

Religion Class

Three Rules of Relationships

Grade Level(s)

7th -12th

Content Area

Bible/Religion

Topic

Relationships, Friendships, Married & Family Life

Guiding Text: Matthew 22: 34-40

Description/Abstract of Lesson

Covers a Biblical model of the three large steps of success in relationships:

1. Be OK with God
2. Be OK with myself
3. Be OK with others

The success of each step is determined by acceptance of the one that preceded it.

Time Requirements

Preparation Time: Time for presentation preparation and project design.

Class Time: One or two 90-minute block class sessions (One for presentation of material, the other for response activities)

Concept/Enduring Understanding

Students connect their relationships together, understanding that the most integral part of a healthy relationship with God, a healthy self-concept, and healthy outward relationships are all dependant on their spiritual health.

Essential/Guiding Questions:

How can students see the big picture of all of their relationships in their proper context?

Journey To Excellence Standards Addressed

- *Acceptance of God:* Surrender one's whole life to God; develop a relationship with Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to work in one's life.

- *Interpersonal Relationships*: Develop a sense of self-worth, skills in interpersonal relationships.
- Affirm a belief in the dignity and worth of others.
- *Healthy Balanced Living*: Accept personal responsibility for achieving and maintaining optimum physical, mental and spiritual health.
- *Intellectual Development*: Adopt a systematic, logical, and biblically-based approach to decision-making and problem solving when applied to a developing body of knowledge.
- *Personal Management*: Function responsibly in the everyday world using Christian principles of stewardship, economy, and personal management.

Specific Learning Outcomes

Head (know): Know that God's value of their lives infuses value into their self-concept, and should provide the basis for the relationships they form with others.

Heart (feel): Feel that the love that God has for them is worth accepting, that they are a worthy and worth-while person, and that their relationships with others can be healthy and productive with the first two steps in place.

Hand (do/respond): Internalize principles of relationships that can begin to make an effective shift in one's life.

Assessment of Outcomes

- Learners will be able to reiterate key concepts from the presentation: they can easily repeat and explain each of the three steps. Reiteration
- A learner's choices and attitudes will reflect understanding and internalization of concepts.
- Measure how learners understand the value of the love that God has for them through their responses to project questions, to discussion responses, and their choices and attitudes toward God and themselves.

Learning Experiences

(All Bible text are from the New International Version)

Lesson:

I. Introduction: Matthew 22:34-40

- a. Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
- b. Relationships should follow the same progression:
 - i. A loving relationship with God.
 - ii. A respect and value of oneself.
 - iii. A love that can extend to others with God's love at the core.

II. STEP #1: Being OK with God

- a. The first instruction is to "Love the Lord Your God."
- b. Understand He created you
 - i. Psalm 139:13-16
- c. Understand that He has a plan and purpose for you
 - i. Jeremiah 29:11
- d. Understand that He came to save you from your sins and worth-stripping contexts and choices
- e. Understand that saving You was only the one of the many things He still wishes to do on your behalf: He's also preparing a place for you, coming back to recover you, and planning to spend eternity with you...
- f. **Therefore, He is the one who establishes your worth.**
- g. "The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them, else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them. He has a use for them, and He is well pleased when they make the very highest demands upon Him, that they may glorify His name. They may expect large things if they have faith in His promises." --*Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages, pg. 668.*
- h. **We protect and defend that which God has given value, including ourselves.**

II. STEP #2: Being OK with Yourself

- a. Cannot properly establish self-image, self-worth, or self-esteem without first understanding what God says about you.
- b. The closer you grow to God
- c. Three levels of acceptance of oneself:
 - i. **Self-Worth:** Knowing you have value
 1. Deep in your heart, you understand that no matter what happens, what you do, what you look like, etc., God has given you an unshakeable, irrevocable value that is not contingent on outward factors.
 2. Big picture...you see yourself as a valuable individual that will not allow value to be squandered.
 - ii. **Self-Image:** How you see yourself in contrast to others; the idea you have of yourself
 1. You can see yourself fairly and rationally...regardless of how others see you, but perception of yourself is one of a member of a community
 2. Composite image you have of yourself
 - iii. **Self-Esteem:** Liking the image you have of yourself.
 1. Unlike self-worth, self-esteem can fluctuate.
 2. Has more to do with if your comfort with the exterior pieces
 - iv. All steps are closely linked with confidence.
 - v. If you are lacking a Step 1, that leaves you searching for something else to determine your self-worth, whatever makes you valuable
 1. Look to exteriors:
 - a. Smart
 - b. Talented
 - c. Athletic
 - d. Acceptance from parents
 - e. Attractive in appearance
 - f. Popular
 2. If you cannot perceive any of these traits on your own (and all are temporary, by the way) then your worth is based on a temporary source...themselves.

3. What is your foundation based on?
 - a. Matthew 7:24-27
 - b. Those who build their “house” on the rock will stand firm.
 - c. Without accepting God’s perspective of who you are, your foundation is on sand.
4. The worth you derive from these things is surface, temporary, fleeting, and only skin deep.
- vi. You cannot love your neighbor at all if you do not first love yourself...
- vii. I don’t know many people who actually love themselves, or if they do, they’re not demonstrating it through the way they live and interact...therefore, they really don’t love themselves.
- viii. How does Jesus love you? Are you that accepting, forgiving, graceful to yourself?
- ix. You don’t have to feel positive about each piece of yourself everyday, 24/7, but you do need to be OK with yourself...cannot be looking outside of God and yourself to determine these things, because other people will let you down, or not consistently accept you.
- x. With Step 1, you accept that God’s interaction with your life gives you value, your image is reflective of that value and worth, including His calling for you to be loved and then to love in turn.

III. STEP #3: Being OK with Others

- a. Cannot properly establish quality intimate relationships without first understanding and believing what God says about you and then allowing that understanding to inform your self-worth, self-image, and self-esteem.
- b. Being OK with others involves not letting the other take the place of the first two steps:
 - i. If Step 1 is replaced by Step 3, then the other person will unsuitably occupy God’s place, thus becoming the God. This = idolatry.
 - ii. If Step 2 is replaced by Step 3, then your self-worth will only be based on what others think of you...and that is shaky ground to base worth on.
- c. When we love our neighbors as ourselves, we love ourselves as God’s precious, unique, and custom creation.

- i. When we extend that to others, we respect and value them as also being one of God's precious, unique, and custom creation...not eye candy, objects, or disposable.

IV. A Person centered in this progression of principles can extend his/her heart to communities and causes; God's work of love becomes extended to a broader community through the one who really takes and holds these values.

V. Conclusion

- a. (Invite students to consider damage when steps are not encountered correctly.)
- b. Choose to only date/enter into very close relationships with people who have also put the first two steps into place.
- c. Consequences
 - i. If you date people who do not have Step 1 in place, they will place you in the God center of their hearts, thus promoting you to that who receives their worship.
 - 1. While flattering for a little while, being someone's God is very scary.
 - 2. When you fail at loving, accepting, supporting, sustaining them, they will crash...the wreckage for both of you will be extremely costly.
 - ii. If you date people who do not have Step 2 in place, they will be dependant on you for all of their self-worth, self-image and self-esteem.
 - 1. It takes a lot of time, energy, and investment to support and be responsible for someone's entire happiness...you are incapable of this. Every human is.
 - iii. If you are currently in relationships where one or both of you have not taken care of Step 1 and Step 2, please carefully, prayerfully consider the summation of God's law, and the priority of that law:
 - 1. Love the Lord your God (1st Commandment of the 10)
 - 2. Love yourself
 - 3. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Teaching Strategies & Instructional Management

Presentation of Ideas
Individual Assessment Time
Group Discussion

Required Materials

Bible

Handouts

Recommended: If using for a chapel presentation, it's always a good idea to pair the presentation with a skit, songs that support the key points, etc. In the presentation itself, appropriate anecdotal stories add a lot to each step.

Lesson Evaluation & Teacher Reflection

Remind students about these relationships connections as you counsel with them, as relationships are being discussed.

Projects and Correlations

- **Art:** Creatively build a heart. Hearts can contain the four chambers...God, self, others, community. Hearts can be constructed from various materials...painted cardboard, clay, paper mache, etc. Students can then creatively express their hearts.
- **Family Groups:** Brainstorm strategies to encourage each other in maintaining a healthy heart. Have them sign "valentines" to each other as a symbol of support and commitment to God-centered self-worth.
- **Music:**
 - "Open the Eyes of My Heart" by Matt Redman
 - "Guard Your Heart" by Steve Green
 - "Man After Your Own Heart" by Gary Chapman
 - "Don't Let Your Heart Be Hardened" by Petra
 - "Love Song for a Savior" by Jars of Clay
 - "Something Beautiful" by Jars of Clay
 - "Surely We Can Change" by David Crowder Band
- **Writing:** Journal about the chambers of your heart: God's chamber, the self chamber, the close others chamber, the over flow into your community chamber. Other journal questions include:
 - What activities, ideas, choices would "close" a heart or make an "unhealthy" heart?
 - What feeds a healthy heart? Remember that in a beating heart, the blood flows through the heart as the

heart regulates the pressure. Hearts without all chambers must be replaced...hearts are only healthy when all cylinders

- **Science:**
 - **Embryology:** The cardiac cells that later become your heart begin formation on the fetus' face. At a certain point early in development, the fetus' head curves toward its chest, and those cells are planted there...so the "information" that starts in the head needs to flow to the heart and become lodged there.
 - **Anatomy/Physiology:** Chambers of the heart, blood flow, etc.
- **Religious History:** Israel
 - As long as Israel maintained a strong connection with God, they had peace among their own nation and were a blessing to others.
- **PE Health:** Cardiovascular Fitness
 - What behaviors and nourishment feed a healthy heart? Why do we avoid some foods/chemicals?