**Better Relationships:** Keeping a Soft Heart in Hard Places
Week 1 | 9.29.10

**Micah 7:6b (Amplified Bible):** “... a man’s enemies are the men (members) of his own house ...”

*Biblical synonym for enemy — oppressor*

*oppress*

–verb (used with object)

1. to burden with cruel or unjust impositions
2. to lie heavily upon (the mind, a person, etc.)
3. to weigh down

“You can’t always change what you FEEL but you can always change what you DO!” - Joyce Meyer

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**Five Things We Can DO to Better Our Relationships**

*[Proverbs 4:18-27]*

1. **Stop reacting, start responding.**
   
   *[Ephesians 4:29-32; James 1:19,20]*

   Webster’s definitions:
   
   React = to act in opposition to
   Respond = to reply; to react positively or cooperatively

   Transform the pattern of reacting to a pattern of responding:
   
   • Slow down and think
   • Keep your mouth shut
   • Know when to walk away

   Reacting keeps the wrong pattern of relating within us strong and healthy.
   Responding helps us move toward resolution in the conflict.

2. **Use your tongue as a weapon for offense, not defense.**
   

   **Proverbs 18:21:** “The power of life and death is in the tongue ...”

   **1 Peter 3:10:** “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep her tongue from speaking evil
   and her lips from speaking deceit.”

   Synonyms for evil — troublesome, injurious, pernicious/poisonous, destructive
3. **Recognize the Enemy Behind the Enemy.**
   
   [John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8]

   Satan might have control of the other person but you can refuse to let him have control of you!

   **Colossians 3:16a:** “Let the WORD of Christ richly dwell w/in you ...”

4. **Don’t Pretend “All is Well” When It Is Not.**
   
   [Psalm 51:6; Proverbs 27:12]

   Often the religious response to personal hurt is:
   - avoid it
   - pretend not to notice it
   - act unaffected by it

   **Ephesians 4:25:** “... let everyone express truth with his neighbor ..”

   Fruit that will grow on the tree of denial:
   - Resentment
   - Bitterness
   - Hardness of Heart leading to Hatred
   - Depression
   - Health issues
   - Etc.

5. **Guard Your Heart. Guard Your Heart. Guard Your Heart.**
   
   [Proverbs 4:23]

   “All the water in all the oceans can not sink a ship unless it gets inside the ship.” —Eugene Petersen

   **Guard Your Heart from the Lies of the Enemy...**
   by constantly filling it with truth.

   **Guard Your Heart Against Toxic Emotions...**
   by keeping a short account with God, and with others when possible.

   **Guard Your Heart Against Fear and Worry...**
   by believing God; that He cares, that He is your help, that He has good plans for you, that He is in control, that He will be faithful, etc.

   **Guard Your Heart Against Discouragement...**
   by letting go of what you don’t understand in your circumstances.

   **Guard Your Heart Against a Peace-at-Any-Price Mentality...**
   by dealing with issues as God leads.
Keeping a Soft Heart in a Hard Relationship

• Individualize God’s love in your life personally.  
  [John 15:15; Ephesians 2:8,9; Ephesians 5:1,2; I John 4:16]

Ephesians 3:17-19 (Amplified Bible):

17 May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love,

18 That you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints [God’s devoted people, the experience of that love] what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of it];

19 [That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!

• Let Biblical thinking pervade your heart and mind.  
  [Romans 12:2,3]

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<tr>
<th>TEN BIBLICAL REQUIREMENTS IN REGARD TO HOW CHRIST FOLLOWERS ARE TO TREAT THOSE WHO OPPOSE THEM AND/OR ARE THEIR ENEMY:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Meet their needs, particularly their physical needs.</td>
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<td>2. Don’t fight back, love back.</td>
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<td>3. Do more than they ask. Give more than they take.</td>
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<td>4. Love them.</td>
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<td>5. Pray for them.</td>
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<td>6. Bless them. Do not curse them.</td>
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<td>7. Seek to be at peace with them, as far as it goes with you.</td>
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<td>8. Do not repay their evil ways with your evil ways.</td>
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<td>9. Don’t avenge yourself; let God repay them.</td>
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<td>10. Don’t be discouraged or disheartened by them; overcome evil with good.</td>
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(Based on verses in Proverbs 25, Matt. 5 and Romans 12)

• Never give up on anyone.  
  [Psalm 43:5,11]

Micah 7:6b, 7 (Amplified Bible):

“... a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.  
But as for me,
  I will look for the Lord and confident in Him I will keep watch;  
  I will wait with hope and expectancy for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me!  
Rejoice not against me, O my enemy!  
When I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to me.”