

## INSIGHT

If someone were to ask you, "What does it take to have a close knit family or relationship?" What would you say? Research has shown that the common response to this question--by close knit families--was, "We do a lot of things together." These same people were asked, "If you could pick one activity that you thought was the most important, what would it be?" Many of them said, "Camping". You may ask yourself what is so special about camping? Camping by itself does not make a relationship closer, it is what takes place when you go camping. That something is conflict. Camping is one activity that seldom goes smooth. Something is bound to go wrong: bad weather, spoiled food, insect bites, bad attitudes, getting lost, etc. But surprisingly enough, it is through these conflicts that friends and love ones are able to find a common bond and draw closer to one another. Think of the times you felt the closest to those whom you love? Wasn't it through a crisis? Or maybe you became good friends with a stranger simply because he or she took the time to lend a helping hand!

Shared crises solidify relationships within families, coworkers, friends and even strangers. Although suffering does not feel good at the time it is being experienced, it does have the power to establish close knit bonds!

The apostles shared both good and bad experiences together. They preached the word, fellowshiped with each other and suffered together for the sake of Christ. For, "*The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.*" (Acts 5:41). The apostle knew the secret of a closer relationship with God and each other: shared crisis. In this case, not only did they share a common crisis, they shared the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. They bore their suffering with an invincible cheerfulness. It was a shared crisis that motivated approximately three thousand souls to be converted to Christ in Acts 2. When Peter preached the message of the Gospel, those who were affected by the suffering of Christ were "*cut to the heart*" (Acts 2:37). They shared a common crisis: they (and us as well) were all guilty of the death of Christ and of sin. It was after the preaching of the gospel that the bonding began: As it is written, "*Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*" From that day forth, all the believers did everything together (Act 2:42-44). They preached God's word, fellowshiped with each other and comforted each other as they faced various kinds of trials for the sake of Christ!

## *The Royal Law: Loving Relationships Closer Relationships*

### Key Text:

**Romans 5:3-4**

*"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."*

### Theme:

Having a relationship with Jesus Christ brings us peace and reassurance of salvation. For the Scripture says, "*...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*" (Rom. 5:1-2). However, we too rejoice in our sufferings for the sake of Christ. For by it, we grow in patience! Patience is a quality that can endure evil without being filled with resentment or revenge, two attributes that can destroy relationships. Patience will put up with a person's shortcomings, and wait long to see its kind effects! Such a quality builds strong and close relationships! Patience, a byproduct of suffering, brings us closer to God and to one another!

### Application:

*Here are some practical suggestions:*

1. **Fellowship!** You cannot build a relationship by being distant. Did not the God of heaven come down to earth to build a relationship with you? Is not the Spirit of God in you? Just as He is in you, you must also be in the fellowship of His children! It is through fellowship that we can get know one another and experience different things as a family!
2. **Be of assistance!** If you see anyone who is down or is experiencing difficulties in their life, comfort them! Pray with them! Give them a call of encouragement! Build them up! Hug them! Reaffirm God's love for them! Show them that you care!

**May the Lord richly bless you!**

## SERMON OUTLINE

### Closer Relationships

*“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers” James 2:8-9*

### Practical Ways To A Loving Relationship

#### I. Last Week: Effective Communication

##### A. Emotional Word Pictures

1. They communicate thoughts and feelings (stimulate left and right brain)
2. Nathan used it with king David (2 Sam. 12:1-13)
3. Jesus used them to explain the kingdom --parables (Mat. 13:34)
4. Ordinary people used them --Harriet B. Stowe’s “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*”

#### II. The Key To A Closer Relationship

##### A. Reminder: The Basis

1. *Romans 12:9,10*
  - a. Sincere love=hating what is evil
  - b. Honor (A person’s soul is very valuable)
  - c. Know their needs (What does he/she need?)
  - d. Supply their needs (What must I do?)  
--commitment, conversation  
fellowship, physical provisions

##### B. Suffering: The Key To Closeness

1. *Romans 5:1-4*
  - a. Suffering is influential  
--It builds patience  
--It proves and improves (*Gk. prove*)  
--Jesus, through suffering, brought us near to God, the Father  
(*Isa. 53:5-6; 1 Pt. 2:21; Gal. 3:25*)
2. Suffering can bring out the best in relationships
  - a. Personal experiences
  - b. Disastrous events (tornado, fire, etc.)

### Conclusion: 2 Peter 1:5-11

1. Increase in the qualities of love
2. Welcome the things that help increase

## SMALL GROUP STUDY

### Warm-up:

Describe a time in your life when you were shown the most support from your friends, family, etc. What did this situation do for you?

### See To It

### 1 Thessalonians 1-3

- 1- From verses 2-6: List the particulars for which Paul, the Apostle, was so thankful to God on behalf of these brethren.
- 2- How did their faith in God show itself? Why was Paul encouraged by their faith?
- 3- How was life as a Christian like for these Thessalonians? Did life seem easy? What kind of impact did they make on others?
- 4- From chapters 2 and 3: How did their love for Paul show itself? How did their love for Timothy show itself?
- 5- What caused these people to have such a great and close relationship with Paul and Timothy? Explain.

### Seeing It Closer

- 1- Give an explanation for each of the following: How is gold made pure? How is faith made pure? Are relationships strengthened through crises?
- 2- Have you experienced personal hardships as a Christian? Please share it with us. What key factors kept your faith from waning?
- 3- **Read Philippians 3:10.** Why did Paul want to know the sufferings of Christ? What benefits does that bring?

### Getting To It:

Suffering for Jesus’ sake strengthens our relationship with God! By the same token, our relationships are made stronger when we experience common trial and tribulations as a family! For by these experiences, our true devotion for one another is shown by what we do as opposed to what we say!