

Psalm 39:12 “Hear my prayer, O Lord... for I am a stranger with You...”

Loneliness is not as absence of people; it's an absence of constructive relationships.

How does God conform us to His own image? We normally think of His work in our lives as being done through His word, prayer, and trials. Romans 5:1-5 validates the reality of that. But I want to suggest another, often undervalued means of sanctification: *human relationships*. Relationships result in influence. Influence results in change. That change may be destructive or constructive, but every relationship we have results in change.

Consider the changes the following relationships brought about:

David and Jonathan David and Nathan David and Absalom David and Michal
David and Bathsheba David and Joab David and Saul David and Samuel

Other sanctifying relationships include Jesus and the Twelve; Jesus and Mary-Martha-Lazarus; Barnabas and John Mark, Barnabas and Paul, Paul and Timothy-Titus-Philemon, and Onesimus.

Speaking of Paul – ever read Romans 16? Paul was continually involved in relationships with people everywhere and all the time. It was not a one-way street. Paul himself was greatly affected by his relationships with these many fellow believers. These relationships brought him great joy and also great sorrow and heartache. That's life. That's ministry. That's relationships.

Be sure to make the time to further relationships within your team as well as with those in need of Christ. God has placed you where you are to be sanctified and to have a sanctifying effect on others through relationships. Christ centered, loving, honest, constructive, encouraging relationships take time. Jesus had less than twenty who were constantly interacting with Him. He had three who were especially close.

Your effectiveness in ministry will flow from your ability to build long term relationships with others. People who get in close to you see you for who you really are. If you are the real thing, you will exert tremendous spiritual influence. Build those relationships wisely and continually. You, and they, will be forever changed as a result.

Suggestion for further study: Relationship principles in Proverbs 18; Life of David; Life of Barnabas; Observations on Paul's relationship with Timothy . not just Acts and 1&2 Timothy, but also his frequent mention in Paul's other letters.

Suggestion for further application: Have you ever entered a formal accountability relationship with another believer? Do you want suggestions of what to do or how to get started? Contact me and I'll send you the materials I use.

You are always in our prayers. Adios, Ron Berrus MCD/ABWE