

TRADING SPACES

The Learning Channel has turned several familiar phrases into a cultural and programming phenomenon. Our friends and neighbors are familiar with the TLC versions, but for the last few weeks we've been learning about God's perspective ...

The Clean Sweep (February 2)

We learned what to do about the emotional clutter that we accumulate during our lives – some memories are worth keeping, but other hurts from our past we must discard if we want to live in freedom.

Extreme Makeover (February 9)

We learned that the reason people put so much emphasis on their appearance is that we are powerless to fix the emptiness in the inner man ... and we heard some powerful testimonies of how God still changes lives from the inside out.

While You Were Out (February 16)

We learned that even when we walk away from God He will welcome us back in His mercy, restore us to a relationship with Himself, and help us stay committed to our most important human relationships.

What Not To Wear (March 2)

We learned about the power of our attitude, and how we alone are responsible to choose our thoughts and have reasonable expectations in our relationships with ourselves, with others, and with God.

Tonight, the final lesson in our series is “**Trading Spaces.**” Have you ever sat in a neighbor's living room and thought, “This is what I would do if I owned this place”? Well, Trading Spaces has become a phenomenon precisely because people think that way! It is a one-of-a-kind decorating show with a twist – two sets of neighbors swap keys to transform a room in each other's home. They have two days, a set budget, and they're not allowed back into their own homes until the moment of truth. Now you might not want someone doing that to *your* house, but can't you think of a couple of neighbors that could use a little assistance?!

Sometimes, getting into someone's space (or face!) is appreciated – and sometimes it is not! If we have strong preferences about the way we decorate our *homes*, you can be sure that we have even stronger preferences about how we live our *lives*. And this is where conflict comes from – we are all individuals, and we all see things a bit differently. That's why, when we try to *enforce* our preferences and viewpoints on everyone around us, we end up destroying the very relationships we are trying to fix! We need to trade places and see things from another perspective.

RELATIONSHIP ILLUSTRATION - DAVID FERRELL

It was the Greek philosopher Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, who first divided human beings into four categories: Popular Sanguine, Perfect Melancholy, Powerful Choleric, Peaceful Phlegmatic. Let's see if you recognize yourself or your friends in these examples:

FLAT HAT

A man walks into a park and sits down on a bench, putting his hat down beside him and turning to read his newspaper. Meanwhile, someone comes along and sits on his hat, flattening it. What will the reaction be?

- Sanguine – starts laughing because the hat looks so funny to him
- Melancholy – starts crying because the hat is ruined, is inconsolable
- Choleric – starts raging, calms down only when promised a new hat
- Phlegmatic – waits for person to leave, calmly puts hat on, walks away

GARDENING

You can tell a person's personality type by how they go about gardening.

- Sanguine – talks to neighbor all day, postpones weeding till next week
- Melancholy – garden is a work of art, beautiful flowers and no weeds
- Choleric – hates gardening, sparse flowers and grass extremely short
- Phlegmatic – went out to plant a garden, but ended up building a shed

DRIVING

You can tell a person's personality type by watching them drive a car.

- Sanguine – drives unpredictably, varies speed without reason, has trouble concentrating, likes talking to passengers, likes to look them in the eye (even in the back seat), has the highest accident rate
- Melancholy – drives carefully, obeys all speed limits and traffic signs, keeps mileage and maintenance logs, studies road maps in advance of a trip, always knows the best route to take from point A to point B
- Choleric – drives boldly, takes risks, always speeding because they want to get somewhere fast, tailgater, thinks speeding tickets are a fair price to pay for saving all that time during the year
- Phlegmatic – Sunday driver seven days a week, drives so slow that they enrage other drivers, take their time enjoying the scenery, end up taking several side trips, forget where they were going and why

Our differences make our relationships great – and complicated!

Last week we learned an important principle: **LIFE IS RELATIONSHIPS; THE REST IS JUST DETAILS.** In other words, everything in life that truly matters can be boiled down to relationships. If you fail in relationships, you fail in life. Thankfully, the Bible gives us lots of help in this area!

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus summarizes His teaching with the “Golden Rule” – the **ULTIMATE RULE OF RELATIONSHIPS** ...

Matthew 7:12 (KJV) Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Matthew 7:12 (MES) Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them. Add up God’s Law and Prophets and this is what you get.

Jesus is really teaching two important principles here:

1. Be willing to look at things from the other person’s perspective (we all have the same basic needs, but we fulfill them in different ways).
2. Be willing to take the initiative in your relationships (don’t wait for the other person to change).

Porcia Nelson’s “Autobiography in Five Short Chapters”

Chapter 1 – I walk down the street. There’s a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I’m lost, I’m helpless, it isn’t my fault. It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter 2 – I walk down the same street. There’s a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don’t see it. I fall in again. I can’t believe I’m in the same place, but it isn’t my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter 3 – I walk down the same street. There’s a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see that it is there. I still fall in. It’s become a habit. My eyes are open, I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

Chapter 4 – I walk down the same street. There’s a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.

Chapter 5 – I walk down another street.

It was Albert Einstein who said, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.” We have to make constant adjustments if we are to be successful employees, successful spouses, successful parents, successful friends, and successful church members. **Did you know that the clinical definition of death is a body that does not change? CHANGE IS LIFE; STAGNATION IS DEATH!**

Counselors will tell you that most times in relationships, the problem is not the problem! All of our issues with each other trace their roots all the way back to the moment Adam and Eve sinned. Fear took over and started the human race on a destructive cycle that never seems to end. Even today, we are afraid that we will not receive what we need from our relationships, so we get angry at others and try to control them.

James 4:1-3 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.



What is the problem in this cycle?
MISPLACED EXPECTATIONS.
We expect another human being to give us what only God can give!
What is the solution? Mature love!

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

As we mature, we no longer expect the church, the pastor, the saints, or our spouse to meet all of our needs. **GOD IS OUR SOURCE!**

You can’t control how someone else acts in a relationship, but you can choose how **YOU** will act and react. All it takes to interrupt this vicious cycle is for someone to change the parameters by ACTING BIBLICALLY.

SUBMISSION is the principle that sets us free in our relationships.

The Word of God contains many verses that teach submission: believers to authority; women to the church; Corinthian believers to Paul’s coworkers; believers to one another; wives to their husbands; the church to Christ; slaves to their masters; believers to God; young people to their elders; Jesus to His parents; demons to the 70 disciples; creation to God; everything to Christ; Christ to God; the world to come to Christ and His church; angels, authorities and powers to Christ

SUBMISSION

- a humble attitude where obedience is rendered within a relationship
- an ancient military term referring to rank
- an expression referring to order, cooperation and partnership

- **1 Peter 2:13** Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake:
- **Ephesians 5:21** Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.
- **Ephesians 5:22** Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Notice that our submission is not merely to another human being, it is ultimately submission to the Lord and to His purpose for our lives.

- **Hebrews 13:17** Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

You will always have troubled relationships, and you will always have trouble submitting to God's order, if you are a PROUD person. There is constant friction (resistance) between God and those who are proud.

- **1 Peter 5:5** Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.
- **James 4:6-7** But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

PRIDE IS NOT THINKING TOO MUCH OF YOURSELF; IT IS THINKING TOO MUCH ABOUT YOURSELF.

- **Philippians 2:5-7 (KJV)** Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
- **Philippians 2:5-7 (MES)** Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human!

When we set aside our advantages, privileges and rights in favor of others, we will be successful in our relationships! The best relationships are not "50-50," they are "100-100" – both parties give it all they've got! This is "trading spaces" – seeing things from someone else's viewpoint.

Even when we give 100% to our relationships, things will not be perfect ... because the very best we can give to a relationship still includes our own faults, failures, brokenness, hurts, and sinful tendencies.

But when God gives 100% to His relationship with us, there is no downside – because there is no fault or failure in Him! This is the ultimate "Trading Spaces" ... we don't have the strength to have perfect *human* relationships, let alone a perfect relationship with *God*. But even though we are imperfect, God willingly supplies us with strength to do it.

Romans 5:6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.