

Connect Group Discussion Guide

Risen Savior Lutheran Church

Life: **IT'S**
COMPLICATED

A RELATIONSHIP SERIES

Welcome to your Connect Group

Life: It's Complicated!

When you read the title, “Life: It’s Complicated!” your response probably was “Absolutely!” “Complicated” has so many nuances that even the word “complicated” can be complicated. Do you mean complicated in the sense of intricate, involved, convoluted, tangled, impenetrable, knotty, thorny, confusing, or perplexing? If you answered “yes” to many of these things, then your life is ultra-complicated! Take this journey with us to unravel the complications of life and how we can untangle the knots we’ve often created for ourselves to live a life full of God’s blessings in our relationships with others.

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Powerful Institutions

Opening Question:

What makes life complicated for you?

This 8-week discussion series will challenge each of us to examine our relationships with the people that God has put into our lives. Are we experiencing relationships the way He intended, or are we sabotaging them with our desire for control in a messy world? We often desire results that are immediate and may not really want to put in the hard work. The world screams “Now!”, “New!”, and “Easy!” Sometimes God says “wait”, “old”, and “patience”. Do we listen to contemporary culture or to God’s Word? Are you ready?

Opening Prayer:

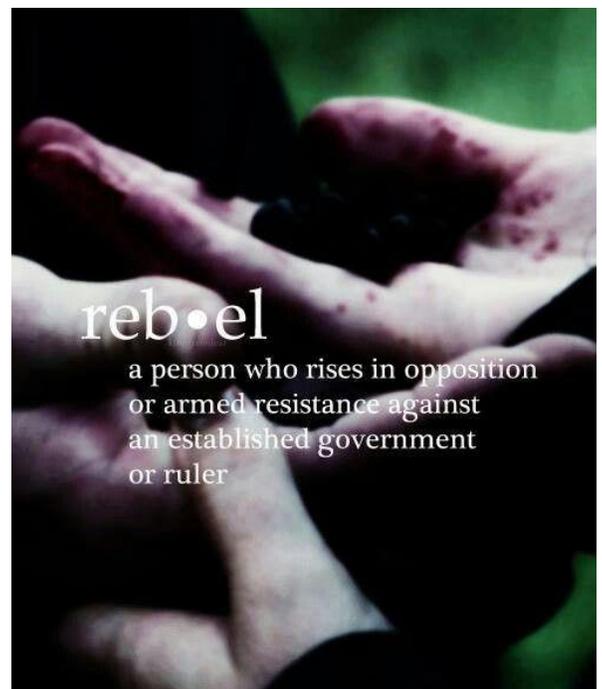
Father God and Holy Spirit, we thank you for bringing us together in this community to learn about your love and protection for us. You have given us Your Word, so that we may see. Help us to live *in* the world but not to be *of* the world. The world has powerful influences, but You are more powerful and You hold us in Your Hand. We praise and thank you for Your great love, in Jesus name. Amen.

Who is the Boss of You?

In moments of frustration, children will blurt out: “You aren’t the boss of me!” If directed toward their older sibling, this might be true. If uttered in defiance against their parents, then a discussion of who really is in charge will ensue. This childhood experience continues into adulthood when we receive a “non-compliance letter” from the HOA or your employer tells you to stay late to work on the latest emergency.

If one aspect of our society differs from previous generations is the universal belief that each individual is the final authority. In the past, a person who turned 21 believed they were in charge of their life’s decisions and the laws of the land supported that basic understanding. Now, children as young as seven or eight years old believe that no one can tell them what to do. They feel they are entitled to all of the freedoms that adults enjoy and do not have to answer to anyone but themselves.

- 1. When have you rebelled against authority?**
- 2. What were some of the lessons you learned?**



Exodus 20:1-11

And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me. "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments. "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.



- 3. Who is the authority in these verses? Does He have this kind of authority? Why or why not?**

Government as a Powerful Institution

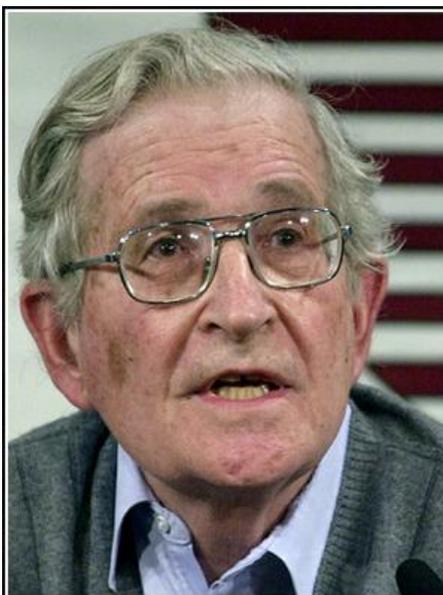
Every government is put in place by God. Jesus answered Pilate, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11). God even uses sinful governments to do His will: There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God (Romans 13:1b). 1 Timothy 2:1-2 tells us to pray for those who govern us. And Mark 12:17 tells us we should honor and submit to those who govern us. All human governments will eventually end and Jesus will reign over everyone forever.

- 4. We live in a time of political dissension. How is God carrying out His will with our current politicians?**
- 5. How do these powerful institutions make life complicated for you?**

In the New Testament, the book of Acts records the civil disobedience of Peter and John toward the authorities that were in power at the time. After Peter healed a man born lame, Peter and John were arrested for preaching about Jesus and put in jail. The religious authorities were determined to stop them from preaching about Jesus; however, Peter said, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20). Later, the rulers confronted the apostles again and reminded them of their command to not teach about Jesus, but Peter responded, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

6. **Has a boss or employer ever asked you to do something you felt was “unethical” or contrary to your Christian beliefs? If you are/were a person of authority in the workplace, how do/did you balance your Christian beliefs with the competitive drive of the workplace?**

7. **Do you believe that the ultimate goal for most powerful institutions is to do good for people? Why do some people within institutions abuse their power (e.g. bosses, teachers, coaches, customers, etc.)? What is our Christian response?**



States are not moral agents, people are, and can impose moral standards on powerful institutions.

— Noam Chomsky —

AZ QUOTES

Isaiah 9:6-7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9:6-7 is a prophesy of the coming rule of Jesus on earth. These verses gather into one announcement the predictions of the birth, the deity, his earthly government, his just kingdom, and eternity of Christ. From eternity God planned to “give” Jesus for us. Jesus reigns as King of the world. The government of the entire world is on His shoulders. Peace characterizes His reign on earth. We can rest confident that God manages the world well.

- 8. When Jesus is recognized as the proper authority, does this change how you look at other authorities in your life? How so? Does it simplify or make more complex your relationships with powerful institutions?**

- 9. In what specific ways can you honor people who hold positions of earthly authority? Consider lawmakers/politicians, your children's or grandchildren's teachers, employers or supervisors, police, and HOAs. How could your honoring them change your relationship with them?**

- 10. Are there people under your authority (past or present)? How did/can you show greater respect for them?**

Connect Group Prayer Requests:

Powerful Personalities

Opening Question:

Which of these TV/Movie families reflects the way everyone gets along in your family: The Brady's (The Brady Bunch)? Modern Family? The Corleone's (The Godfather)? The Foreman's (That 70s Show)? Other?

Introduction

As we spoke about in our discussion of POWERFUL INSTITUTIONS, there is a proper use of authority and power, namely, to protect and provide for the well-being of those under the rightful authority. But what is true in the political world is also true in the family: Might does not mean right.

The roles and accompanying responsibilities in the family have boundaries. There can be an attitude of entitlement based on the positions given in the family. Parents earn respect rather than demand it. Obedience to proper familial authority is not absolute – God's laws and ways always are in place and given foremost importance.

God's design for family provides stability, love, growth, and support. When these things are breached by a powerful personality in the family, things can get very complicated and dysfunctional. Social psychologists and other professionals in our secular society measure a family member's resilience to 10 most common childhood traumas (ACE Score) to help people overcome the abuses: physical, verbal, sexual, and neglect: physical, emotional. Five more risk factors are related to family members: a parent who's an alcoholic, a mother who's a victim of domestic violence, a family member in jail, an untreated family member with a mental illness, and the disappearance of a parent through divorce, death or abandonment. God's design never intended for any of these things to occur!

What we traditionally have called normal parenting in this society is abusive because it is emotionally dishonest. Children learn who they are as emotional beings from the role modeling of their parents. "Do as I say - not as I do," does not work with children. Emotionally dishonest parents cannot be emotionally healthy role models, and cannot provide healthy parenting. Our model for what a family should be sets up abusive, emotionally dishonest dynamics." (The Dance of Wounded Souls, Robert Burney)

A strong-willed child in the family can also complicate family dynamics. From the moment they are born, they make their presence known. In the toddler years, everything's a battle. We know from research that strong-willed kids are often the world changers, i.e., natural born leaders who typically pave the way when no one else will. Who's the biggest "world changer" in human history? Jesus! Hmmm.

Exodus 20:12

Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

- Luther's Small Catechism

Ephesians 6:1-4

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

- 1. What 4 reasons are given for children to obey their parents?**
- 2. Do you have a family member you consider to be strong-willed? How would you describe their personality?**
- 3. What qualities would characterize a home where the children and parents applied Ephesians 6:1-4 consistently?**

God's Design for Family

In healthy, functional families, roles of family members are fluid and can change over time. They love and support each other as they grow and experience new things, i.e., they are not threatened by one another's growth. They help each other become all that God wants them to be. When children make mistakes, they still experience love from their parents. Healthy families retain functionality even when individual members "leave" through moving out, starting their own families, or even the death of an individual member. Forgiveness and grace blanket the family, that is, when someone trespasses over another family member, saying "I'm sorry" is quick and thorough. The responsibility for teaching the children forgiveness and grace falls squarely on the parent's shoulders.

Discussions and devotions take place regularly in a healthy family. This is a place where all voices are acknowledged and heard. Final authority rests on the head of the household and children are still required to honor and obey their parents. However, this is a time for the parent's/head of the household to really listen to the underlying reasons for a disagreement so that they can make a better decision. Age appropriate rationale for a decision can then be given. This teaches the family members how to problem solve and make clear choices.

- 4. God tells us that fathers are not to anger their children. What are some ways fathers can control their tempers when disciplining their children?**

- 5. How can wives/mothers honor and obey their husbands when they disagree with them?**

- 6. If you have no children in your household, how do you apply Godly principals of family?**

- 7. As an adult, how do/did you honor and obey your parents? How was God's promise fulfilled for you ("that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.")?**

Dysfunction in the Family

Some of you know all too well what a dysfunctional family is – you just went through Thanksgiving and Christmas a few months ago. Instead of having a healthy loving Christ-like gathering, it was filled with tension, arguing, fighting, hateful silence and overall unhappiness. No one had their "bucket filled." Instead, they were drained and couldn't wait for the obligatory holiday gathering to end so they could leave and avoid this toxic interaction. Many individuals are keenly aware of familial difficulties. In fact, most people have a bittersweet experience with the holiday season for this very reason. In other words, family drama is not uncommon to the majority of the human race.

'dysfunctional'—that is, the system by which the family interacts is distorted by the addictions and compulsions of one or more members and, so, ignores the needs of each individual. In his view, it is the 'don't trust, don't tell' rules in such families that lead the children into their own self-destructive patterns. . . . 'Most people think they come from a dysfunctional family.'

A dysfunctional family is a family in which conflict, misbehavior, and often child neglect or abuse on the part of individual parents occurs continually and regularly, leading other members to accommodate such actions. Children sometimes grow up in such families with the understanding that such an arrangement is normal.

8. Family drama can be especially hard on children. What is your most memorable family drama as a child during the holidays? How has – or how can – God intervened to help you process and heal from this memory?

9. How can you make your home and family gatherings a place of sanctuary? What are some techniques you can share with others? Can you apply these techniques to gatherings in your home with friends?

Sanctuary –
refuge, shelter,
safety, protection

NOTE: If a family member is endangering themselves or someone else, please seek immediate professional help.

Toxic Personalities ~ What can you do? Plenty:

1. Recognize reality and don't sugarcoat it. People reveal who they are by their behavior, so don't ignore the noxious things they do.
2. You must set boundaries as to what you will and will not tolerate. I know families that have had to bar adult children from holiday meals because they have ruined so many family gatherings in the past. Only when behaviors change should you lower the boundaries.
3. Get everyone else to agree that there are topics that simply will not be discussed because they only bring out the worst in these individuals, and don't allow the conversation to veer into a minefield of divisive issues.
4. Set time limits: if dinner starts at 6:00 PM, start exactly at that time and let everyone know if they are late, dinner starts without them. The emotionally unstable personality is famous for being late (egregiously late) in order to make dramatic entrances, be the focus of attention, and to demonstrate dominance or control. Don't provide that opportunity.
5. Behavior that is dangerous (excessive drinking) or divisive, or that only serves to antagonize or irritate others should not be tolerated. If it is your house, you set the rules. If it is someone else's house, you don't have to be a party to acrimony, hostility, or worse.
6. Do expect to have a great get-together and to have a good time—and if someone is detracting from that as has happened in the past, resolve that this person simply will not have an audience this time – something these individuals usually crave.
7. If things get out of hand, especially where alcohol or weapons are involved (sadly yes, weapons), don't ever hesitate to call the police.
8. Remember that just because you are family does not mean you are safe – we are only safe (emotionally, physically, psychologically) when we avoid or control those individuals or situations that would do us harm.
9. Family holiday time is not therapy time – that is for professionals to handle and in private. Do not allow yourself to be drawn into the drama that these individuals use to dominate social events and diminish your enjoyment of the holidays.
10. Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, always remember that you have absolutely no social or familial obligation to be victimized – ever.

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FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Who, in your family (immediate or extended family), has the most powerful personality?

Where do their passive, aggressive, or neglectful behaviors come from?

Write down their attributes that you love the most:

What would your prayer be to help you bring greater relational health into your life with this person?

Write your Prayer Request Here:

For further study, read: Ephesians 5:15-33

Connect Group Prayer Requests:

Self-Sabotage

Opening Question:

What does “cutting off your nose to spite your face” mean? When have you seen this in action?



According to Psychology Today, “behavior is said to be self-sabotaging when it creates problems and interferes with long-standing goals”. The most common self-sabotaging behaviors are procrastination, self-medication with alcohol or drugs, comfort eating, and forms of self-injury such as cutting. Have

you ever procrastinated? Ever eaten too much or something you knew was not healthy? Slept in and missed an appointment? A single act of self-sabotage may not create huge problems for us, but when it becomes a pattern of behavior or enters into other forms of self-sabotage that are much more serious, like addictions, cutting, and suicide for example, it can be devastating to ourselves, our relationship with God, and our relationships with those we love. These serious acts minimize who we are in Christ and the full life that God intends for us.

Life is complicated when self-sabotage affects a user’s relationships. For example, with drug or alcohol abuse, the user values their drug/alcohol induced experience more than their family, friends, and coworkers. A deep relational bond is formed between the user and the mind altering substance that pushes other relationships to the side. The impact on family life can include substantial mental health problems for other family members, such as anxiety, fear, and depression.

- 1. In what ways have you seen alcohol or drug addiction affect a family (without naming names)? What were the relational consequences?**
- 2. What other forms of self-sabotage have you seen destroy families?**
- 3. Do you criticize yourself constantly, i.e., engage in excessive “negative self-talk”?**

People are important, significant and have eternal value because we are made in the image of God. We are prohibited from causing anyone any harm and are called to assist them to have healthy and safe lives. Because of our high value, God want us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Imbedded in Christ's command is the assumption that we are going to love ourselves. **As we would not cause harm to another person made in God's image, so we will not cause harm to our own lives.**

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Matthew 6:25-34

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

- 4. How can we honor God with our bodies? Do these suggestions help control self-sabotaging?**

- 5. How does anxiety contribute to self-sabotaging tendencies?**

- 6. At what point is professional help needed to care for a loved one that is self-sabotaging?**

To forgive is a divine attribute. It is to pardon or excuse someone from blame for an offense or misdeed. The scriptures refer to forgiveness in two ways. The Lord commands us to repent of our sins and seek His forgiveness. He also commands us to forgive those who offend or hurt us.

The power of forgiveness is the story of Jesus' life and death. For some people, the most painful part of this story was not the crucifixion, but that his friends and devoted disciples abandoned him, leaving him to suffer alone. Even Peter, his best friend and his "Rock", denied him three times. Although they abandoned him, Jesus forgave them, "Forgive them for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) And He welcomes Him completely back into relationship with Him. The power of grace through forgiveness eases pain and suffering.

As a dam blocks the flow of a river, anger blocks connection to grace. Forgiveness removes the dam of anger, restoring the flow of grace.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Ephesians 1:7-8

- 7. How have you benefitted from the grace of God?**

- 8. Have you repented from the sins of self-sabotage that have entangled you? Have you asked God for His forgiveness, strength, and guidance?**

- 9. Can you forgive yourself? Why do you need to forgive yourself for self-sabotaging thoughts or behaviors?**

- 10. Are there people in your life who have sabotaged themselves to the degree that you need to forgive them and show them the same grace of God?**

In Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son, a son making some very bad choices, turns his back on his family. After living with the bad consequences of his choices, he is full of sorrow and completely broken. He returns to his family expecting to work for them as a servant. But, to his surprise, his Father takes him back lovingly and celebrates his return. This upsets the older son. The Father implies to the older son that his love for both sons is not dependent upon their perfection but their willingness to return to him with a broken and contrite heart (Luke 15:11-32). This parable indicates that we do have the opportunity to make a change from the bad choices we make. When we humble ourselves and return to God, He embraces us with love, forgiveness, and grace.

11. How do you feel when you have been treated unfairly? How can you show acceptance to someone who doesn't seem to deserve it?

12. How can you guard yourself from self-sabotaging behaviors?



FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

How am I self-sabotaging myself?

What affect is this having on my relationships with those I love?

What would your prayer be to help you flee your self-sabotaging behavior?

Write your Prayer Request Here:

Connect Group Prayer Requests:

Dangerous People

Opening Question:

What kinds of items might you see a “DANGER” sign on? Why is the warning there?

Life is complicated by dangerous and harmful people and they don't come with warning signs. These people harm others physically, psychologically and emotionally by their destructive actions. They limit and even end the life of others. Their motives are as varied as they are irrelevant – they damage and mistreat other people. Our lives are complicated because we must spend time, money and eternal vigilance to protect ourselves from them or to try to fix the harm and destruction in our lives they have caused.

The commandment "You shall not murder," is not limited to taking another person's life. Bullying, physical and psychological abuse, threatening, and any other form of intimidation is included. Any action that limits and diminishes a person's life can be considered harmful.

The main relational complication is fear. Those who seek to harm us want us to fear their action. They may hide behind good and godly roles such as spouse or parents or friends but their actions are intended to minimize our freedom and live full lives as God intended. They will use fear as a means of controlling us and manipulating us to do their will.

- 1. What makes being a victim of a crime complicated? Are the complications different if the victim knows the abuser?**



Luke 10:25-36

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" [Jesus] replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So, too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

2. What natural inclinations make it easier to act like the priest and the Levite than the Samaritan?

3. Read Leviticus 21:1-3. (Also see Numbers 19:11-22.)

How might one justify the actions of the priest and the Levite? Why is it different now?

The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: 'A priest must not make himself ceremonially unclean for any of his people who die, except for a close relative, such as his mother or father, his son or daughter, his brother, or an unmarried sister who is dependent on him since she has no husband--for her he may make himself unclean.

Leviticus 21:1-3

In this case, the person who was robbed was not just robbed, but beaten and left to die! They "beat him and went away, leaving him half dead." It's bad enough to be robbed, but they beat the man and presumably left him to die of his wounds. Clearly by breaking the commandments, the robbers "complicated" this victim's life. Who knows what lasting damage was inflicted by that beating? Would he ever fully recover his full strength and vigor?

By the time the Samaritan comes along the man was probably three quarters dead. Lying out in the elements could not have improved his condition. The Samaritan (probably a business man) took action to care for the man beaten by robbers. It complicated his life because it took him off schedule, kept him exposed to the robbers who might have been nearby, used his supplies to care for the man and then paid for his recovery. Obviously, he had some appointment that would take two days but he adjusted to this new complicated situation.

4. Tell of a time when you changed your schedule and/or plans to help someone in need.

The government is charged with bringing justice to those responsible for a crime. But what is our response to those who are victims of physical, psychological and emotional assault? The two religious men saw what had happened and did nothing. By their inaction they allowed the man to remain half dead. Their lives were not complicated because they avoided responsibility.

"He is guilty who does evil to his neighbor, but he also who can do him good, prevent, resist evil, defend and save him, so that no bodily harm or hurt happen to him, and yet does not do it."

Dr. Martin Luther – Large Catechism

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:8

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

James 2:15-17

5. What is wrong with doing nothing?

Sometimes we have dangerous people deeply embedded in our lives. They are people who are controlling, abusive, and manipulating. They create much social, emotional, and psychological damage in a relationship. The personality characteristics that create this relational damage are viewed by the perpetrator as simply the way they are and not a problem or psychological difficulty. They have always lived with this personality and behavior, often something they learned from their relatives. They leave those closest to them severely depressed, with their self-confidence and self-esteem destroyed. Here are the clues that you have a dangerous person in your life:

- They're physically rough with you and hurt you on purpose.
- They have a frightening and scary temper.
- They repeatedly put you down, killing your self-confidence.
- They cut off your support, leaving you isolated.
- They encourage you to drop your hobbies, interests, and involvement with others.
- They check up on you constantly, keeping track of where you are and who you are with.
- They embarrass you in public.
- They convince you that you are never quite good enough.
- They have a perfectly logical right to do whatever they want.
- They brag about their tempers and outbursts because they don't see anything wrong with it.
- They disregard the feelings and opinions of others.
- They are extremely hostile toward criticism.

Instead of experiencing the warmth and comfort of love, you will constantly be on edge and "walking on eggshells" in their presence. You don't bring up topics, mention that you saw or spoke to a friend, or question their behavior. You shut down in self-defense. You may start to do "crazy" things to hide what you do from this person. However, it is important to remember that there is no such thing as "normal behavior" in a combat situation. Rest assured that your behavior will return to normal if you detach from them before permanent psychological damage is done.

6. Do you think this is common behavior in our society today? Why or why not?

7. What would Jesus say to someone who might try to manipulate Him?

You are fearfully and wonderfully made in His image. You are God's masterpiece – He created you anew in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10). Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). If you find yourself or a loved one trapped in a relationship with a dangerous person, seek professional help. Don't believe the lies of evil that have crept into your life through this person.



If you have used the above tactics to control another person, admit it and face your fear. Seek professional help. Jesus died for you, too. You are missing out on His greatest blessings by fearing your loss of control over others.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Romans 12:10

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

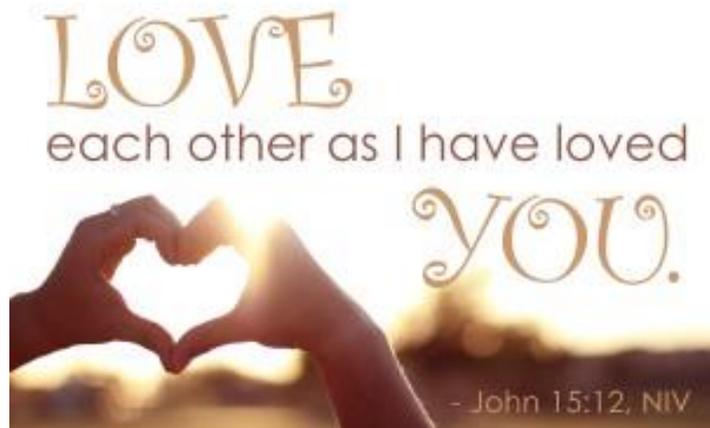
Ephesians 4:2

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

1 Peter 3:8

8. What kind of professional help is available for people who may be in an abusive situation?

9. How does loving each other like Jesus loves us “un-complicate” life?



FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Have I ever used dangerous tactics to control someone I love? Who?

What affect is my behavior having on my relationships with those I love?

What would your prayer be to help you love others like Jesus loves you?

Write your Prayer Request Here:

Connect Group Prayer Requests:

Marriage and Divorce

Opening Question:

?

Sexual Immorality

Opening Question:

?

Work and Money

Opening Question:

?

Lies and Deception

Opening Question:

?



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