

I. INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

A. Building relationships

It is good to be here with you and a tremendous privilege.
Perhaps it is well to share a bit of what we hope to do.
We hope to discuss various kinds of BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.
I have 11 different lectures I would like to share.
But we all have just come from busy schedules so first we will spend about an hour getting our thoughts together on thinking about relationships.
What does it mean — to build relationships?

Later on we will discuss several variations and details and do some questionnaires.
Then we will close with some practical ideas we all need to learn.
There is a lot of material, more than what you can use. So you do not have to pay attention to every detail.
I'll be sharing many different topics so that everyone can benefit from some of the things.
But no one needs all the things, so just relax and enjoy.

Much has changed over the past two or three decades.
You have changed much and accomplished much.
You are tremendous people, and many of you have accomplished wonderful spiritual things for Christ and His church.

We all have much to thank Jesus for.

Our hopeful desire is for spiritual fervor to return to our churches.
Therefore, we want to talk today about.

Exploring (understanding) relationships – what they mean to us. How important are they? What can they accomplish?

B. Finding and renewing our fervor

There are so many nice things to say to a group like yourselves that I could fill the day with it.
But Scripture warns about being a teacher having itching ears 2 Tim. 4:3.
Just talking about how good we are is not going to help us much to get better.
I am sure most of us would admit to not being perfect and would confess a secret desire to grow personally and become even more beautiful than we are.
So we must look ourselves in the face and admit we are not what we should be -- we need some help.
— We need to make some changes if we are to experience a fresh new growth in our churches and denomination.

Admitting something isn't right, hurts.
— Change is uncomfortable
— Change is hard

Today I do not want to give a high level speech with academic information and a lot of mental knowledge.
My hope is to have a talk that will bring us together on the same page.
I hope we can discover how God is ready to make us into fiery spiritual participants with Him.
I believe God is very interested in the doubling of your church's attendance and for your church to give birth to one daughter church.
I would like to share some simple practical ideas that you may desire to pray about and possibly try out.

In my opinion you conquered the change over from a restrictive regime to freedom.
I congratulate you!!!

But now a whole new world has evolved in the last 10 years that few of us even know about and even fewer can relate too.

There is a new world out there and we need to scramble to learn about it and to keep up with it. An unprecedented revolution is sweeping the world that will change completely the way we “do church”.

Church ministries and worship services as we know **them are** a thing of the past.
God himself is ushering in the end times.
While God is doing that, He also is bringing the church back to its initial New Testament beginnings.
Over the centuries the church has become legalistic.
The church has adapted many business principles.
God is bringing the church back to **relationships**.

We have entered a whole new revolution that is sweeping Christianity and will change it forever.
The Muslims are openly preparing *another Jesus* — an antichrist, but I am not talking about the Muslims.

I am talking about the *technical* and *electronic* revolution that is sweeping our churches and we are not even aware of it. Smart Phones have taken over priority in the lives of people.

We are no longer a Baptist denomination
— or rather an isolated Baptist denomination separate from other denominations.
We use charismatic music, listen to Pentecostal messages, read books from other denominations, and have teachers with different doctrines.
Most of it is excellent. But we are no longer isolated Baptists, we have become one segment of the orchestra that plays on God’s platform along with many others.
It is better — much better. It is wonderful and I hope you will shout hoorah; hallelujah will also do and even our Baptist standard “Praise God” is fine.
But it means one very significant thing.

A crucial thing! Our people will no longer be Baptist, just because they are Baptist, or because it is our tradition, or because they grew up being Baptist.
No rather they will choose to be Baptist because they feel we **care** more for them than other denominations in their town.
Being a Baptist in the future will be based upon **how much you care** for other people.

Caring for people means knowing them, deeply — personally--responding to them and their needs.
It means listening and helping rather than just preaching.
With relationships that are built within the church, preaching will become less and less important.
This is because there will always be a better sermon somewhere on a mobile phone, **or** the internet.
Music will no longer play a crucial role.
New, fast, loud, modern songs or subdued older hymns will not be a key element in having people come to church on Sundays.
To unbelievers the future of the church, your church, will be determined by **RELATIONSHIPS** — not by preaching as in the past.
To weak believers, without relationships in the church, the church on Sunday morning will become less and less important as people use the internet more and more and do more shift work, their loyalty will be determined by relationships.

But the internet does not bring love, it does not bring relationships.
Only one human can offer a relationship to another human.
Animals can’t satisfy us — things can’t satisfy us.

Very spiritual people can satisfy others if they learn to develop relationships.
God and Jesus stressed relationships more than everything else.

Relationships consist of:

Proximity -- being together
Listening to the other person in depth
Meeting that individual person’s need
Ministering to others — love is giving (doing something for another person)
Receiving--accepting help, accepting advice, accepting correction

So I would like to talk and share together about building the following relationships:

1. Building more Intimate Relationships with God,
2. Building New Relationships with Wife & Family,
3. Building Relationships with Young people,

4. Building Relationships with coworkers,
5. Building Relationships with Unbelievers,
6. Building Relationships with Civil leaders,
7. Building Relationships with Missionaries,
8. Building Relationships with Enemies,
9. Becoming an Encourager,
10. Our Responsibilities toward One Another

c. The Foundation is Love

Relationships are all built on love.

No love, no relationship.

Little love, little relationship.

Sporadic outbursts of anger, derogatory comments, or complaints, are a breakage of love.

Words like “always” or “never” damage, limit, and destroy love.

Love is not just an emotion, but an attitude that must be desired, learned, practiced, built and kept alive by continual use.

But love is also discipline!

A discipline that calls for faithfulness even in difficult circumstances.

The use or lack of love infiltrates all of our relationships.

The use or lack of love defines every move and action with another person.

The use or lack of love defines who we are; it makes up the total of our personality

— we are defined as friendly, kind, or harsh, cold, etc.

The use or lack of love is the key factor of how other people relate to us.

The use or lack of love is the key to how other people perceive us.

The use or lack of love either draws people to us or repels people from us.

Therefore, love is the drawing card to having a growing church and a growing denomination.

The future of our denomination and the future of your church can be summed up in one word: **LOVE**.

Love is an action word; love by its very nature cannot be passive.

LOVE IS ACTION — it is physically expressed, physically practiced.

Love is not something we talk about; love is something we demonstrate. (1 John 3:18)

If there is love, your church will grow. If there is a *lack* of love your church will shrink.

Love is the great foundational indicator of spiritual healthy or unhealthy churches.

Christ therefore put the greatest priority on love.

Love comprises all the fruits of the Spirit.

Love encompasses all the 10 commandments.

Love is the foundation of the greatest sermon in scripture: the Sermon on the Mount — 3 chapters long.

Christ summed it up in a threefold statement as follows:

Love the Lord your God

Love your neighbor

Love your enemy

On these three laws of love hinge our total personal influence and ministry effectiveness.

D. Reality

Let us begin by finding where we are really at!

So, I'll begin by sharing where I am at and we will take it from there.

In my business life or “ministry” I may, according to the Old Testament, be compared to a “priest” or possibly as some say “prophet.”

In the Gospels I might be compared to a Pharisee.

I am only speaking about myself.

I do not want to apply that to you.

But perhaps you might find it interesting and helpful to compare your spiritual profession with those from the Old and New Testament.

Pharisee has a very negative meaning to many of us, but this is incorrect — totally incorrect.
Pharisee does not mean hypocrite; it means spiritual leader.
I am a spiritual leader.
My job is to try to be **good one**.
I want to be a GOOD Pharisee, not one of the bad ones.

For just a moment let us take a look at the Pharisees and see if that helps.

1) What was a Pharisee?

- A Pharisee was being a teacher of the Bible (the law).
- A Pharisee was being a church leader (leader of the synagogue).
- A Pharisee was having a doctor's degree in theology (doctor of the law).
- A Pharisee had a very different lifestyle from other people (special clothing or carrying your Bible).
- A Pharisee meant being an official warden of certain spiritual things (traditions, sacraments).
- A Pharisee meant taking care of physical spiritual property (buildings, keeping them sacred).
- A Pharisee had a different time schedule on weekends from those around him.

Item number one to remember is:

Most Pharisees and other spiritual church leaders were **good**, not bad.

There were more good Pharisees than bad ones.

We must not equate being a Pharisee with being bad.

Pharisees were not criminals.

It was the Pharisees — the spiritual leaders that gave the Jewish nation and people their significance.

Without the Pharisees the Jewish nation would have collapsed a long time before Jesus came.

So being a Pharisee does not mean being a bad leader or a bad person.

We will not study this further here, but if you so desire, studying and applying the word "Pharisee" to your own ministry may be a very helpful personal activity.

I recommend it.

So, what does "Pharisee" mean then?

There are other meanings that can be applied, but we will apply the meaning given by Jesus.

Jesus identified them as professionals

Professionals — who had lost their deep spiritual fervency that they had as **young** people.

Professionals — who had lost their deep intimate personal relationship with God.

Professionals — who knew and upheld all the outward services, methods, traditions, etc — and rightly so!

But according to Jesus, Pharisees had lost their humility, their deep personal care for other people, and their relationships with ordinary men and women who were weak or non-believers.

The one glitch that Jesus focused on was those ceremonies, prestige, doing things right (the Baptist way, not like Charismatic) had taken priority.

Relationships had been replaced by a system — a program — an accepted form of doing things on the Sabbath (Sunday morning for us).

Do we have any of that amongst us?

As an illustration I am reminded of one of our village pastors who requested an evangelist to come and hold youth services.

The evangelist was told to reach out to the young people — only do not use loud music.

In another church a deacon grew a beard and the pastor thought that was a sin, forgetting that a hundred years ago all his church founders wore beards.

So I am a Pharisee and I am struggling with being a good one.

Don't throw traditions away! We need traditions!

By far most of our traditions and habits are good but

// 1-2/// are we reaching our young people? _____
Am I growing MEN for Christ? _____
Am I helping to plant new churches? _____
Are the churches where I minister growing? _____

These are the things that many pastors struggle with and that many are trying to balance in their ministry.

2) *Let me explain it this way to you:*

I am one of the oldest people here — and that means that it is more difficult for me to be unbiased and pure of heart than for you.

The older one is the harder it is to be a good believer.

Since I am older than V.Nesteruk, our former president it is harder for me to be a good Christian than it is for him.

Since VN, is older than Slavic Nazarkevich, the main pastor of the L'viv Baptist church it is harder for VN to be a good Jesus follower than for Slavic.

My dear Brothers; *the older we are the more trouble we have to do it right.*

A young new Christian has no experience, only faith; so he prays, then gets an inspiration and says God wants me to do such and such.

Or he makes a mistake and we older ones tend to say “Oh, it’s ok, he is just a new believer but he is on fire that is what is most important.”

When an older believer does something unclean — unchristian, every one is shocked.

It is natural, but is it right?

Moses and David were both older believers and leaders when they made their blunders.

But, yes, we expect fewer mistakes from an older person.

Pastors make mistakes, — the beauty is that some pastors have humility and openly share their mistakes.

For a pastor to share his mistakes and apologize is a mark of true holiness.

The stakes for pure, clean living are much higher for you church leaders than for just ordinary believers.

God Himself said so to King David (2 Sam. 12:14).

You of all people David, my chosen one, my anointed one.

You are the leader of God’s people.

You are their shepherd.

How did you dare to do a thing like that?

Shame on you David (2 Sam. 12:9, 10).

It reminds me of a story about a church elder. A guest speaker was informed by the church secretary that he better preach a good sermon that Sunday because an unbeliever was going to attend. The guest and an elder stood outside the church welcoming the traditional, properly dressed people. Then a somewhat disheveled woman dressed in sloppy clothes came. Obviously she was the unbeliever. The elder stepped forward and said, “Dear miss, this is the house of God and we dress appropriately for God here.” The wounded woman broke out in tears and ran away.

I wonder what Jesus would have done?

Would He have done the same thing as this elder?

3) *What would Jesus do in this situation?*

What would Jesus do is always a good question to ask, isn’t it?

Also an older believer has more experience; he just about knows for sure what God is going to say or what He wants to do.

So an older believer tends to answer his own prayers, go by experience, use common sense plus he has accumulated a number of false ideas and practices.

This makes many older pastors operate the church similar to a **business**.

This is the very thing that is killing our denomination at this moment.

Two scripture passages come to witness that it is harder to be a good believer when you are older than when you are young.

In John 8:7, 9 we see that Jesus challenged the professional church leaders to take an inward look.

Jesus did not condemn them, **not at all**.

But as they looked inside they discovered that their **true** love for God, for their neighbor, and for their enemies did not measure up to God’s spiritual standards.

They were not even close.

Professionalism was their priority!

In the book of Job we have the story of Job’s 3 trusted old friends telling him that he — in so many words — is actually a fake.

They can only look back at “what always has been, traditions, the rules of the church, their doctrines.”

They are convinced that outward appearance is an accurate measurement of inward spiritual conditions.

But the fourth, youthful Elihu sees some other possibilities.

When God comes on the scene, He exonerates Job, clears Elihu, but expresses the need for the other older 3 friends to be purified because of their shortcomings, which God even calls foolish. Job 42:7, 8.

I am sharing these things because most of you as the superintendents, pastors and elders are both older in physical age as well being older as believers, and also older as professionals in the service of Christ.

The older we become in our marriages, in our relationships with others, the more difficult it usually becomes to change and do some new things.

It is scary to do things we have never done before.

It is scary to admit that we have some false doctrines, like believing that pastors do not sin, or that they are always right.

We all know that such teaching is false teaching. But to admit to others that we are wrong or have made a mistake is not easy, and it usually becomes harder as we get older.

E. REDISCOVER Dependence upon Others and what Reckless Dependence upon God is.

We need to rediscover relationships, dependence upon others and what faith (reckless dependence) upon God really is.

I ask your permission and cooperation today to freshly rediscover these precious elements of our Baptist forefathers.

By this little study we hope to help you discover how flexible you are.

What percentage of your church ministry reflects professionalism and how much reflects your personal love as in the "one-another" passages in the New Testament.

We have looked at our professional life, but we also have a private life.

I'll share a few ideas of my private life as example.

My Personal life:

Are people trying to imitate my marriage?

Do I take care that my wife has one day of complete rest every week to honor God?

Have I cultivated in my children the things of the Lord.

Do my children who live at home reflect a reasonably positive lifestyle?

Do I think that some things in my private life should not be known publicly?

Did I help to make my wife a spiritually successful woman that can be measured against Prov. 31?

Do I have habits that do not fit the fruit of the Spirit?

Are my finances clean and pure?

Do I borrow money for less than extreme causes?

/// 1-3/// As a whole am I a better believer now than 3 years ago? _____

Has my first love for Jesus been renewed recently? _____

When and How? _____

Is there a chance I will finish strong? _____

My private list can go on and on and on; what is yours?

Let us stop here and do a brief simple personal analysis.

Then we will go on to take a look at our responsibilities to one another.

!!! Do

Answer Questionnaire # 1!!!

With this we conclude our presentation about relationships in general.

So now that we have talked about some basic issues I think we are ready to address the relationships in our lives. We will now focus on 7 individual relationships.

/// 1-4a///

Questionnaire # 1

The Bible teaches us to “Be above reproach”.

Above reproach obviously does not mean to be perfect.

What does it mean to “be above reproach?” _____

/// 1-4b /// Write down your very first thought that comes to mind about an area where you are you not “above reproach?”

Even if you did not write it down, it was still there, right? — God has spoken to your conscience.

/// 1-4c /// Can you remember as pastor the last time you told your elders that you had made a mistake in church affairs? Yes ... / ... no ... / ... can't recall? ... (*Circle one*)

/// 1-4d /// When was the last time you asked your wife for forgiveness?
_____ (*Fill in approximate date*)

/// 1-4e /// I wish I could conquer _____ problem.

/// 1-4f /// (Name item or for privacy write in (I have 1, 2, 3 etc areas.)

/// 1-4g /// I wish to grow in _____ area.

/// 1-4h /// (Name item or for privacy write in (I have 1, 2, 3 etc areas.)

/// 1-4i /// I consider my biggest hurdle to be _____ I need your prayer.

/// 1-4j /// I would like to add the following concern to my analysis _____

PS: If you are perfect please do not participate. Do not fill out the above. This is for imperfect people only.

/// 1-4kj /// So if it is still blank congratulate yourself – you are perfect? _____