

Improving Relationships in 2015

by Wayne Goff

The early morning of January 1 found me watching a news program while drinking my morning coffee and enjoying the accomplishments of the past few days. Rachel DeAlto, a “communications and relationship expert” gave four tips on how to improve **any** relationship in the coming year. The tips were good, but every one of them can be found in the New Testament! Let me list the tips and give you the accompanying Scriptures:

1. “Take Off The Mask”

The first point is about honesty. Stop trying to be something or someone you are not. In the business world, the advice is “fake it till you make it.” And there is something to be said for **visualizing** in order to make progress. But many people cannot develop new relationships because they cannot be honest about themselves with others. They put on a “face” which they want the world to see, and they refuse to take it off and show their real selves. So in order to have friends, you must be a friend yourself (Prov. 18:24), and that requires being true.

NEW TESTAMENT: “Provide things honest in the sight of all men” (Romans 12:17, **KJV**) “Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:21, **KJV**).

2. “Give To Give”

Focus on *giving* rather than *getting*. Most people *give* to *get*, Rachel said. But in any successful relationship, we must give more than we get. There are people who are natural givers, and there are people who are natural takers. But if the relationship between a “giver” and a “getter” is to succeed, then the “getter” must learn to give. Unrequited givers eventually burn out.

NEW TESTAMENT: “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35). “Let each of you lookout not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4).

3. “Complacency Is A Killer”

In order to have a successful relationship, whether with a spouse, a friend, etc., you must put **work** into it. Just as soon as you take the other for granted, the relationship begins to suffer. So we must continually work at every desired relationship.

We have all had the experience of talking our hearts out to someone only to find out that they aren’t even listening! Not only does that hurt, it also suggests the other person isn’t interested in you! How dangerous this is when our “heart” is not in our worship to God! God will not maintain a relationship with anyone who is just going through the motions. And my guess is that none of us would do it either!

NEW TESTAMENT: “Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent” (Rev. 2:4-5). “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9).

4. “It’s All About Acceptance”

Rachel emphasized that in a personal relationship one needs to either learn to “love them or leave them. You are not going to change the other person.” Indeed, the other person will change when they decide for themselves that they want to change. So you have to learn to accept others for who they are.

In a spiritual vein, let me say that we are to let God change others. It may be our duty to teach, correct, instruct, but we cannot force others to change if they do not want to.

NEW TESTAMENT: “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (Jn. 15:13-14). Jesus “loved” us while we were still “enemies” (Rom. 5:10). We feel God’s love and acceptance, and voluntarily change as we repent.

