

Five Ways To Change Your World 04
How To Live With People
By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. Illustration – a couple of my all-time favorite quotes

1. Linus of the Peanuts cartoon
“I love mankind. . . it’s people I can’t stand”
2. Pogo
“We have seen the enemy and he is us”
3. Whether they knew it or not, I think they were stating the same thing that the apostle Paul said
Romans 3:10 (NAS) — . . . “There is none righteous, not even one”

B. We’ve been talking about ways to change our world

1. The only person you can change is yourself
2. Attitude is a powerful thing – it enables us to succeed or causes us to fail
3. We need to rid ourselves of bitterness over the past
4. Each of those are potent tools in the arsenal of the person who would change their world

C. More than likely, we could make a list of things we’d like to change

1. Situations in which we find ourselves – at work, at home, in our personal lives
2. Circumstances, which are a bit broader, are often on our change list
3. We would often like to change specific events because of their negative impact
4. Probably nothing captures our desire for change as much as people

D. People make life difficult

1. Men say, “Women! Can’t live with ‘em and can’t live without ‘em.”
2. Women say, “Men just don’t understand us.”
3. Name a human relationship and I’ll show you a potential trouble spot
4. This is why many people waste their lives trying to change others
5. Perhaps you could benefit from learning how to live with people

I. WHY ARE PEOPLE SUCH PROBLEMS?

A. There are probably many ways to communicate the reasons why people are such great problems to us

1. We could dig into the psychological differences between us all, or we could examine the sociological differences that draw lines and barriers
2. We could speak endlessly of the emotional contrasts that make it so hard for one person to understand or relate to another
3. All of these are important elements and help us develop understanding and insight into how people create problems for one another

B. Let me give you a few theological ideas from that help us understand human nature from a spiritual point of view

1. Free will

A term frequently used for man's moral responsibility or free agency, which is the better term. A man is free to act in accordance with his own nature, and he is responsible as he does so.¹

2. The ability to think for oneself

- a. man was created with a mind with which to reason, to understand, to decide or choose
- b. thought is exercised by means of the will

3. A nature that reflects either similarity with God or with Satan

- a. **Genesis 1:27 (NAS)** — 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
- b. **John 8:44 (NAS)** — 44 “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

4. Life based on deeds of the flesh or life based on the fruit of the Spirit

- a. **Galatians 5:19–21 (NAS)** — 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- b. **Galatians 5:22–23 (NAS)** — 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

¹ *Believer's Study Bible*. 1997 (electronic ed.) (Re 22:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

C. All human problems result from one or more of these areas

1. Free will could be considered a great blessing, but it is also the source of great human conflict
 - a. my will and your will are not always the same
 - b. as we each exercise free will, we frequently conflict with someone who is also exercising their free will
 - c. it should be easy to understand that just because God blessed us with the ability to exercise our own will, it doesn't mean what we do is in any way good, right, or beneficial to anyone – self or others
2. The ability to think for oneself is a great blessing, but it is also a source of tremendous conflict
 - a. we don't always think alike
 - b. we are each created with varying degrees of intelligence, or at least, varying degrees of ability in different areas of thinking
 - c. thought is often a slave to emotions, life experiences, and even physical injury
 - d. differing abilities in the area of thinking can be an asset, but it can also pit one person against another
3. Human nature expressed in concert with God is one thing, while human nature expressed in concert with Satan is another
 - a. basically, we get into the area of good versus evil
 - b. there is a lot of evil in the world, and wherever there are problems between people, there is always at least some evil present
4. Pursuing deeds of the flesh versus the fruit of the spirit results in distinct differences
 - a. again, it's good versus evil at the base level
 - b. deeds of the flesh drives people apart, while the fruit of the Spirit draws people together

D. Considering the serious nature of the differences between people, it's a wonder that anybody gets along with anybody else!

1. I think I understand Linus from the Peanuts comic strip
 - a. "I love mankind. . . it's people I can't stand!"
 - b. this has driven many thousands of individuals to become hermits and withdraw from as much interaction with other humans as possible
2. I can tell you from years spent counseling people – people are trouble!
3. Most of us are tempted to say, "That's right, those other people are trouble!"
4. I'd suggest that we all get a mirror and take a look at the trouble-maker closest to us

II. THE BIBLE IS A WONDERFUL GUIDE ON HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

A. Understand the basic biblical approach to promoting positive human relationships

1. Work on yourself first and most – work on others second and least
2. **Matthew 7:1–5 (NAS)** — **1** “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. **2** “For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. **3** “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? **4** “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? **5** “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.
3. This doesn’t mean we can’t help others understand God’s will nor does it mean we can’t encourage others, or influence others, or teach them God’s truth
 - a. it does mean that the vast majority of your effort is on yourself
 - b. some of the most damaging actions is when a person gets on a crusade to straighten out everybody else
 - c. the only successful change within your reach is that which happens to yourself

B. Love people

1. **John 13:34 (NAS)** — **34** “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
2. **John 15:12 (NAS)** — **12** “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.
3. **1 John 4:20 (NAS)** — **20** If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.
 - a. sometimes there’s a lot of “I love God” while dispensing a, “But I don’t really care for you a lot”
 - b. loving people is the single best thing you can do to change your world

C. Behave in loving ways

1. Love needs to move beyond a mere sentiment or feeling
 - a. “warm fuzzies” sound all cute and cuddly, but they don’t go far
 - b. Perfect love may cast out fear, but fear is remarkably potent in casting out love. —P. D. James
2. We won’t take the time to read the passage this morning, but if you haven’t read 1 Corinthians 13 lately, go home and do so, then do those loving things for others
 - a. Remember the song - What the World Needs Now Is Love Sweet Love
 - b. guarantee – if you love people, your world will change

D. Respect people

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson – Men are respectable only as they respect
 - a. I think that quote is used in Tony Dungy’s book, “Uncommon”
 - b. I heard Tony Dungy tell this story in a TV interview
One of his players got into an on-field fight with an opposing player. Dungy called him off the field and asked what was going on. The player said, “He disrespected me, Coach!” Dungy replied, “If you want people to respect you, the act respectable!”
 - c. acting respectable is first and foremost, giving respect to others
2. **1 Timothy 3:2 (NAS)** — **2** An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,
 - a. having qualities or characteristics that evoke admiration or delight
 - b. you can’t admire anyone who behaves in ways that disrespect others
3. Respect demonstrates that we value, appreciate and honor other people
 - a. **Romans 12:10 (NAS)** — **10** Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;
 - b. **Romans 13:7 (NAS)** — **7** Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.
 - c. **1 Peter 2:17 (NAS)** — **17** Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.
4. If you want to change your world, start treating other people with respect

E. Develop a whole set of relational tools

1. **Ephesians 4:29–32 (NAS)** — **29** Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. **30** Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
2. **1 Peter 3:8–9 (NAS)** — **8** To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; **9** not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

F. Practice the golden rule

1. **Matthew 7:12 (NAS)** — **12** “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.
2. This is a key passage to living with other people

CONCLUSION

A. The bible is remarkably silent about how we ought to take up the impossible task of fixing other people

1. It is remarkably vocal about how we ought to take up the possible task of changing ourselves
2. Don't get the idea that if you change others will change too
 - a. they might, after all, if we all treat others like God desires, we give them the best reasons and best atmosphere to also change
 - b. but don't let that be your motive
3. Just take up the challenge to change your world by changing the one thing within reach – you!
 - a. you might be surprised that if you can't change others, you might become an influence, a motivation, an example that does help others
 - b. you can count on this – if you change, your world will change too

B. Invitation