

# Are We Willing to Invest in Others?

*“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds...*

*Let us encourage one another.”*

Hebrews 10:24-25

In the previous three lessons we have focused on three key questions:

Are we prepared for relationships?

Are we willing to focus on others?

Can we build mutual trust?

When we have learned to faithfully practice the “people principles” related to the above questions, we will have laid the foundation for strong and meaningful relationships. However, if we stop here, we will miss the best part of relationships. This brings us to a vitally important investment question: Are we willing to invest in others?

So many people invest in things that will fade away. So what can you invest in that will last? People! When it comes right down to it, is there anything else that really matters in this world compared to people? Once you’ve gotten to know people, learn to invest in them. The best relationships are always the result of unselfish giving. The following five people principles offer insights on some of the most important ways we can invest in relationships.

## 1. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle:

### All Relationships Need Cultivation.

For a garden to grow and flourish, it takes time, care and cultivation. If a garden is neglected, it will soon wither and die. Relationships are the same way: cultivate a relationship and it will grow; neglect a relationship and it will die. Whether it’s as a spouse, parent, friend or leader, you can cultivate a healthy, growing relationship by focusing on these ideas:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ – The foundation of a relationship is trust, and trust is fostered by a mutual commitment to the relationship.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ – Often a relationship will begin with easy communication, deepen with difficult communication, and will be sustained with intentional communication.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ for the well-being of the other person – Strive to put the other person’s desires before your own.
4. Build \_\_\_\_\_ together – Shared experiences bring lasting connection between people.
5. Experience \_\_\_\_\_ together – Growing together helps keep a relationship fresh and strong.

### Biblical Case Study: Moses and Joshua (Exodus 17, 24 and Numbers 27)

Moses and his assistant, Joshua, enjoyed a long relationship. For four decades, in good times and bad, their relationship became ever stronger. Moses invested faithfully in Joshua.

1. He gave Joshua \_\_\_\_\_. When Moses commanded Joshua to choose some men and fight the Amalekites, he stood on a hill with the rod of God in his hand, supporting the fighting army (Exodus 17:8-13).

2. He gave Joshua his \_\_\_\_\_. Moses continually invested in Joshua over the years.
3. Moses gave Joshua opportunities for \_\_\_\_\_. When he went to the mountain to meet with God, he took Joshua with him (Exodus 24:12-13).
4. Moses gave Joshua his \_\_\_\_\_. He set up Joshua to succeed by inaugurating him in front of the Israelites (Numbers 27:12-23).

**Discussion:** How are you investing in the most significant relationships in your life?

## 2. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle: Find the 1 Percent We Agree On and Give It 100 Percent of Our Effort.

Sometimes building relationships can be difficult. How do you connect with people when you seem to have nothing in common with them? Most people have many things in common. Occasionally, we encounter someone who seems different in every way, but even the most diverse people can find a commonality. Once they find it, they need to focus 100 percent of their effort on this point of agreement. The greater the differences, the more important it is to focus on what they agree on, and the greater the effort they need to give it. The benefits are numerous.

1. You build a \_\_\_\_\_ for a relationship.
2. You prevent unnecessary \_\_\_\_\_.
3. You prevent making an \_\_\_\_\_.
4. You make the best of a difficult \_\_\_\_\_.
5. You gain a potential \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Biblical Case Study: Peter Defends God's Inclusion of Gentiles (Acts 10:1-11:24)**

Some of the leaders of the early church felt that God's redemptive grace was for Jews only. The disagreement was strong and there was potential for a major church split when the leaders received word that Peter had shared the Gospel with Cornelius and other Gentiles. Upon Peter's return to Jerusalem after his ministry to the Gentiles, there was a major confrontation. Peter focused on the one issue on which he and all the leaders agreed: the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of a genuine believer. He declared: *"The Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning"* (Acts 11:15). The leaders replied, *"Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life"* (Acts 11:18). The process that was followed is outlined as such:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 11:2-3).
2. Common \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 11:15-17).
3. Continued \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 11:18).
4. Growing \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 11:20-24).

**Discussion:** Think of an important relationship in your life that really needs major improvement. Upon what one thing can you and the other person agree? How can you use that common ground as a springboard for improving the relationship?

### 3. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle: The Journey with Others Is Slower than the Journey Alone.

Relationships require *connection* with people and patience with people. The desire of every leader should be to connect with people and to take them with him or her on a growth journey to reach their maximum potential. This will require a great deal of patience. Just about everyone would agree that patience is a good quality. We admire it and desire it. Those of us who need it most are least inclined to cultivate it; however, here are some steps you can take to become a more patient person in relationships:

1. Understand that it takes time and energy to build a strong relationship.
2. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Be sensitive to how they feel.
3. Remember that everyone has problems.
4. Acknowledge your own imperfections.
5. Never forget that all relationships have their difficult moments.

#### **Biblical Case Study: Joshua and the Israelites (Joshua 1:10-8:35)**

After the death of Moses, the Lord instructed Joshua to lead the Israelites across the Jordan and into the land of promise. If Joshua had entered the Promised Land alone, the trip could have been completed very quickly. But Joshua was responsible for taking a host of people with him into the Promised Land. The "Patience Principle" was practiced repeatedly:

1. Clear \_\_\_\_\_ had to be given (Joshua 1:10-12).
2. Time was needed for \_\_\_\_\_ (Joshua 1:11).
3. Joshua \_\_\_\_\_ for everyone to cross the river (Joshua 3:17).
4. Israel's defeat at Ai was a major \_\_\_\_\_ (Joshua 7:6-7).

**Discussion:** How can you change your attitude or actions to make you less impatient and better able to stay connected with others?

### 4. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle: The True Test of Relationships Is Not Only How Loyal We Are When Friends Fail, But How Thrilled We Are When They Succeed.

This principle is sometimes difficult to understand. It seems strange that friends would stick with us in our failures, but abandon us if we are more successful than they are. There is powerful truth in this statement from John Maxwell: "*Average people do not want others to go beyond average.*" Mediocrity desires company. It wants no one to succeed greatly!

When your friends enjoy great success, can you rejoice and celebrate with them? Do you pray daily for their success? This may well be the greatest relationship test of a leader. How do you learn to celebrate with others who enjoy great success instead of ignoring or even undermining them? Here are some principles to remember:

1. The joy of an accomplishment is diminished when no one celebrates with you. Add joy by celebrating with others.
2. People can readily identify with failure, but they sometimes have a hard time connecting with success. If they don't identify with success, they may resent it.

3. What hinders people from success often keeps them from celebrating others' success. People's weaknesses, such as emotional insecurity, a scarcity mind-set or petty jealousy, prevent them from rejoicing with others.
4. People who celebrate with you become lifelong friends. There is no friend like a friend who will remain loyal when you surpass his level of success.

**Biblical Case Study: King Saul and David (1 Samuel 18: 5-16)**

The army of Israel under King Saul cowered in fear of the giant, Goliath. No one, not even the king, would fight Goliath. Up stepped David, the shepherd boy. He courageously, in the name of the Lord God, destroyed the giant! When the army of Israel saw that Goliath was dead, they pursued the Philistines and won a great battle. As Saul and David were returning home from the tremendous victory over the Philistines, the women of the city came out to welcome King Saul. The women danced and sang, saying, "*Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.*" The Bible records that Saul became very angry because of the words of the women. He was enraged with jealousy.

Saul failed to understand the following key leadership principles:

1. My \_\_\_\_\_ can only be achieved with others.
2. My \_\_\_\_\_ can only be strengthened by others.
3. My influence can only be \_\_\_\_\_ through others.
4. My \_\_\_\_\_ can only be left for others.

**Discussion:** Do you have trouble celebrating the success of others? Can you identify reasons why you hesitate to celebrate the success of others? What would you like to start doing differently to help others celebrate?

**5. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle:**

**We Go to a Higher Level When We Treat Others Better than They Treat Us.**

There are three roads we can travel in dealing with others. We can take...

- The \_\_\_\_\_ road – where we treat others worse than they treat us.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ road – where we treat others the same as they treat us.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ road – where we treat others better than they treat us.

The low road damages relationships and alienates others from us. The middle road may not drive people from us, but it won't attract them to us either; it is reactive rather than proactive and allows others to set the agenda for our lives. The high road helps to create positive relationships and attracts others to us; it sets a positive agenda with others that even negative people find difficult to undermine.

The high road is always the road less traveled. It requires thinking and acting in ways that are not natural or common. Those who take the high road become instruments of grace to others. High road people have several things in common.

Those who take the high road...

1. Understand that what happens to me is not as important as what happens within me. They refuse to let others control their actions.
2. Commit themselves to travel the high road at all times. They do not allow circumstances to dictate their actions.
3. Extend grace to others. They see their own imperfections and their need for grace and understanding.
4. Refuse to see themselves as victims. They choose to serve others.

BECAUSE THE HIGH ROAD IS UPHILL, NO ONE TRAVELS IT BY ACCIDENT.

**Biblical Case Study: David and Saul (1 Samuel 24:1-22)**

When we examined the “Celebration Principle,” we observed that Saul refused to celebrate David’s success. Not only did Saul become very angry, he soon began a campaign to take David’s life. Saul lived in relentless pursuit of David. I Samuel 24 describes an occasion when Saul is trying to destroy David. The Bible explains that Saul enters a cave where David and his men are hiding. King Saul becomes an easy target. This is David’s opportunity to return evil for evil, but David practices the “High Road Principle”. He treats Saul better than Saul has been treating him.

1. David has an opportunity to \_\_\_\_\_ the low road (v.3).
2. David encounters \_\_\_\_\_ to travel the low road (v.4).
3. David is \_\_\_\_\_ to travel the low road (v.4).
4. David \_\_\_\_\_ the low road (v.7).
5. David declares that he will always follow the \_\_\_\_\_. (v.12, 22)

**Discussion:** Why is it difficult to take the high road with someone who is taking the low road with you?  
What does holding a desire for revenge do to a person emotionally, physically and spiritually?  
Do you agree that taking the high road brings out the very best in you?

## Assessment and Application

**Assessment:** Review the five people principles related to the investment question. In which of these principles are you the weakest?

**Application:** As you think about the principle with which you struggle the most, what are steps you can take to more effectively practice this principle?