



relationships

bearing fruit

by Ibukun Adebayo

When asked 'are you in a relationship?' most people answer 'yes' or 'no' dependent on whether they're in courtship or not.

The truth is, God has blessed us with many more 'relations' than we appreciate from before we were born, and we often end up missing out on the benefits of such relationships as we don't view ourselves in a relationship with any other than our spouse or someone we are betrothed with.

The first and most important relationship we have is with God our creator, i.e. Jeremiah 1:5 states He formed a relationship with us before He implanted us in our mother's womb. Our relationship with God is therefore the most important relationship we can ever have as this started before we were born, and will continue beyond this world into eternal life.

Another vital relationship is that between parents and children, i.e. natural, adoptive, and spiritual parents; all essential to one's spiritual and physical growth. Guess what? Whatever 'faults' our parents may have, they still gave us the chance to 'be born' when not all babies are afforded such a luxury.

I'll seize this opportunity to plead for 'forgiveness' on behalf of any parent that has 'failed' or 'hurt their children'; as I've come to understand I can't make the same mistakes my parents made with me, but I sure have made some mistakes raising up mine; the fact is, most parents, as human beings, will make mistakes – if it takes counselling, praying, fasting; do whatever it takes to let go and let God heal you! Other relations?

Some readers have been blessed with brother and sister relationships (including spiritual brothers and sisters), and whilst it's great to have siblings, many relationships between these are fraught with sibling rivalry. As a mother, one sibling rivalry I've had to deal with is two of my boys being born on the same date 6 years apart – any suggestions on how to resolve this will be gratefully received – 'why on earth did he choose to arrive on my birthday?' has been a question on the older sons' lips for many years, and jet black permanent hair dye has failed to disguise the stress caused by this particular issue.

Most children grow out of sibling rivalry, but it takes prayer, constant affirmation, and the love of

us parents to nurture each of our children out of rivalry into their own identity, and God's destiny for their lives, reinforcing Psalm 139:14 to them at all times.

Finally, we've got the 'husband and wife' relationship which is the only relationship where 'three's a crowd', i.e. it's the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the 2 parents and each sibling and, conversely, the sibling and 2 parents; then, we've got the husband and wife who are not a threesome, but a single entity in God's sight. Ephesians 5:31.

Ephesians 5 provides guidelines for the husband/wife relationship, but these guidelines need to be translated into action for a husband and wife relationship to withstand the trials of two persons aiming to become one. I don't blame celebrities for drawing up pre-nuptial agreements, rather, for the contents of these agreements i.e. if we split, you get the dog, I get the cat, the lawyers get all our money from trying to make our parting as drawn-out, bitter, and public as possible!

There's nothing wrong in drawing up a positive pre-nuptial agreement with your betrothed, or 'spouse' if already married – better late than never – i.e. where you agree never to shout at each other, disrespect each other, keep malice, or do all the other stuff that take away from, rather than contribute towards, a fruitful relationship.

In summary, God wants each relationship, including ours with Him, to bear fruit, and impact each party to the relationship and others.

As you review each relationship in your life, ask yourself one question, is this relationship bearing fruit, is it impacting positively upon the other party and I, and others, and finally... 'what would the other party say about me if asked in my absence'?

