

TAKING — — CHARGE

OF YOUR LIFE

RELATIONSHIPS



WHAT TO EXPECT

This booklet looks at the principles essential to the building of quality relationships—business, social and romantic.

You will enjoy the focus on practical skills.

The goal is to assist you in:

- Self-understanding and self-acceptance
- Essential communication skills
- Discovering and building the caring power of active listening
- A deeper understanding of intimacy and how to experience it

“Loneliness and the feeling
of being uncared for are the
greatest poverty.”

MOTHER TERESA

QUOTED IN *HIGH*
MAINTENANCE RELATIONSHIPS



QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS

—OUR FUNDAMENTAL NEED

Our most fundamental need is to live in the context of loving relationships.

Emotionally healthy people build healthy relationships and healthy relationships help us to stay emotionally healthy people.

How much of our personal growth and healing come through relationships? (Note the quote below)



“All personal growth, all personal damage and regression, as well as all personal healing come through relationships.”

Harry Stack Sullivan Quoted by John Powell *Why am I Afraid to Tell You who I Am?*

“Relationships are both an important goal of and a means to” (See second quote below).



“Relationships are both an important goal of personal growth and a means to personal growth.”

Dr. Glen Wilson, *Ibid*

All of life exists on the basis of interactive relationships. The ideal of quality human relationships has been a central value throughout recorded human history.

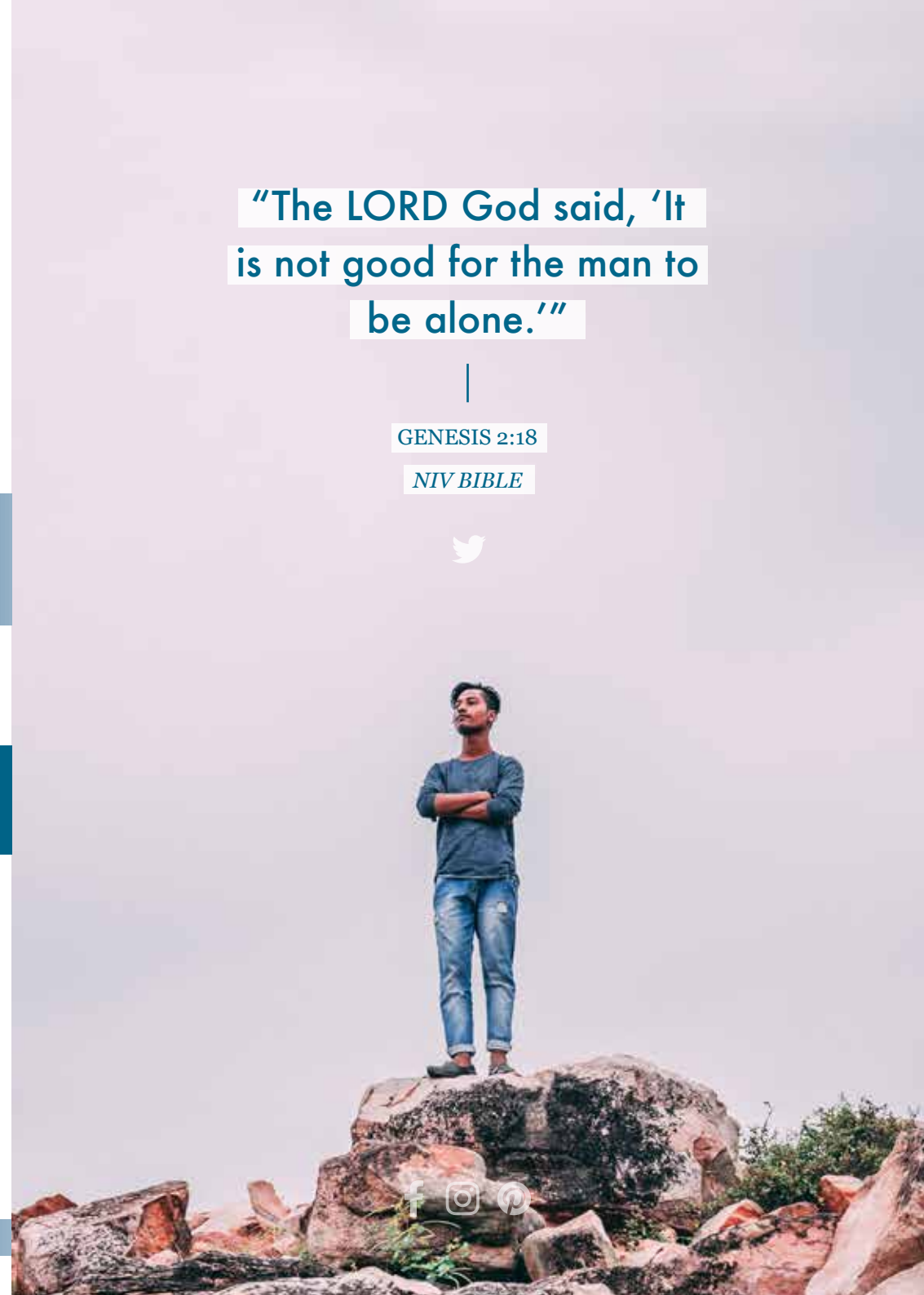
The earliest records of the importance of human relationships are found in the Scriptures. Note the quote on the next page.

“it is not good for the man to be”

“The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone.’”

GENESIS 2:18

NIV BIBLE




THE HEART OF MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

The previous booklet concluded with love as the premise of purpose. This booklet puts love at the centre of all meaningful and enduring relationships.

Love, for many, is difficult to understand and define. Note, the quote on the next page, by Jerry Hardin.

The Scriptures give an excellent definition of love. Read, in the quote below, and fill in the following aspects of love:

 "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."
1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NIV Bible

"Love is p.....
love is k.....
It always p.....
always t.....
always h.....
always p....."

Three Dimensions of Love:

1. **Passion**—An intense emotional desire for another person.
2. **Intimacy**—An open trust that enables the sharing of our deepest thoughts and feelings.
3. **Commitment**—The willingness to stay loyal to another person.



"Love is one of the most meaningful, yet confusing words in the English language."

JERRY D. HARDIN



QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS START WITH ATTITUDE

SELF ACCEPTANCE

Self-acceptance and self-respect are basic to accepting and loving others. Clinical psychiatrists Drs. Minirth and Meier tell us, "As we grow stronger and more secure in our we have a more positive influence on the people we love." (See quote below)

“As we grow stronger and more secure in our self-esteem . . . we have a more positive influence on the people we love.”
Drs Minirth & Meier, *The Complete Life Encyclopedia*

How does the Bible speak of self-love? (Note the two biblical texts below and on the next page)

“love your neighbour as yourself.” *Matthew 19:19 NIV Bible*

“love your neighbour as”
“He who loves his wife loves”

The subject of self-esteem has many facets. It is a recurring theme throughout this Life Management Study Program.

SELFLESSNESS

Personal pride and selfishness are negative attitudes which block our capacity to build friendships. We can determine to adopt attitudes that build winning relationships. A healthy self-image is essential.

ACCEPTANCE

The development of friendship is governed by our willingness to accept others. It is important to develop an attitude of unconditional acceptance.

“If someone comes to you in a state of hurt or anger, and you consistently respond to them with love and warmth, eventually their state will change and their intensity will melt away.”
Anthony Robbins, *Awaken the Giant Within*

“Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.”

EPHESIANS 5:28

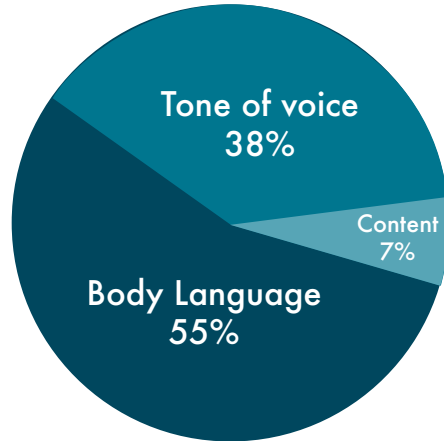
NIV BIBLE



COMMUNICATION

—THE ESSENTIAL SKILL

Note the three components of conversation and their relative importance.



Effective communication requires all three to work together. If body language and/or voice tone does not agree with the content, the communication lacks effectiveness.

Two keys to quality communication are:

- our attitude toward the other person
- absolute sincerity

Think about the conversations you have had with a partner or close friend during the past few months. Are you satisfied with the quality and quantity? In your opinion, do you need more . . .

- time to talk
- openness in discussion
- listening to each other
- opportunities for both parties to have input in important decisions
- more acceptance or corrective advice?
- other

CONVERSATION

—FROM CLICHE TO INTIMACY

Conversation begins at a superficial level. We talk in cliches, such as: “How are you? . . . How is your family? . . . Where have you been? . . . I like your dress . . . We must get together again soon. It’s really good to see you.” They are important conversation starters.

The development of conversation takes us from cliché to the sharing of information—a little more substance.

If the relationship is to develop further, conversation will progress from information to sharing opinions.

At each level, we reveal more of ourselves, making us more vulnerable. The development of a relationship requires progressive risk and trust.

The next level is sharing feelings. They express the uniqueness of who I am. This is therefore the intimate zone of communication.

Shared feelings will, from time to time, reach into the zone of peak-open communication—the experience of deep trust, fulfillment, and growth. At these times, the two persons will feel an almost perfect empathy.



LISTENING

—THE COMMUNICATION IMPERATIVE

You will note from the quotes below and on the next page, that modern therapists and ancient Biblical wisdom emphasise the importance of listening.



“Listening means that when your spouse is talking to you, you are not thinking about what you are going to say when he or she stops talking.”

John Powell, *Unconditional Love*



“It is impossible to overemphasize the immense need humans have to be really listened to, to be taken seriously, to be understood.”

Dr. Paul Tournier, *A Doctor’s Casebook*

Listening is a most important communication skill. Can you think of a reason or two why this would be so?

Instead of listening intently while the other person is speaking, there is a tendency to concentrate on what we are going to say next.

Effective listening is an art. It is essential for good communication and the development of a relationship. This kind of listening is active rather than passive.

Active listening affirms the other person in a conversation. It communicates acceptance. It is a skill that can develop communication beyond the superficial level. Like any skill, becoming a good listener requires practice.

“He who answers before
listening—that is his folly
and his shame.”



PROVERBS 18:13

NIV BIBLE



ACTIVE LISTENING

Active or reflective listening uses the paraphrase feedback. It simply summarises what the other person has said and expresses it back. It can be introduced with:

- “What I understand you to mean is . . .”
- “What I hear you saying is . . .”

Example:

Other person: “I am so nervous and confused about this decision, I don’t know what to do!”

You: “It sounds like you are really having a hard time!”

The paraphrase feedback, when used naturally and sincerely, rarely fails to inject enthusiasm into a conversation. It lets a friend or a loved one know they are not alone because you listen and you care. Like any skill, it requires practice for it to become natural and effective.

ASSIGNMENT

Find a partner and practice the paraphrase feedback. Each take turns in leading the conversation with the other giving paraphrase feedback based on what was said.

BENEFITS OF ACTIVE LISTENING...

- affirms the other person.
- communicates that the other person is important to you—worth listening to.
- promotes mutual trust.
- can be the means of a conversation reaching the intimate zone.
- can comfort in times of need, loss, and emotional pain.
- clarifies and ensures an accurate exchange.
- can assist in taking the heat out of conflict—sometimes when an angry person knows they have been heard there is no need for a continuing power struggle.



EMOTIONAL LISTENING

This listening skill facilitates the sharing of inner feelings. It can be introduced by:

- “How did you feel about it?”
- “You sound excited by what happened...”
- “You must have been deeply moved...”
- “Did it make you feel frustrated?”
- “You seem to be sad about...”
- “Do you feel elated?”
- “I hear you saying it made you angry...”
- “It sounds as though you’re worried about...”



“If you and I can honestly tell each other who we are, that is what we think, judge, feel, value, love, honour and esteem, hate, fear, believe in.. then and only then can each of us grow.”

John Powell, *Unconditional Love*

EMPATHETIC FEEDBACK

Empathy is putting ourselves in the other person’s situation and sharing their emotion.

Empathetic feedback eases the other person’s sense of being alone with their feelings. It is the way to support a person and develop the relationship. It does not necessarily agree or take sides. However, it does communicate your continuing acceptance.

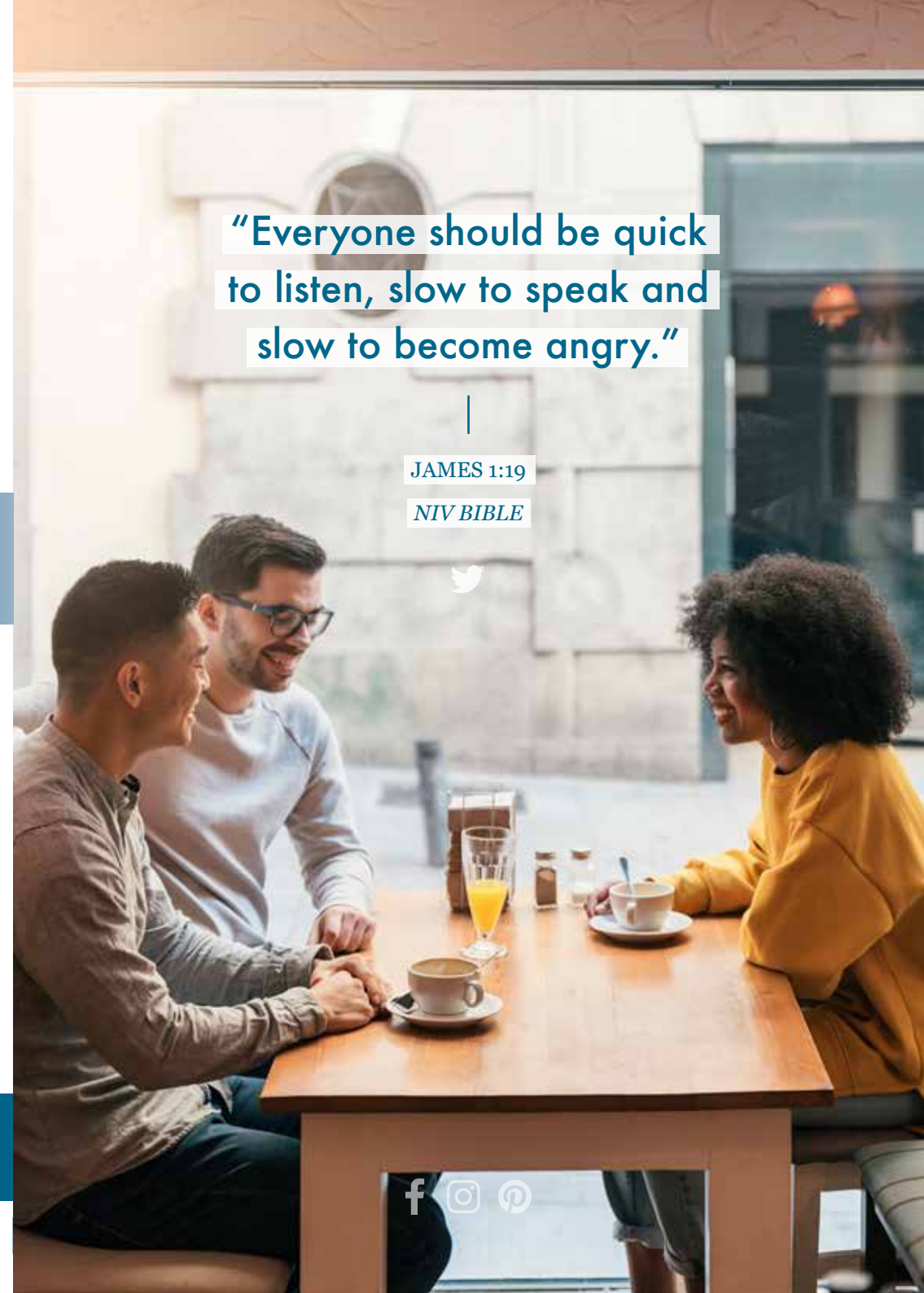
It can be achieved by saying:

- “I think I understand why you feel that way; no one likes that.”
- “I think I would feel that way if that happened to me!”
- “I have been through a similar experience - I can imagine how you are hurting.”



“No one can develop freely in this world and find a full life without feeling understood by at least one person.”

Dr. Paul Tournier, *A Doctor’s Casebook*



“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”

JAMES 1:19

NIV BIBLE



LISTENING STYLES

The ancient parable on the previous page illustrates various listening styles. See, in the quote above, four very different 'listening' responses:

1. The closed and shallow listener (the 'path'). The hardhead does not allow new thoughts to take root. It is closed to new ideas, change, and growth. The needs of others not understood.
2. The open but shallow listener (the 'rocky soil'). The shallow mind grasps information, but does not process it beyond the information level. Congenial conversation- but superficial.
3. The open, deep but conflicted listener (the 'thorny soil'). The divided self, a product of inner conflict. Unresolved negative feelings block deep meaningful understanding and response.
4. The open, deep and responsive listener (the 'good soil'). The open mind is open to new insight, listens and empathises. It builds deep relationships.

ATTITUDES AND SKILLS

Neither the necessary attitude nor skills for effective listening happen by accident. We must decide this is what we want. Then it is important to nurture both our attitude and our skills.

Like all skills it will develop with practice

"A farmer went out to sow his seed...some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly... But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop...

Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:

When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it... This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time...

The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it... But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it."

Matthew 13:3-23

NIV Bible

SURVIVING THE TRANSITIONS

All relationships have cycles that lead through positive and potentially challenging experiences.

Many of the transitions, from one phase to the next, potentially confront the relationship with crisis. This process can apply to professional or personal relationships, friendship and/or romance, individuals or groups.

Marriage is no exception. There are five distinct passages. (See on the next page.)

Failure to adjust to each new phase in a relationship can mean the “end”. It can be triggered by:

- conflict through irreconcilable differences;
- unfaithfulness;
- boredom through failure to grow.

Quality relationships never happen by chance. They should never be taken for granted. The necessary harmony - in terms of understanding, communication, sharing, intimacy, tenderness - calls for continuing growth.

The attitudes and skills, outlined in this booklet, will work for you if you continue to put them into practice.

THE PASSAGES OF MARRIAGE

1. Young love: the first two years

This is a time for choices: Lifestyle, money management, time management, how many kids and when...

2. Realistic love: Years 3 to 10

The early excitement has faded. Expectations, based on the different backgrounds of both partners, begin to surface.

3. Comfortable love: Years 11 to 25

The comfort passage -this period shapes the future quality of the marriage relationship.

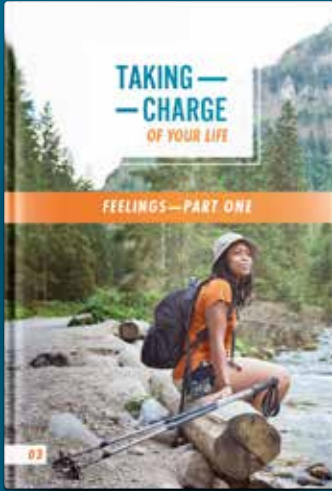
4. Renewing love: Years 26 to 35

The storms and challenges of life are taking their toll. The friendship developed needs to be renewed.

5. Transcendent love: Years 36 to . . .

Transcendent love is a profound and peaceful perspective toward each other and life itself.

Drs. Minirth, Meier and Arterburn, The Complete Life Encyclopedia








CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

FEELINGS—PART ONE

The next two booklets focus on our feelings, and in turn, many of the blockages to quality relationships and personal happiness. Email or call HopeChannel to receive your copy and continue in your journey.



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