practice the words of this book? Have you ever tried to actually love your enemy? Tried to put into practice Jesus statement in Luke 17.3-4,

SLIDE

³ So watch yourselves. "If a brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. ⁴ Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."

Go ahead, try to forgive and keep on forgiving. You can't do it – at least not without God's help. What we human beings do is we attempt to do the Bible without the power of the Holy Spirit. The way we do it is by lowering the standard. We say, "Well, we can't jump 10' high, let's set the bar at 1 foot and we'll just step over it."

But what if we didn't do that? What if you were a person who decided: I want to stop lowering the bar on what God requires of me as a follower of Jesus. I want to stop lowering the bar regarding what God requires of me as a single man or single woman. I want to stop lowering the bar regarding what God requires of me as a married person, as a father, as a mother. I want to actually put God's Word into practice in my life.

Well, Paul lays out the standard for healthy relationships in v. 2.

SLIDE

Phil 2:2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

If this does not drive you to your knees, then you don't understand it. The thing that Paul says is: I want you to be like-minded.

SLIDE

Phil 2:2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

I want you to be in agreement about your fundamental values. I want you to see the same truths.

If I want to bring health to a relationship, the source is God. The standard is that I have to pray that as much as possible, me and this other person would share common values. That we would respect the same truth. That we'd have the same mind regarding areas where we've been conflicted about money, about child raising, about our family, about work. That we would have the same fundamental orientation to life.

Obviously, if the other person is not a follower of Christ, then rather than complaining to other people about them, I need to speak to God on their behalf asking God to save them. If they are a follower of Christ, then I may still need to speak to God asking that we come into an agreement about the truth.

We need to be like-minded having the same love. Love comes only when we are emotionally connected to another person. It is more than just having common values. We need a heart connection. And since we are talking about bringing health to a relationship that means that all of us are responsible to being the initiators for a heart connection with another.

How do we get a heart connection with another person? By not just dealing with the surface person. Not just dealing with their words; getting behind the words. Trying to know another person's heart. Listening well enough to know what makes that person tick. What is this person's deepest need? What's keeping this person from experiencing the fullness of life that God intends?

Parents, you want to initiate health in your relationship with one of your children? Somehow with God's wisdom, you need to figure out how to connect with your child's heart. Likewise, husbands and wives, you need to, with God's wisdom, learn how to connect with the heart of your mate. This is true with friendship. This is true with our small groups.

At work, have you ever tried to not simply deal with the behaviors of a difficult coworker, but to pray to see what makes them tick, what were they like growing up, what's their life experience been like. It's amazing how much more empathy you can have towards another person when you connect with their heart.

And Paul says the third standard is that:

SLIDE

Phil 2:2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

The standard is being pressed all the way down to the deepest part of our being, to the place where we make choices and discover our values. Do you see how we might think that we have a healthy relationship with another human being, but the standard of the Bible is so much higher than our standards. Sharing the same values, enjoying the same truth, speaking to one another's hearts, connected in the place of our choices and of our decisions.

Now, v. 3 gives us

SLIDE

The Destroyers of Healthy Relationships

SLIDE

Phil 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

Eugene Peterson, in his book *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* says this:

SLIDE

All cultures throw certain stumbling blocks in the way of those who pursue gospel realities. It is the sheerest fantasy to suppose that we would have had an easier time of it as Christian believers if we were in another land or another time. It is no easier to be a Chinese Christian than to be a Spanish Christian than to be a Russian Christian than to be a Brazilian Christian than to be an American Christian – nor more difficult. The way of faith deals with realities in whatever time and whatever culture.

But there are differences from time to time and place to place that cause special problems. For instance, when an ancient temptation or trial becomes an approved feature in the culture, a way of life that is expected or encouraged, Christians have a stumbling block put before them that is hard to recognize for what it is. For it has been made into a monument, gilded with bronze and bathed in decorative lights. It has become an object of veneration. But the plain fact is that it is right in the middle of the road of faith, obstructing discipleship. For all its fancy dress and honored position, it is still a stumbling block.

One temptation that has received this treatment in Western civilization, with some special flourishes in America, is ambition. Our culture encourages and rewards ambition without qualification. We are surrounded by a way of life in which betterment is understood as expansion, as acquisition, as fame. Everyone wants to get more. To be on top, no matter what it is the top of, is admired.

There is nothing recent about the temptation. It is the oldest sin in the book, the one that got Adam thrown out of the Garden and Lucifer tossed out of heaven. What is fairly new about it is the general admiration and approval that it receives.

What throws sand into the gears of our relationships is what the apostle Paul calls selfish ambition. It is this culturally approved viewpoint that we always must end up on top, that we've always got to win, that we've always got to expand. There is no current limit in America to our selfish ambition for more, whatever more may be. And we baptize this unbiblical American idolatry in the church and call it prosperity teaching.

Let me share with you a few statistics. In 1980 CEOs of Fortune 500 companies made an average of 42x the salary of a typical worker. Now in the year 2006, CEOs are making 431x more than the average worker. From 42x the average worker in 1980 to 431x the average worker 26 years later. When is enough enough?

You say, "Well, the people at the top are worth it." What is most troubling to corporate critics is that many are being paid even though the companies they are presiding over are failing. In a just published study, The Corporate Library, a corporate governance research outfit, found out that in the last five years, board compensation committees authorized a total of \$865 million dollars in pay to CEOs who presided over an aggregate loss of \$640 billion dollars in shareholder values. So we have companies that have negative returns to shareholders, that underperformed their peer companies, that are laying off tens of thousands of workers, and the CEO is grabbing more and more for himself. That's what the apostle Paul is talking about when he says "selfish ambition."

Here is another statistic. Between 1966 and 2001 the median wage for workers in America went up just 11% adjusted for inflation. Now if you are in the top 10% of wage earners, your income adjusted for inflation has gone up 58%. If you are in the top 1%, your income went up 121%. And if you are in the top one-hundredth of one percent, your income went up over 600%. America's income has gotten more and more skewed towards the top end. More and more of our national wealth is going to fewer and fewer people. That is a terrible thing.

And it is made even more terrible by the fact that those who are grabbing more for themselves are celebrated. They are the ones being interviewed on Larry King and they are the ones who have best-selling business books. I think of someone like Jack Welch, the former chairman of the board of General Electric. He got married and signed his prenuptial agreement; he was worth about \$900 million. At his divorce, it was disclosed that GE not only gave him a wildly extravagant severance package, but they paid for an apartment in New York at the rate of \$80,000/month. He also has complete access to a Boeing 737 which he can use as his private jet whenever he wants. He gets floor level seats to the New York Knicks, courtside seats at the US Open and Wimbledon. Whatever

costs associated with the New York apartment from wine and food to laundry, toiletries and newspapers are picked up by GE. He gets an unlimited expense account. He even gets his dry cleaning bills paid for by GE. And this is a man who is worth over \$900 million dollars. And this is all the while GE has been laying off tens of thousands of workers, continually cutting benefits, and America celebrates that kind of selfish ambition.

You say, "What does this have to do with me and my relationships?"

In America we have the mindset that we always must win, we always must end up on top. We have football coaches saying, "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing!" And Vince Lombardi said, "If winning isn't everything, why do they keep score?" And Leo Derocher, the famous baseball player/manager said, "I never did say that you can't be a nice guy and win. I said that if I was playing third base and my mother rounded third with a winning run, I would trip her up." John Madden said, "The only yardstick for success our society has is being a champion. No one remembers anything else."

And so in our relational conflicts, no one wants to give any ground. No one wants to admit that they may be wrong. No one wants to examine themselves and their own contribution to the problem. Everyone points the finger at another person. This series that I'm doing for the next several weeks is titled *Winning By Losing*. We want to win in our relationships by always winning, by always being right, by always getting our point across, by always being heard. That's why marriage counseling is so incredibly difficult – because often two people come in and both insist that their version is right. Both demand to win. Neither will take 2nd place. Both are pointing fingers at the other. Neither will confess their contribution to the marriage problem.

The New Testament teaches us a very different style of life. It is the style that I'm calling *Winning By Losing*. And so Paul says, here is the

SLIDE

The prerequisite for healthy relationships

For healthy relationships in Phil.2:3-4,

SLIDE

³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Humility is the prerequisite for bringing healing to relationships. You can't heal a relationship while you stand in your pride. What is humility? I've always loved CS Lewis' definition in *Mere Christianity*. He says,

SLIDE

Do not imagine if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call “humble” nowadays: he will not be a sort of greasy, smarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody. Probably all you will think about him is that he seemed a cheerful, intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him. If you do dislike him, it will be because you feel a little envious of anyone who seems to enjoy life so easily. He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all.

See, people who bring health to their relationships are people who are not self-consumed and they are people who do not stand on their pride.. They aren't thinking about themselves or their own needs. They aren't thinking about how they can win or how they can end up on top, or what you need to do for them. People who bring health to their relationships approach relationships in humility. They are asking these questions: How can your needs win? How can your concerns surpass mine? How can I focus on you?

Not in some doormat Christian way, humility is not being a person that everyone wipes their feet on. Humility is not being a person who cleans up everyone else's mess and then gets thrown overboard. Humility says when there is a conflict, I'm going to let your complaints be heard. When there is a conflict, I'm going to allow your needs to be met. When there is a conflict, I'm going to address your concerns. When there is a conflict, I'm going to acknowledge my own contribution to this problem and not stand on ceremony.

Humility is “I am confident in God. I have heard God's evaluation of my life. I am truly being encouraged by the Lord. I am being comforted by God. I am not clinging or needy or desperate for someone else's approval. From this place of security I am able to move out in strength, to acknowledge my faults and laugh at myself, focused on other people's concern and someone else's needs, not simply my own.”

This is the model of Christ.

Let me close with vv. 6-11.

SLIDE

Phil 2:6 Who, being in very nature ¹ God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature ² of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There are three movements in this text: the humbling of the Son of God first in his incarnation, taking on human flesh. A second humbling is found as a Man who allowed himself to be crucified naked on a cross. A third movement is his exaltation when everyone will bow at his name.

Paul is presenting Christ as the model for healthy relationships. Christ is someone who won by losing. Paul is calling us to imitate Christ in the way that Christ related to others. V. 5,

SLIDE

Phil 2:5 In your relationships with one another, have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had:

Christ is the model of relationship for those who claim to be saved by him.

And do you know, salvation that doesn't change the way we relate to other human beings is probably not salvation at all. One of the first ways you can tell whether someone is truly saved is by a change in their relationships. Watch the way they relate in their families and at work with their friends. You see, a teenager gets saved and one of the first things that is going to happen to that teenager's life is that they say, "I'm a follower of Jesus now. You know, I've got to start showing respect to my parents or my grandparents. I never have before, but I have to start doing that now."

Parents say, "I'm a follower of Jesus now. I've got to stop being so harsh and so irritable with my child."

Husbands say, "I'm a follower of Jesus now. I have to stop being so domineering and controlling."

Wives say, "I'm a follower of Jesus now. I've got to stop being so manipulative and winning by my mood control."

What is the model of Jesus? V. 6,

SLIDE

Phil 2:6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

In contrast to the CEOs, Jesus uses his power and position for the sake of others. Instead of holding onto power and trying to draw everything towards himself, the movement of Jesus is away from himself towards others for their good. The God Jesus revealed to us is not a giant vacuum cleaner sucking everything into himself. The God that Jesus revealed is more like a fire hose who pours out rivers of blessing and gifts on others.

Let me close with a story. Many of you probably are unfamiliar with the name Aaron Feuerstein. But you may know his story. Aaron Feuerstein was the CEO of Malden Mills that invented the fabric polartec. It is used in blankets, fleece materials for companies like Lands End, LL Bean. In 1995 Malden Mills' factory burned down. It was the largest fire that Massachusetts had seen in a century. No one was killed, but the town of Lawrence, Mass was devastated. Malden Mills was one of the few large employers in a town in which lots of other factories had already closed down.

Aaron Feuerstein made a decision that others in the business world found hard to believe. He decided to rebuild there in Lawrence, Mass and not move his factory to the South or to Mexico in search of cheap labor. And he also made another decision. While the factory was being rebuilt, he would pay all of the workers their full salaries and benefits. A lot of people asked why didn't he just take the insurance money, pocket it, and retire. Hey, Aaron, win the game of life by grabbing ore for yourself. Aaron Feuerstein's response was this:

He said, "What would I do with all of that insurance money? Eat more? Buy another suit? Retire and die? No, that did not go into my mind."

You see, Aaron Feuerstein is a Torah-observant Jew. And because of his study of the Torah and the Talmud, the Jewish commentary on the Torah, he said, "I have a responsibility to the worker, both blue collar and white collar. I have an equal responsibility to the community. It would have been unconscionable to put people out on the streets and deal a death blow to our cities."

So Aaron Feuerstein spent millions of his own dollars to do the right thing. He used his position and his power for the benefit of others. He won the game of life by giving, not grabbing.

That's what Christ did. And that's what we followers of Jesus are called to do. To live in an entirely counter-culture way, not simply amassing more and insisting on winning every dispute and triumphing in every conflict. To use whatever position we have, whatever power we have, whatever resources we have to bless others, to help others, to love others, and to bring health to our relationships. Let's pray.

How To Bring Health To Your Relationships

Rich Nathan
October 28-29, 2006
Winning By Losing Series
Philippians 2:1-11

I. The Search For Healthy Relationships

II. The Source Of Healthy Relationships (Phil. 2.1)

III. The Standard For Healthy Relationships (Phil. 2.2)

IV. The Destroyers Of Healthy Relationships (Phil. 2.3)

V. The Prerequisite For Healthy Relationships (Phil. 2.3,4)

VI. The Model Of Healthy Relationships (Phil. 2.5-11)

A. Giving Not Grasping (Phil. 2.6)

B. Humiliation (Phil. 2.7, 8)

C. Exaltation (Phil. 2.9-11)