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# Living Laws That Govern Relationships

How many of you would like to improve your skills at getting along with people? Good. My hand would go up on that one, for sure. I'd put both of them up.

There is no greater need in the world today, no greater need in churches, organizations of all types, than the ability, the skill, the knowledge, and the understanding of how to get along with people better. How well do you get along with others? That's a good question, isn't it? How long or how well do different groups of God's people get along? You know, from God's perspective, as He looks down on this earth and He sees all the problems, the biggest problem is just not knowing how to get along with other human beings--not understanding other people, not knowing how to heal relationships.

What I would like to do today is give you what I call the "living laws" that govern relationships, the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Bible. I think you will see as I go through them that all of us violate these laws in the way that we treat people, the way that we deal with people, and that this creates the problems that we have, whether it is in the Church or in the world.

We heard a good sermonette about *{how}* there is a God and we ought to obey Him; but the problem is, even as Christians, we fall short. We don't really obey God, many of His instructions, the way that we should. It is not that we don't want to. I think we all want to obey God, and we want to do better in obeying God. Sometimes it is ignorance of these laws. I am going to show you today that a lot of the reason why people don't get along, don't treat one another right, is they don't know how to. They don't understand the differences in people.

Jesus Christ revealed the laws that govern getting along with human beings. Satan hates God and His laws and His ways, and he does everything possible to mess up relationships. He starts rumors, he starts prejudice, racism, just everything that he can start. Any differences between people Satan will use to get people upset with each other.

I love this subject. I love this message. I love to give it. I love to prepare it because, to me, there is no other subject more important than relationships. A relationship with God is number one; and our relationship with each other, the Bible says, is next in importance to our relationship with God.

I would like to review with you, then, what I call, "living laws of relationships." I call them living laws because they are spiritual, and they are laws of God that govern life. I have violated and broken them unintentionally. I don't always live by them the way that I should. This is why I may have problems in certain relationships. I hope today that this review of God's laws that govern getting along with people will help you to understand and improve your ability to get along with others, no matter what they are like, who they are, how different they are than you, because God gives us the answers.

The key is just more and more of us as His people working harder at abiding by these laws and principles. Today Satan has scattered the Church, separated the Church into different groups, different bodies; and God Almighty alone knows how to bring us back together if that is His plan in this age.

My background before God called me was as an engineer. I was a mechanical engineer, designing airplanes, working in southern California, when I came into contact with the Church, back when it was called the Radio Church of God, so I have a mathematical/science/engineering background. When God called me, my mind worked with logic. God helped me to begin to see that God's laws aren't just the physical ones, but there are also these relationship laws.

I am not going to be giving you anything you don't, maybe, already know; but if you have relationship difficulties and problems, I hope to get you to think a little bit more about what is wrong and why, and, just as important as that, what can be done to repair that relationship or fix it.

Let's begin with living law number 1. I'll put it kind of in my own words, and then we will go to the scriptures and see what Jesus taught. Living law number 1 is:

***1. Treating others the way you want to be treated.***

Now, if you stop and think about it, do you always do that? Do I always do that? I would say, probably, the answer would be, "No, I don't." We know we should. We want to. It is God's way.

Turn to **Matthew, chapter 7, verse 12**. Jesus said:

**Matt. 7:12** - *Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

This was written in the law of God and in the prophets, that you should love your neighbor. You and I may know this as the **Golden Rule**, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Would you say that this is part of the problem today in the world or even in God's Church?

Let's take a look at how we want to be treated. I'm going to give a little bit of a summary here very quickly of how I would want to be treated. I think you would agree with this, how we would want to be treated and, therefore, how we should always treat others: with respect. We want to be treated with respect. We all want to be treated as someone with value, someone who has worth. This is a deep human need. God created it within us, *{the need}* to be valued and to be respected, to feel that we are worth something to God and to others, *{to feel}* that we are needed. To be respected is a great human need. So we need to ask ourselves, "Do we always show respect to others?" Some do and some don't.

Jesus said to the disciples, "You are of much value. More value than all the sparrows." He said, "Every hair in your head is numbered." You are very important to God. He called us, "children of God." We are God's children. We have great value. We are very important to God, and we need to treat God's children with respect.

We want to be loved and appreciated, not just respected. You might respect someone but not really like him. All of us want to be loved and appreciated. That is also a very deep, God-given, God-created human need within everybody. When you understand this and you are always trying to help fill that need in others, it is tremendous. It is wonderful.

The Bible tells us, as you all know, that we are to love one another. I remember this scripture that Jesus said, "Here is how you will know that they are My disciples, that they for one another." That is how God is really going to know. I think the Church of God has been falling short, myself, just personally. As I look at this trial that God has allowed His Church to go through and what is happening and how we, as God's people in His Church, (the broader body of the Church *{with}* United as a part of God's Church...we believe this is God's Church, definitely, but we are a part of the bigger body, the scattered brethren, of God's people), I have been so saddened. I know many of you probably have as well, sometimes, at some of the things that brethren say about each other, to each other. It is disappointing and hurtful. I think we have failed; and I think many, many in the Church of God, all of us, in fact, need to really examine ourselves in this area and to realize we are in violation of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

How do we want to be treated? We want to be encouraged and praised, don't we? Do you like to be around negative people? Do you like to be around people that are picky and look for your faults and problems and put you down, make fun of you? I don't. I like to be around people who look for the good in others, who like to encourage and praise others and look for the good. That's what the Bible tells us to do. It says, "Encourage one another daily." The *King James* says, "Exhort one another daily." That Greek word can be translated "encourage" and is in many translations. To encourage one another daily. We need that. It is one of the greatest needs.

We live in a negative world. We get discouraged, all of us; and we need people who are good at encouraging others.

The book of Proverbs says, **Proverbs 27:2**...we will be turning to major scriptures, but some scriptures, for the sake of time, I'll just refer to, but Proverbs 27:2 says:

**Prov. 27:2** - *Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth...*

So the Bible does say that we are to praise others. Imagine, if you are looking for the good in me, and I am looking for the good in you, and I praise you and acknowledge you for the good I see in you, how wonderful that is going to be. This is not insincere. This is sincere. This is God's way.

So that's just a little bit under this living law No. 1 that Jesus said how we are to treat others: Do unto others as you want them to do unto you. We all need to examine ourselves because I just don't believe we practice this the way we should. And yet, it is a dynamic living law. It is not just a principle. It is a law of God that God set in motion. That is the first living law that God has given us in the Bible, the way we treat others; but, my, how human beings fall short, how we all do.

Living law number 2. This one is a little bit longer. I'll say it a couple of times so you don't have to write it down. You can just listen if you want, but it is:

**2. *Treating people as unique individuals by recognizing and appreciating the differences in people.***

There are no two people alike on the face of the earth. I'm going to show you that it is a law that people who do not treat everyone as unique individuals by recognizing and appreciating the differences that God has created in people, don't understand one of the living laws of relationships. They have a hard time getting along with people who are different than they are, or people who think differently than they do, or people who have a different culture or background than they have. They just can't get along with them because they are not in harmony with one of God's laws.

God looks upon His children, each of them, as unique, special beings and treats each one of us uniquely and in a special way. God, as we know, has created tremendous diversity on this earth in everything that He has created. Look at the tremendous variety of foods that we have. What are you going to have tonight if you go out to eat or go home?

*{There is}* tremendous diversity in flowers and food, but I'm talking about human beings today. On this earth, God has created every size, shape, and type of human being that is almost imaginable. How do you get along with the different nationalities and races and groups of people on earth?

I use an example, starting with male and female. We know Genesis says God made male and female. He made them. I didn't really begin to learn *{some things}* until I married Lee Ann. We've been married 37 years, as I mentioned. I had never been married before. Until

you've been married and lived with a woman, you don't really understand a lot of things (especially with my background).

I was an old engineer. I was very left-brained in my thinking. I really hadn't learned to develop my right brain very much, my sensitive, creative, intuitive area. For me, life was logical, practical. That's important, obviously. Those things are good, not bad; but I was very predominantly left-brained in my thinking, as a man. Most men, I think, dwell a little more in the left brain. They are connected, obviously...we've heard a lot about this, but I'm just telling it the way it was for me.

I liked life logical and practical. Then I married Lee Ann. Beautiful gal, I love her dearly. We are very much in love. But I married her, and do you know where Lee Ann lived, primarily? In her right brain. She would feel certain things, and she would say, "Honey, how do you feel about this?" "Uh, I don't feel anything," would be my answer in the early years.

She would want to talk a lot. "Do you want to talk, honey?" "Nah." I wasn't a big talker. I was used to doing my engineering. But she is like many of you ladies here. She likes things to be really pretty. She likes flowers, beautiful flowers, and her garden and yard really pretty and the house pretty--and I like things practical. She likes them pretty. After 30...well, it didn't take that long. After a certain number of years (some of you have heard me say this before, but this is true), things around our house became pretty practical, and the pretty comes first.

I really had a lot to learn, but I just never understood about women; and that's the way it is with all human beings. Until you "live with them," so to speak, until you really work hard...and it took Lee Ann digging into things, "God, why did you make men that way? How did you make men?" And me trying to..."God, why is my wife so sensitive and her feelings get hurt so easily and I've got to learn to be more careful and express my love more and show her my love more and tell her I love her and spend time with her and have more romance in our life..." I know you all understand what I'm saying. This was a law I had to get in harmony with, with my wife. Until I began to understand Lee Ann, until I began to understand her background, where she was born, where she grew up...her father was in the Air Force. She traveled all the time. I didn't understand certain things she struggled with, insecurities in her life.

That's the way it is with everybody. Until you understand people and their background and upbringing and what they've been through and so many factors in their lives, you don't really know them, do you? You don't really understand them. Therefore, you may misjudge them; and you may not really get along too well with them because you don't understand them. They may not understand you.

So God created male and female; and the Bible tells husbands to "dwell with them according to knowledge." Some translations say, "with understanding." Today, thank God, there is a lot of knowledge and understanding available about the differences

between men and women and how to have a harmonious and happy relationship. Now, I'm still a human; therefore, I still end up back in my cave, for those of you who read Dr. Gray's...what's his first name? John Gray, thank you. Some of his books. That was very true. I'm a man. I tend to revert back into being the "silent type," believe it or not, when I'm on my own and I get into my office, which is my cave, where my work is and my computer; and there I stay.

So, how in harmony are you with this law? Do you understand the opposite sex as well as you would like to? Do you understand different races of people as well as you would like to? The answer for most of us would be "no" to that. I encourage you to remember when you are dealing with people to try to understand them. We all want that.

Let me give you something else that I learned, just a brief overview, that has helped me to this day. It is about the different temperament and personality types that God has created. Those of you who have children know that each little baby is absolutely unique in its personality and its temperament type. I've got two children, a son and a daughter. Now we have five grandchildren, an one of them is absolutely different and unique.

It used to be *{that there were}* these kinds of psychological names that I'd hear about peoples' personalities...I don't know, "sanguine" and names like that, and I could never remember them. But, then, I read Gary Smalley's book, *The Two Sides of Love*. He used animals to *{help us}* remember four basic types of people, and it has helped me ever since. Some of you may have heard this or read it or I've mentioned it before in messages, but it's true. People are complex, so this is simplified; but it is still true. I'll show you.

There are the *lion* type people that God has created, even from the time of little babies. You will see it in little children. They are the natural...they are leaders. Lions have strong personalities. They are bold, they are aggressive, they are the leader types. They are just strong leaders. I've got a little granddaughter, and she's just a born little leader. When I go play with her, do you know what she'll say? "Follow me, Grandpa." She'll lead. The strongest temperament trait in her is the lion temperament personality type.

Another one you've heard about, probably, is the *beaver* type personality. People are like this; children are like this. The human being, let's say, who predominates in this temperament type is very detail minded, very organized. They like things in their place. They just don't mind all the little details. I just, ahhhhh, can't handle too many little details. Do you know what I mean? My wife and I have taken tests for these things, and I'm going to tell you when I get done with these types what I am in temperament type and what my wife is.

So, there's the beaver type. Then there's the *otter* personality. The otter personality is the fun-loving, playful type personality. Life should just be a ball. They are more spontaneous, fun loving, and can have a good time. For me, it's, "Play? Fun? When shall we schedule it? What is it?" It's not a natural part, as you can tell; that's not one of my

temperaments. I like to be around otter type people. They are good for me. They help me laugh and relax and enjoy life and have fun.

Then there's another type personality. It is the *golden retriever* type personality. If you know the golden retriever dog, they are very friendly. They like people. They want to be loved, and they love everybody. The golden retriever human being type personality wants peace. They are peacemakers. They are easy going. They love people. They want to be loved and liked and accepted. That's a predominant characteristic. They hate conflict.

Well, what do you think I am? No, I don't predominate in lion. One of my secondary characteristics is the lion personality. My lion will come out if I'm really pushed. Then you will see that the old lion will rise up; but my predominant characteristic is I'm a golden retriever. I don't like conflict. I would prefer to avoid it. I like to work with people. I love to have peace and harmony with people, so I'm predominantly, first golden retriever; secondarily, lion. My wife says, "Honey, I don't think you have any beaver. Close that door to your office!" In other words, when you go into my office, it's not real bad; but I've stacked some papers and things like that. I know what's in there, but nobody else does. My wife likes her house in order.

My wife is predominantly lioness. I call it the lioness, but she's a converted lion. In these things, we've become converted, with God's help; we grow. But my wife came out in the testing we've done as a lion in her personality--strong leader, strong opinions, strong feelings, good teacher, good leader, good writer. Some of you have read her articles in the past in the Church's publications, you know, *Woman's View of Prayer*, *Woman's View of Bible Study*. She just has skills in those areas.

Secondarily, my wife is a beaver. She likes her life and her house organized and in place. She likes her husband that way. {*Chuckle*} When it's not that way, she's frustrated. She'd admit this to you and tell you these same things. So once I understood her and once she understood me better, once we noticed and understood what we're dealing with, that people are different...at one time, years ago, I had a minister tell me he didn't like me. I won't say much more than that; but, you know, you get taken back, but some people are just right up front, direct, bold. It's good to learn about these things and to understand other.

Sometimes conflicts in meetings are different points of view because, "How come you don't think like I think and see things from my point of view? Don't you know I'm right? My point of view is best." {*We are*} trying to understand the different perspectives and points of view and how people can sincerely look at things differently and feel differently about things. God made it that way. That's why He said, "In the multitude of counselors there is safety," because none of us is perfectly balanced like Jesus Christ. He had all of these qualities and characteristics, all put together.

So, that's living law number 2. I can't spend an overly {*long*} amount of time on that; but that living law, just to repeat it again, is **treating people as unique individuals, and**

**recognizing and appreciating their differences**--in fact, coming to look for and understand their differences and why they are the way they are, why they feel the way they do, why they think the way they do, and appreciating that, and then, accepting that.

Living law number 3 (these are my words). I call it a living law because I believe that it is and that it is based upon God's word. I call it this one:

### ***3. Seeing things from the other person's point of view and putting yourself in his shoes.***

You've heard that statement, "Walk a mile in someone else's shoes," try to live his life for a while, and then see what your opinion might be or your attitude or point of view. Putting ourselves in others' shoes can make a big difference in the way we treat them and what we think about them.

I want to show you that Paul and Christ did this. Turn to **I Corinthians 9**, first of all.

I Corinthians, chapter 9, **verses 19-22**, where Paul said:

**I Cor. 9:19-20** - *For though I am free from all men...in other words, because God had called him, he had God's Spirit and a relationship with God, he was not, you might say, controlled. He was not a slave to anyone in the wrong way. He was, as he went on to say, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew...This is an example to show that Paul practiced this. I believe it is one of God's living laws, because we have the example of Paul, and I will show you the example of Christ and others...To the Jews I became a Jew, that I might win the Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law...He isn't talking about God's ten commandments, a spiritual law, as some burden or curse that you are under; but in his day and time, the Jews were still keeping the Old Testament sacrifices and rituals.*

Even in the margin of my Bible (I use the *New King James Bible*), they give a couple of scriptures that give examples of what Paul is talking about here. One of them, if you turn back to **Acts 16:3**, is where he had Timothy circumcised so that he would be accepted by the Jews because Timothy's father was Greek; his mother was Jewish. Paul went along with them and had Timothy circumcised. He didn't need to. It wasn't a requirement, but he did. He went ahead with that Old Testament requirement at that time.

Another example they have right here in the margin of what this means about being under the law, that he would subject himself to the law, as given in **Acts 21:23-26**, where some of the other disciples said, "Paul, you have a bad reputation as one against the traditions of the fathers and the laws of the Jews." They gave him some advice. There were four other men, and they were going to go to the temple. They were going to take these certain vows, and, "We advise you to go along with them into the temple and to do these things." Paul did. They shaved their heads and took these vows of purification. Paul didn't believe he had to do that, so the example is here that Paul said, "Hey, if that will help me to relate to them and win some of them, then I'll do it."



**Verse 21** - *To those who are without law, as without law...in other words, Paul could relate to somebody as carnal as anybody--somebody who had no knowledge of the law of God and the way of God...to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God)... "God knows what I believe about His law as a way of life," but under law toward Christ...he believed in the law of God and the law of Jesus Christ...that I might win those who are without the knowledge of the law.*

He was an incredible man, wasn't he? He was willing to become like others, put himself in their shoes, try to be like they were, as much as possible, without sinning or breaking God's law, in order to relate to them and win them to Christ.

**Verse 22** - *To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

How much more do we need to be that way, brethren, and really try to practice this living law of God of putting ourselves in others' shoes? I'm sure many of you have many examples where we have not done that and we have failed to do that.

I'd like to use a few other examples of how you can do this.

You don't really understand somebody who has been addicted to alcohol and drugs--I'm not saying you have to go out and become an alcoholic or drug abuser--but until you want to understand the nature of addiction, what a terrible thing it is to have the cells of your body craving, hungering for that alcohol or that drug to relieve you of anxiety and sometimes even actual physical pain...so the problem in the world of dealing with people who have addictions is a very important and serious one to understand. It's a great need, as you know.

Physical and sexual abuse is another area. Paul said, "To the weak, no matter what a person's problem is, I want to try to help him." Whatever the dysfunction is in that person that God is calling into His Church, no matter how odd, different, or strange he seems to be, something made him that way. What is it? Can I, maybe, be an instrument to help him?

I'm going to use another one here. I don't want to offend anyone. I'll try to use great sensitivity here to the feelings of many people, but *{what about}* trying to help people who struggle with homosexuality? There are different kinds of homosexuals. Not everyone has just chosen in his adult life or whatever, "Oh, I think I'll with the same sex." Not everybody has just decided that's what he wants to do or be. There are people, there are men and women, who have never, ever, their whole lives, been attracted to the opposite sex.

The causes of homosexuality in people other than, let's say, people who are in prisons or, you know, maybe it's forced on them or they make a conscious choice that they are going to practice that way of life...I'm talking about people that I know and have counseled with

and worked with, a totally different group of people who have never...that didn't apply to them. This is a group of people, because of things in their childhood...and many of you, probably, have read enough to know that sexual identity in children is at a very early age, something like 2 to 3 years old. One of the important things in this area to understand, and most of you, I think, can understand this, many of us should be willing to say, "Except for the grace of God, there I go."

I had a Mom and Dad who loved me and took care of me, and I thank God that I had that; but many boys and girls growing up have never, in some cases, had a loving relationship with the same sex. Like a little boy, they need Mommy especially when they are very young; but they also need Daddy. These things are coming out more today, and we understand this; but if little boys grow up and they don't have a close, loving relationship with their Daddy, their father, that leaves a hole in them. God made everybody to need that, and so many men struggle in homosexuality. The need is more than just that physical act. The real need, and I have had many homosexuals that God had called and was calling out of that lifestyle tell me that, "You know, what I really needed in my life, the great hole and the big need was I've never had the close bonding love of a father in my life." And Satan led them off into the wrong kind of a relationship.

It is a complex issue, but I'm just focusing here on a need in the world. We all understand that there is a lobby to make homosexuality accepted as a lifestyle in the world. We know what God says about that, that it's wrong. People are not born this way, and they can change, with God's help; but do you know what is also needed? Do you know what it takes for people who...let's say God is calling them into His Church. If they have had a struggle over this in their life, they've had tendencies in this direction, boy, if they ever hear you making all these snide remarks about anybody with that problem, they'll never open up to you. You will never know that they are somebody who happens to have this problem. Homosexuality is not right. It is a sinful lifestyle. It's wrong. But what they need is somebody who has unconditional love. It doesn't matter what your sin is or your problem God is calling you out of, God can forgive you and heal you and help you because in order to heal these kinds of problems, people struggling with this problem need close relationships with the same sex--non-sexual, close, affectionate, loving relationships.

I'm just throwing that in there under this point that it is a great need in the world. There are many people God is calling into His Church who struggle with this; and my point is, unless we understand the living law and just get over our hostility or anger or prejudice or this, "Well, just destroy them all! They're just all a bunch of evil people!" God certainly will never be able to use you to help someone He's calling if you are that way about it, so I am encouraging all of us.

I know I need to keep working in this area of applying this law in my life, *{as we all do}*, so that we in the Church can be of service and help to all the people that God is calling, whatever their hurt or pain or struggle, whatever that is in their life, so that we are

growing, not in condoning sin or accepting wrong lifestyles, but in helping sinners through the love of God and Christian love, to be healed.

Living law number 4 ties in with this one, but I have made it a separate what I call "living law," and that is:

#### ***4. Exercising God's love and compassion for others and not being judgmental.***

Now, we are to make judgments, decisions; but being judgmental is an attitude. It tends to condemn others. *{When we}* look at somebody who is kind of, maybe, big and heavy and overweight, we'll say, "Boy, look at that fat person." And we have no concept whatsoever of why the struggles, the battles, what they may have been through, the help they need. What caused that? There are so many causes today of all of these kinds of things.

Not being judgmental. What was Jesus like? Turn to **Matthew, chapter 9:10-13:**

**Matt. 9:10-13** - *So it was, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors (they were despised, tax collectors) and sinners?" When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous..."* Now, when I read that, I always kind of add in my own mind, "Yeah, those who think they are really righteous..." *but sinners, to repentance.*"

So Jesus Christ, as we know, ate and drank with sinners; and He was condemned because that is whom He came to serve and to help and to influence and to bring them to repentance in their lives.

I want to go to **Matthew, chapter 7**, but...well, why not. It's just one chapter over. I think I'm doing OK time-wise. Let's just read Matthew, chapter 7, **verses 1-5**, together and think of this, as I call the living law of **exercising God's love and compassion for other human beings and not being judgmental.**

**Matt. 7:1-5** - *Judge not, that you be not judged...now, it can be translated, "condemn not"... for with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how do you say to your brother, "Let me remove the speck out of your eye," and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

So what does this mean? Does this mean that Christians are naive and that we compromise sin or condone sin? Of course not. You all have heard the saying many times that we are to hate sin but love the sinner. I guess my question is, do we all really love

sinners the way Jesus Christ did? The way Paul did? Are we willing to become like them in the sense, not of committing the sin, but of wanting God's help in understanding their struggle with sin? Their struggle with sin. How can I be an instrument to encourage them and help them? Through loving them, never condoning a sin they may commit, but letting them know, "God loves you and I love you and I accept you. I may not accept your sin or your bad habit, but I love you and I accept you. You are my brother or my sister; and anything I can do to help you, I want to do that."

I believe that is living law number...I call it number 4. You could put these in any order, but God's great love and His great compassion and His mercy, where would we be without that, brethren? And it is a living law, isn't it? Without God showing His love and mercy and compassion toward us, we would never make it. I thank God He is that way. All of us and every Christian, we all need to become more that way, don't we?

I do not see real peace and reconciliation coming among the people of God, Christians, and the churches of God or anyone until we all get more in harmony with these laws of God.

The last one that I want to close with, living law number 5, is:

#### ***5. Praying for your enemies and loving and forgiving them.***

You probably know which scripture I will use on this one. Turn with me to **Matthew, chapter 5**. This is one of the most difficult of all to do. At least, I have found it so. Living law number 5, praying for your enemies, taking the time to pray for them and asking God to help you to love them and literally forgive them for the wrongs that they have done to you, the hurts that they have caused. Let's read Matthew, chapter 5, **verse 44**, where Jesus said:

**Matt. 5:44** - *But I say to you, love your enemies...you might think for a moment, who are your enemies? It might be a brother or a sister in Christ. An enemy might be someone that you feel doesn't like you and has hurt you or mistreated you. If you have been in the Church any length of time...we all have been through our trials and tests in that way as we are learning to love one another as brethren. Like a big family that hurts one another, like people of a large family where there is dysfunction and they mistreat one another and abuse one another...and, brethren, I am not saying everyone is like this. There is a lot of love in God's Church and among God's people, but not enough.*

Jesus said that we are to do this. Now, you ask yourself, each of you, how well have you done in this one? Living by this law of God? This is a law. This is not a suggestion. It is not a principle. It is a law of God. And Jesus said, *I say to you, love your enemies*, love them like God loves them. It is not saying that they will be your best friend. You know there are different Greek words. This is "agape" love; this is God's love. It is not "phileo" love. It is not saying, "Boy, they are my best friend." But it says, *Love your enemies, bless those who curse you.*

What should we do, then, when someone curses us or says some evil thing about us or does some evil thing to us? Should we turn around and do the same toward them? That's human nature, but it isn't what Jesus said to do. *Do good to those who hate you*, to those you think hate you. Maybe they do, but Christians aren't supposed to hate one another. *And pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you*. So, my question is, do we do this? Do you have a list of those people, you know, that you have anger, hurts, hard feelings because of things that we all experience in life, and do you pray for them and ask God to help them learn and grow, help you learn and grow? That is what Jesus said to do, so this is something that applies to all of us.

It is very difficult when you are hurt deeply. It is very difficult. The only way to do this that I know of is to ask God for forgiveness, to give you forgiveness for them. "God, give me the gift of forgiveness." It doesn't mean they are innocent. It doesn't mean they haven't done wrong; but it does mean, when you ask God to help you to forgive, you are asking God, "God, help me to let go of my anger from the hurt. Please heal me of this."

We all know that forgiveness is one of the keys that Jesus taught for healing and that it also is a command. Notice, well, we're right here, **Matthew, chapter 6**, part of the prayer that He taught the disciples here, **verse 12**:

**Matt. 6:12** - *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*

Dropping down to **verses 14-15**:

**Verses 14-15** - *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

And it might be good at this point to read also **Matthew, chapter 18**. How many times should we forgive somebody who hurts us or sins against us? Peter asked that question. You might remember this one. Matthew 18, **verse 21**:

**Matt. 18:21** - *Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? How many times, Lord, do I have to forgive my brother if he hurts me? Seven times?"* Peter asked. And you know the answer.

**Verse 22** - *Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."*

And did Jesus mean 490 times and then you can really let him have it? No. No, He was saying you forgive him as often as you need to. And then He told the parable, which you can read, of this man who was forgiven much by God, but he was unforgiving toward his servants. Let's read down at the end, **verses 33-35**, where Jesus said:

**Verses 33-35** - *"Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So my heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.*

So this living law, brethren, which is so difficult to do because, you see, when you are hurt and when you have pain, it is very hard to forgive. I know from personal experience. My wife knows from personal experience. We've been in the Church 40 years this year. God called us in 1959.

I know and you know that Satan goes around causing these things, problems in the Church. Brethren hurt brethren. I just hope with all my heart, mind, and being, brethren, that all of us in the United Church of God, other brethren who still are clinging to the truth of God and the way of God and the law of God, preserving the truth, and any of the other groups of God's people, I hope we will all, rather than being angry with one another, at one another...because Satan is trying to divide us and destroy us. He would like to prevent any kind of a real work from being done, wouldn't he? I pray with all of my heart that God would help us not to be enemies as brethren, but to pray for one another, to love one another, and to forgive one another, the hurts and the wrongs that have taken place in the past.

This has to come from God, doesn't it? You have to want forgiveness. We have to pray to God and ask for forgiveness and for the healing of the wounds and the healing of the hurts. We have to be willing to let go and ask God to give us this kind of love that only He can give us. I believe only then can we really have the peace and prosperity and progress in the United Church of God to go forward. Only then, if we can ask God to help us to practice these living laws in all of our lives, in the ministry, in the Church more, and among the brethren more, and really work together and grow together in these areas...I'm speaking for myself. I'm not speaking for the Council of Elders or Ministerial Services or the Home Office. I'm speaking for Luker, Christian, husband, father, grandfather, minister, speaking for myself to you today, how I feel; and I would like to be an instrument in God's Church and work for greater peace and harmony and unity.

I'm a part of United. I'm committed to United. I've been a part of it from the very beginning. I recognize our faults and shortcomings as much as anyone, and we have them; but we are sincere in our desire to serve God, to do His work, and to endure to the end, to be faithful, to reach out to other brethren, and especially, brethren, beyond that, to reach out to this poor world of suffering people that need God's truth.

I hope we are growing and maturing in our spiritual lives so that, if it is God's will once again to bless His Church and bless His work with growth as we reach out into the world, that we will be a mature group of His people, that they can come into our congregations and find love and healing. I'm sure they will because we all want this in our lives, don't we, brethren? So let's work together and pray together and ask God to help us all together to be growing in His love and in acting and practicing these living laws in our lives.