



Relationships

# BUILDING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

LES AND LESLIE PARROTT

(Ecclesiastes 4:9)

A

pioneering band of researchers has recently studied the age-old mystery of what makes people happy, and their answer is not what might be expected. What comes up consistently at the top of the charts is not success, good looks, or any of those enviable assets. The clear winner is relationships—close relationships.

What can be done to build good relationships? To be honest, the answer is “not much.” We cannot *do* a whole lot to cultivate healthy relationships. Techniques do not work. Real relationships evolve out of *being* a certain kind of person. We must focus on who we are in relationships rather than what we do. Following are a few of the most important ways of “being” in order to build good relationships:

## **BE SOMEONE WHO LISTENS**

At the heart of every good relationship is the ability to listen and understand what another person is saying. Without accurate listening, a good relationship can never be built. People who have good relationships take the time to hear what the other person is saying. They don’t have a habit of interrupting or jumping to conclusions. They listen to the feelings the person is expressing, and they know how to respond appropriately. Like a mirror reflects an image, we can reflect the person’s message by saying something like, “What I hear you saying is . . .” This kind of a reflection lets the person know we are really interested in accurately understanding. It also does wonders for building good relationships.

## **BE SOMEONE WHO IS SAFE**

A close relationship is built on feelings of security. If people do not feel safe, there is no hope of them ever opening up and being authentic. People who keep their word create a sense of security for people in a relationship. They follow through on the

promises they make. If we promise to keep a secret, we must keep it. We must keep our word. Once we have earned a person’s trust, our relationship will flourish.

## **BE SOMEONE WHO LENDS A HAND**

In rewarding relationships, people not only have feelings of security, they also help each other out. Sometimes that help may be seen in tangible ways—a ride to a ball game, for example. And sometimes it may be through giving reassurance before they take a big test or have that big interview. The point is that we should help them because we *want* to, not because we *have* to. As the saying goes, “That’s what friends are for.”

## **BE SOMEONE WHO WALKS IN ANOTHER’S SHOES**

To build good relationships, people have to learn to see the world from another person’s perspective. The fancy word for this is “empathy,” which can unlock mysteries by helping them understand the other person better. Once we put ourselves in other people’s shoes, we begin to understand why they might react, feel, and think the way they do. Of course, empathy does not come naturally; it takes work. It takes a decision to see life as another person sees it. But the relational dividends of empathy are well worth the effort.

## **BE SOMEONE WHO CAN RECEIVE**

When the scales of a relationship are unbalanced—when one is always receiving

and one  
eventual  
ships.  
There  
people  
care for  
We mu  
that in  
to do a

BE SO  
TURBU

Almost  
ally en  
both pe  
phase i  
that b  
surface  
their li  
bad. B  
we per  
lence o  
and m  
fore. O  
we pay  
ships.

BE SO  
TO CA

There  
worth  
ship n  
ships,  
make  
If we  
do thi

we are  
appro  
tions  
that is  
before  
us a

and t

To Lear  
also the

and one is always giving—both people will eventually feel cheated. In healthy relationships, people meet each other's needs. There is a give and take that keeps both people in balance. We can allow people to care for us as much as we care for them. We must not fall into the trap of thinking that in order to be a good friend we have to do all the giving.

### **BE SOMEONE WHO WEATHERS TURBULENCE**

Almost every good relationship eventually encounters a rough spot, a time when both people feel like giving up. It is a scary phase in relationships, usually indicating that both parties are going beneath the surface to talk about their true feelings, their likes and dislikes, the good and the bad. But if we are mature enough, and if we persevere, the time of relational turbulence can lead to a deeper, more genuine, and more authentic relationship than before. Conflict is often the temporary price we pay for deepening intimacy in relationships.

### **BE SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHEN TO CALL IT QUITS**

There are some relationships that are not worth the work. Of course, every relationship needs nurturing, but some relationships, no matter how hard people try to make them work, are doomed to disaster. If we are in a relationship that leads us to do things that we do not want to do, the relationship is not healthy and should be stopped. If we are in a relationship where we are constantly trying to win the person's approval or never feel accepted, the relationship is probably not a good one. When that is the case, we need to call it quits before the other person's rejection damages us and limits our usefulness to God.

In summary, relationships are complex and require some fundamental elements

and time. In building relationships, it is more profitable to examine ourselves to determine the type of person we are, rather than focusing only on the things we do.

### **FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of relationships include:

- Proverbs 13:20; 17:17; 22:24; 27:6-9
- Luke 6:28
- John 13:34, 35
- Romans 12:9-21
- Philippians 2:3, 4
- Colossians 3:13
- 1 John 4:7, 8

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on relationships at Ephesians 4:31, 32 on page 556. See also the personality profile of David and Jonathan on page 372.

<sup>5</sup>For this you know,<sup>a</sup> that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup>Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup>Therefore do not be partakers with them.

#### WALK IN LIGHT

<sup>8</sup>For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup>(for the fruit of the Spirit<sup>a</sup> is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), <sup>10</sup>finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. <sup>11</sup>And have no fel-

lowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. <sup>12</sup>For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. <sup>13</sup>But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. <sup>14</sup>Therefore He says:

“Awake, you who sleep,  
Arise from the dead,  
And Christ will give you light.”

**5:5** <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads *For know this*. **5:9** <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads *light*

#### KEY PASSAGE

### KIND, TENDER, FORGIVING

(4:31, 32)

As God's people, we must put out of our lives bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speech, and malice. Then we should replace those attitudes and actions with positive ones:

- > *Being kind to one another.* We should act charitably and benevolently to all people, regardless of how we are treated in return. That means taking the initiative in being kind.
- > *Being tenderhearted.* This means having compassion. We should show genuine sensitivity, allowing for others' faults and failings while still showing care and concern.
- > *Being forgiving . . . even as God in Christ forgave us.* This is probably the most difficult. If our relationships are going to flourish, we need to be able to forgive others. Christ forgave all our sins and continues to forgive us daily. We can forgive because we are forgiven.

Consider how our relationships would change if we lived by these words!

To Learn More: Turn to the article about relationships on pages 856, 857. See also the personality profile of David and Jonathan on page 372.

#### SOUL NOTE



**What a Waste (5:18)** Drunkenness has no place in believers' lives. To become “drunk with wine,” or any alcoholic drink, reveals a lack of self-control. Getting drunk, wrote Paul, is “dissipation,” referring to the waste of time and money caused by partying and an out-of-control lifestyle. The waste of God-given talents and resources, the consequences of drunkenness, and addiction to alcohol should keep people from substance abuse. The underlying issue, of course, is who or what is in charge of a person's life. Believers should be able to say that God is in charge and then trust Him to help them overcome such behaviors. **Topic: Drug Abuse**

#### WALK IN V

<sup>15</sup>See the  
as fools  
cause the  
<sup>17</sup>There  
stand wh  
not be d  
tion; but  
one ano  
al songs.  
heart to  
all things  
Lord Jesu  
in the fear

#### MARRIAGE

<sup>22</sup>Wives  
to the Lo  
wife, as a  
He is the S  
as the chu  
wives be  
<sup>25</sup>Husba  
also love  
<sup>26</sup>that He  
washing  
present ha



their w  
them. I  
build a



obey th  
other  
them u  
sibilities

my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you?"

<sup>10</sup>Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will tell me, or what if your father answers you roughly?"

<sup>11</sup>And Jonathan said to David, "Come, let us go out into the field." So both of them went out into the field. <sup>12</sup>Then Jonathan said to David: "The LORD God of Israel is witness! When I have sounded out my father sometime tomorrow, or the third day, and indeed there is good toward David, and I do not send to you and tell you, <sup>13</sup>may the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it pleases my father to do you evil, then I will report it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And the LORD be with you as He has been with my father. <sup>14</sup>And you shall not only show me the kindness of the LORD while I still live, that I may not die; <sup>15</sup>but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when

the LORD has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." <sup>16</sup>So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "Let the LORD require it at the hand of David's enemies."

<sup>17</sup>Now Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul. <sup>18</sup>Then Jonathan said to David, "Tomorrow is the New Moon; and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty. <sup>19</sup>And when you have stayed three days, go down quickly and come to the place where you hid on the day of the deed; and remain by the stone Ezel. <sup>20</sup>Then I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target; <sup>21</sup>and there I will send a lad, saying, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I expressly say to the lad, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; get them and come'—then, as the LORD lives, there is safety for you and no harm. <sup>22</sup>But if I say thus to the young man, 'Look, the arrows are be-

#### PERSONALITY PROFILE



Relationships

### DAVID AND JONATHAN— BEST OF FRIENDS

(1 SAMUEL 20)

David and Jonathan shared a rare friendship. Born out of youthful mutual admiration, their relationship stood the test of difficult decisions and conflicting loyalties. Jonathan, the king's son and future heir, befriended David, his father's champion. Both men demonstrated courage and fine leadership abilities. They came to trust one another with their lives.

Then came the conflict between Saul, the king, and David. Jonathan found himself caught between his father and his best friend. At first, he found it hard to accept his father's change of heart toward David. The temptation was to choose one over the other. Jonathan had a better plan. He chose the truth and faithfulness to God. He remained loyal to both his father and to David. He managed to keep them apart so he wouldn't have to take a side.

His wisdom earned him David's deep gratitude and Saul's resentment. To Jonathan's credit, he did not allow his father's attitude to drive him away. He died with his father in battle. Until then, it was apparent that Jonathan was never threatened by David's popularity. Whether or not he knew that Samuel had anointed David as the next king, Jonathan remained loyal. He displayed all the best character of a true friend.

Most of us desire to have a friend like Jonathan in our lives. We don't necessarily have control over that. But we can decide to be a friend to others like Jonathan. David and Jonathan were not in the same place, with the same choices. Jonathan made his relationship with David an area in which he practiced his faithfulness to God. Integrity, truth, intimacy, and loyalty characterized his side of the friendship. In what ways are you seeking to be a Jonathan in someone else's life?

To Learn More: Turn to the article about relationships on pages 856, 857. See also the key passage note at Ephesians 4:31, 32 on page 1556.

hundred *shekels* of silver, and a horse one hundred and fifty; and thus, through their agents,<sup>a</sup> they exported *them* to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.

#### SOLOMON'S HEART TURNS FROM THE LORD

**11** But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—<sup>2</sup>from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. <sup>3</sup>And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. <sup>4</sup>For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of his father David. <sup>5</sup>For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. <sup>6</sup>Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as *did* his father David. <sup>7</sup>Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that *is* east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. <sup>8</sup>And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

<sup>9</sup>So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, <sup>10</sup>and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded. <sup>11</sup>Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and have

not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. <sup>12</sup>Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. <sup>13</sup>However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.”

#### ADVERSARIES OF SOLOMON

<sup>14</sup>Now the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he *was* a descendant of the king in Edom. <sup>15</sup>For it happened, when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army had gone up to bury the slain, after he had killed every male in Edom <sup>16</sup>(because for six months Joab remained there with all Israel, until he had cut down every male in Edom), <sup>17</sup>that Hadad fled to go to Egypt, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him. Hadad *was* still a little child. <sup>18</sup>Then they arose from Midian and came to Paran; and they took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, apportioned food for him, and gave him land. <sup>19</sup>And Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him as wife the sister of his own wife, that is, the sister of Queen Tahpenes. <sup>20</sup>Then the sister of Tahpenes bore him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house. And Genubath was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh.

<sup>21</sup>So when Hadad heard in Egypt that David rested with his fathers, and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to

**10:29** <sup>a</sup>Literally by their hands



#### SOUL NOTE

**Closer or Farther Away? (11:1-13)** What a sad commentary on a great king! Solomon had been blessed with world-acclaimed wisdom and wealth, but his wisdom did not extend to his passions. God gave the nation peace, but Solomon continued the age-old tradition of marrying foreign women to obtain alliances.

Solomon “loved many foreign women” and “clung to these in love” (11:1, 2). These relationships led to his downfall, for these women turned his heart to other gods. Our relationships can help us grow closer to God, or they can cause us to turn from Him. We must make careful choices in marriage and friendship. **Topic: Relationships**

This also is vanity and a grave misfortune.

**THE VALUE OF A FRIEND**

- 9 Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor.
- 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up.
- 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone?
- 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

**POPULARITY PASSES AWAY**

- 13 Better a poor and wise youth Than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more.
- 14 For he comes out of prison to be king, Although he was born poor in his kingdom.
- 15 I saw all the living who walk under the sun; They were with the second youth who stands in his place.
- 16 There was no end of all the people over whom he was made king; Yet those who come afterward will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

**FEAR GOD, KEEP YOUR VOWS**

5 Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than

to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.

- 2 Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few.
- 3 For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool's voice is known by his many words.
- 4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed—
- 5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

6 Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse<sup>a</sup> and destroy the work of your hands? 7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God.

**THE VANITY OF GAIN AND HONOR**

8 If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, do not marvel at the matter; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them.

9 Moreover the profit of the land is for all; even the king is served from the field.

10 He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver;

5:6 <sup>a</sup>Literally voice

Nor he will increase. This also

11 When go They increase So what Except to

12 The sleep Whether But the a permi

13 There is under Riches k

14 But thos misfo When he in his

15 As he ca nakec To go as And he Which :

16 And this Just exa



Riches gi ment. T wealth u



the abili ability to others-

**SOUL NOTE**



**Eternal Friendships (4:9-12)** The Preacher observed the importance of friendships. God created people to be in relationship with Him and in relationships with one another. Friends who work on a task can rejoice together in its accomplishment. Friends can help each other—if one should fall, the other is there to “help him up.” Those who have both a strong relationship with God and strong friendships with other believers will have bonds that strengthen life’s joys and limit life’s sorrows. Friendships among believers are precious, for they have the bond of Christ and of eternity. We should both find good friends and be good friends. **Topic: Relationships**



<sup>33</sup>The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."

<sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods"?'<sup>a</sup> <sup>35</sup>If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), <sup>36</sup>do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? <sup>37</sup>If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; <sup>38</sup>but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe<sup>a</sup> that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." <sup>39</sup>Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand.

#### THE BELIEVERS BEYOND JORDAN

<sup>40</sup>And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed. <sup>41</sup>Then many came to Him and said, "John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true." <sup>42</sup>And many believed in Him there.

#### THE DEATH OF LAZARUS

**11** Now a certain *man* was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>It was *that* Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. <sup>3</sup>Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

<sup>4</sup>When Jesus heard *that*, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

<sup>5</sup>Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup>So, when He heard that he was sick,

He stayed two more days in the place where He was. <sup>7</sup>Then after this He said to *the* disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

<sup>8</sup>The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?"

<sup>9</sup>Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. <sup>10</sup>But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." <sup>11</sup>These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."

<sup>12</sup>Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." <sup>13</sup>However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.

<sup>14</sup>Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup>And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him."

<sup>16</sup>Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

#### I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

<sup>17</sup>So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup>Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles<sup>a</sup> away. <sup>19</sup>And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

<sup>20</sup>Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. <sup>21</sup>Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But even now I

**10:34** <sup>a</sup>Psalms 82:6 **10:38** <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads *understand*. **11:18** <sup>a</sup>Literally *fifteen stadia*



#### SOUL NOTE

**The Greatest Need (11:5)** Human beings need food, water, air, and shelter to stay alive. But to be truly alive and thriving, we also need love. Lack of love causes physical, emotional, and mental problems. Relationships often wither and die without love and caring. When Jesus lived on earth, He had a special relationship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They showed Him friendship and hospitality and were open to His message. Jesus nurtured that relationship with His interest in their lives and His love for them. God works through our human relationships to give us comfort and encouragement. Family and friends are blessings from God. **Topic: Relationships**

know  
give Ye  
<sup>23</sup>Jes  
again.  
<sup>24</sup>Ma  
rise ag  
rection  
<sup>25</sup>Jes  
am the  
the life  
believes  
may die  
<sup>26</sup>And w  
believes  
never d  
lieve thi  
<sup>27</sup>She s  
You are  
come int

JESUS AM  
<sup>28</sup>And v  
went her  
ter, saying  
ing for yo  
arose quit  
had not y  
the place  
Jews who  
comforting  
up quickl  
"She is go



Grief/Los

death s  
and a g  
Lazarus  
compas  
lable sor  
defeated  
It is  
relations  
His com

To Learn  
profile a

every spirit, but they are of God; those who have gone out do not know the Spirit of God. <sup>2</sup>Whoever confesses that Jesus has come in the flesh is of God, <sup>3</sup>and whoever does not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh is not of God. And whoever confesses that Jesus has not come in the flesh is the spirit of error.

Love is born of God, for love is born of God; he who does not love

1 John 3:23 <sup>a</sup>M-Text  
that and Christ has

the Cross, much that is not just saying but our families by our neighbors as possessions

Christians and what they say, religion, but ready a... For as you is greater

does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup>In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

#### SEEING GOD THROUGH LOVE

<sup>12</sup>No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. <sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. <sup>14</sup>And we

have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup>Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup>And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

#### THE CONSUMMATION OF LOVE

<sup>17</sup>Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made



#### SOUL NOTE

**Love Story (4:7)** God authored the concept of love. When people become believers, they learn how to "love one another" because the Spirit within shows them how as they yield to His leading. Christian relationships ought to be the most loving in the world. Christians who meet each other for the first time experience a bond of love that transcends understanding. The love that binds Christians makes for solid and eternal relationships. The love in our relationships reveals God in us.

**Topic: Relationships**



#### SOUL NOTE

**Through Us (4:12)** No one has ever seen God, but God reveals Himself to the world through His frail and imperfect people by perfecting His love in them. As believers go into the world living their faith, they reveal God to everyone they meet. Their love reveals God's presence in their lives. When believers show love toward one another and to the unbelieving world, God makes Himself known and His love is "perfected" in them. God often shows His love through His people. What does our love for others say on God's behalf? **Topic: Love**



#### SOUL NOTE

**Too Many Critics (4:19-21)** When believers hate one another, they certainly are not showing love. At times, a critical spirit will cause believers' relationships to become strained as they judge each other. Believers will always disagree on some matters, but they should still be able to celebrate their unity in Christ. Those with critical spirits, however, will be unable to love others. If they cannot love their fellow believers whom they can see, how can they possibly love the invisible God? Believers who claim to love God but hate others are lying to themselves, God, and everyone else.

**Topic: Judgmentalism**