

Opening Prayer

1. How to Look for Love and Relationships

Adapted from Richard J. Krejcir

Session I - Love and Relationships

One way to look at the world of love and relationships is to see it as a big, dark, and foreboding maze, with many paths we could take, each with options, potential traps, and dangers. As we go into this maze, we come face to face with our fears, doubts, and we encounter various opportunities, as well as others, seeking love.

When we are faced with so many paths, we can become frustrated, and be led to wrong decisions. This, in turn, can result in a string of lost, and broken friendships that further direct our lives toward conflict and strife. Or, perhaps we find the right path, by chance, leading to a life of contentment, harmony, and affection. Do we not risk it? Or, do we proceed? If we stay off the path, we end up in loneliness and despair. If we take our chances, we can get lost and hurt. This is true of both friendships and romance. So, what do we do?

We feel a need to choose a direction, and move ahead on that path. Then, the questions become, *what is that direction? How can I find it? Is there a Divine plan for me? Do I need to prepare myself first, or can I just dive right in ? Or, Do I seek God's teachings, so I can take the path with more confidence?*

What if we took seriously what God's Word has to say, His timeless, tested, and righteous path on which we could walk. We could go into that dark maze of seeming uncertainty armed with the Light of His Word so we can take risks, and make right decisions; we can find, and form relationships that work! After all, **the meaning of the Christian life is relationships**, with God, and then with the others around us.

When we venture into the confusing maze of relationships, the options confronting us will cause us either to embrace others with eagerness, or to become fearful, and alone. One path may make us content, another bitter. Fears are a natural defense mechanism warning us away from dangerous situations. Added to these natural fears are the various social attitudes of our culture, and our physical and emotional desires. Meanwhile, Christ is calling us to follow Him out of that deep, dark maze to a path of solid, lasting relationships, which may include; close friendships, dating, finding the right spouse, and possibly a healthy marriage.

Read the following:

Matthew 7:1-4 Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. "And

why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye?

Romans 5:8-9 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation.

1 Corinthians 13:1-7 If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Galatians 5:13-15 For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.

1 John 4:9-13 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us. And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.

Then discuss the comments above and these questions:

- 1. What is love?**
- 2. What do these Bible passages teach you about love? Are these ideals realistic today?**
- 3. Have you ever felt, "I have failed in relationships?" Why did you feel that way?**
- 4. What role does love play in your relationships, in general?**
- 5. What do you expect to gain from these discussions and to contribute to them?**

Closing Prayer