



The Four Levels of Relating (Proverbs 27:5-6)

Dr. Nicolas Ellen

God's Design for Relationships: Relationships were designed to be a community of people connecting together on the foundation of truth and love, to reflect the character of God and to accomplish God's objectives for their existence individually and corporately. Therefore, relationships are to be primarily devoted to helping people believe in Jesus Christ, become like Jesus Christ and belong to the community of Jesus Christ. If we are going to build Christ-centered relationships, we must understand **The Four Levels of Relating**.

I. There are four basic levels of relating: (Proverbs 27:5-6)

A. Sometimes our relationships can be **open and unloving**. (v5)

1. Rebuking others without respect
2. Exposing sin with rudeness
3. Exposing character flaws with harshness
4. Speaking truth with no love

B. Sometimes our relationships can be **closed and loving**. (v5)

1. Appreciative but not expressing it
2. Concerned but not showing it
3. Having praise in your heart but not expressing it
4. Desiring the highest good of others but not expressing it

C. Sometimes our relationships can be **open and loving**. (v6)

1. Rebuking in love
2. Spending quality time
3. Speaking the truth in love / giving encouragement
4. Meeting needs and bearing burdens

D. Sometimes our relationships can be **closed and unloving**. (v6)

1. Talking behind someone's back instead of to them
2. Insincere favors or gifts
3. Flattery
4. Being uncooperative

II. An open, loving relationship can be expressed to others in many ways at the right time, in the right way, and in the right circumstances through: (Proverbs 27:14, 25:11, 15:23, 15:1, Colossians 4:6)

- A. Sincere forgiveness (Matthew 5:23-24, Romans 12:18)
- B. Praising others (Proverbs 27:2, 31:28-29, 1 Corinthians 11:2)
- C. Listening and talking to them (James 1:19, Proverbs 18:2, 13)
- D. Sharing where you hurt (2 Corinthians 6:11-13, 7:2-3)
- E. Spending time with one another (2 Corinthians 12:15, 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Ephesians 6:4, Titus 2:4-5)
- F. Gentle correction (Proverbs 27:6a, 1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- G. Self-sacrifice (1 Corinthians 13:5, Philippians 2:3-4)
- H. Submission to God-ordained authority (Ephesians 5:22-6:9, Romans 13:1-7, Hebrews 13:17)
- I. Saying "I love you" (John 13:34)
- J. Giving encouragement (1 Thessalonians 5:11,14, Proverbs 12:25)
- K. Showing appreciation (Philippians 4:14)
- L. Helping each other (Acts 20:35, 1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- M. Comforting each other (Romans 12:15, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
- N. Bearing one another's burden (Galatians 6:2)
- O. Warm smile or appropriate touch (Proverbs 15:30, Mark 10:13-14)
- P. Phoning or writing expressions of love (3 John 1:13-14)
- Q. Asking for help (Philippians 4:17)
- R. Expressing forgiveness when someone has apologized (2 Corinthians 2:7, Ephesians 4:32)
- S. Discipline of one's children (Ephesians 6:4, Proverbs 13:24)
- T. Using your spiritual gifts to serve others (1 Peter 4:10-11)
- U. Evangelism and discipleship (Matthew 28:18-20, Ephesians 4:11-16)

Key Point: *When disagreements arise in open, loving relationships, unity of heart will be maintained if God's love continues. If unity of heart ceases, seeking forgiveness should be done not for disagreement but for unloving attitudes, words, and actions. You can be right in what you are saying but unloving in your presentation. (Deal with the lack of love.) (Colossians 3:14, Ephesians 4:15)*

(Insights adapted from *The Heart of Man and The Mental Disorders* by Rich Thomson)