

RELATIONSHIP TRUTHS

Basic understanding that make
it easier to invest in and grow
up foundational relationships
for life.

an eBook by
Kathryn C. Lang

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Relationship Truths

I am ready for some mountain moving results in my life. I have been digging in my heels, taking purposeful action, and seeking to be persistent and diligent in those actions. I know that it doesn't happen overnight – but I also know that it CAN happen overnight.

The “when” must not be my concern because it is not something that I can control. All I can do is what I know to do and trust that the “when” is just around the corner.

Part of what I can do it to make a purposeful investment in relationships but taking the time, making the effort, and having the heart for relationships.

Most days, I do pretty well with my relationship investments. I think about other people. I am giving and helpful. I do for others. Now, there are still those days when I stumble, but I think that I am getting better at the investment and having fewer of those stumble days.

Despite all that I am investing and doing, and despite my efforts to be relentlessly giving, it turns out that there are some hard truths about relationships that I just can't ignore. The good news is that relationships are not based on “like” but founded in love. Relationships are not about getting but about giving. Relationships are not about results but about efforts.

But knowing the truths can keep me moving in a better direction.

First – not everyone will like me. I know – it shocked me too. But it turns out that despite my best efforts there will be others that just do not like me.

Second – I need to be attractive which is to say that I need to be the very best me that I can be right now where I am - which will require some attention and effort on my part.

Third – It is not always a two-sided effort. There are times when I will invest more in a relationship (and there are times when YOU will be doing the more investing).

Fourth – I will have to sacrifice to grow relationships – there is just no way around this truth. I will have to give, to give up, to let go, to change, to adjust, and sometimes to choose others over self.

Fifth – It is rarely balanced. There is always more giving on one end than there is on the other.

Building strong and lasting relationships is not complicated but it is work. I have to be willing to invest my time, my resources, and my energies into growing the relationships – but at the same time I have to recognize that these basic relationships truths will have an effect.

Relationship Truths – One Not Everyone Will Like Me

As hard as it may be to believe, that first truth is that not everybody will like me. Yep, it turns out that I'm not everyone's cup of tea – just ask my husband.

I've watched this concept play recently with sons. My oldest son made a new friend recently – but my other son is not overly enthused with this new friend. It is not that my other son dislikes her – it is more that he just doesn't have a strong desire to spend time with her. She is not his cup of tea.

The most interesting part is watching her try to make him engage her. I can remember being like that – but I have learned through time and experience (and more than one brick wall) – trying to MAKE someone like me is usually a losing battle for several reasons.

It is up to me to invest in the relationships in my life – but it is not up to me to make everyone like me. Learning to understand that it is not personal can help me accept this reality.

It would be nice if everyone would like me – at least on one level or another. I am, after all, the rainbows and lollipops host. It may shock you to find out that not everyone embraces rainbows and lollipops the way that I do.

I know it shocked me. But the more I journey through this world the more I realize that different people and different types of people make the journey far more interesting. It also turns out that I don't have to like you and you don't have to like me to develop a relationship that can support and encourage – we just have to find a way past the issue of “like” and learn to dwell in love.

I have always gotten along well with others – or at least I have always gotten along well enough to be able to get along for the limited time I have spent with some of those others. Even the rainbows and lollipops host has met a person or two that she did not like.

But it is not my job to like – and it is not my job to be liked – and that one understanding has made a HUGE difference in my journey.

My gift (and love) of hospitality helped me find my way of getting along because I have hosted so many events over the years. And those events have had me encountering quite a few people along the way.

Several years ago, I was host to a group of home school moms for a women's bible study. We stayed in one room visiting and studying while the kids free played around the rest of the house and outside.

A great time was had by all – except for my husband who was never there for the events but always had to endure how the kids put the board games away – in random boxes. Someday I will tell you how this was a GREAT tool for teaching him to relax.

Several weeks into the study, one of the new moms confessed that she almost didn't come back after the first day. “I didn't like you all that much.” She explained.

Now, some folks would get their feelings hurt – but I just smiled. I suspected I knew where she was going. “You were just so direct.”

I am direct – especially when I am excited about the topic and when I am in full-on teaching mode – which I was.

The new mother went on to explain that another mother talked her in to coming back and she began to see that my directness was always out of love and support – but that first week, not so much.

I can still be tough to take at times, but that does not mean I am thrilled to hear that someone doesn’t like me. My default diva wants to be more like Sally Field and able to exclaim “they like me – they really like me.”

I am learning and growing and smiling thought. I am better at accepting that just like some folks don’t like sweet tea – and really, who has time for those folks – no matter how amazing sweet may be it is just not their cup of tea.

It is not personal – at least not most of the time. There are usually some simple reasons that some people just don’t like me.

1. Personalities – because we all have one – granted some not as big or bold as others – and every personality is unique. I am a full-blown extrovert. I mean, when you take the personality tests I score almost 100% on the extrovert side of the scale. I can be a bit much for those that fall on the other side of the spectrum – even in small doses. Our personalities may not exactly clash, but they definitely don’t mesh either.

2. Interests – I am not the happiest camper in the South when September rolls around – sometimes it will kick in as early as August. My interests collide with the rest of the world (including ever pastor or preacher I have ever listened to). It is Football Season in the South at that time and I am just not a football fan. That means that a lot of the conversations and references go right over my head – or I just don’t bother trying to catch them.

I can survive a little while, but eventually I’m going to seek out someone who cares more about the blue box than the pigskin.

3. Traditions – or customs (however you prefer to label them). These are usually minor annoyances or hiccups in the journey to grow up relationships, but they can end being something more at times.

I had a good friend that began decorating for Christmas around Thanksgiving – so each year his son would come home to visit and instead of investing in relationships he would have to decorate for the season not yet there. The traditions of the father hindered the relationships of the son.

4. Likes/dislikes – and the stronger the like or dislike the more it can get in the way. I LOVE horses and would have a front yard full if I could get the menfolk of the house to build me a fence. I have another friend that is HIGHLY allergic to horses and can't be around them at all. Investing in my like hinders my ability to invest in the relationship with my friend – to one degree or another.

5. Focus – because focus drives direction. When I engage with someone that has a different focus than I have then it will be hard for us to communicate because of the differences. I found this out when I first started down the path of positivity thinking in a powerful way. Someone that had been very close to me would get annoyed when I would speak my positive thoughts. “But that's not how things are.” She would try to explain. Eventually we came to a point where we just didn't discuss certain things. The difference in focus had caused a bump in our relationship.

The fact that not everyone likes me is not a personal thing – because I am amazing, right? There can be some minor differences or major differences that keep us from locking into that place of “Like.” The good news is this journey and relationships in general are not about “liking” but about the choice to love.

Foundations for Getting Beyond Being Liked

I have never been much of a people pleaser – I get that from my uncle who taught me to be strong in my beliefs (although I have also learned from him that it is easy to lose that place of boldness).

I have known some people pleasers in my life – ones that try to be everything to everyone. The most amazing thing to me is that they manage to succeed with some folks. For me, they are just annoying because they struggle to do what they tell everyone they will do because they only have some many hands and can only juggle so many plates.

I guess it is a good thing that I don't expect everyone to like me – although the more I tame my tongue the easier it is to expect others to at least tolerate me to one degree or another. Still, I have found that people will get annoyed at me even when I am doing something as simple as sharing the Scripture (or worse, repeating the very Scripture that was just shared). It is almost as if I have offended them because I have believed the words.

The best news I have found is that I don't have to be liked by everyone – and even better I don't have to LIKE everyone. Paul puts it like this – in Romans 12:18 (this comes from the NIV translation) “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

Paul doesn't say for me to make sure everyone likes me. Paul doesn't say that I am supposed to please everyone. Paul simply challenges me to be at peace with others – to make peace with others or to live in harmony. In other words, I am not supposed to be stirring up trouble or making way for strife. I am to do my best to be at peace.

In Mark 9:50, Jesus also challenges me to have peace with others – Jesus is talking about how salt is good but if it loses its flavor what can you season it with. He then goes on to say have salt in yourself but to have peace with others.

For me, this means that instead of trying to season others (like salt) or fix others (like salt has been known to do) – I need to focus on taking care of myself with the salt and putting my efforts towards others as those of peace.

Jesus also goes on to say that I am not to be focused on PLEASING men – because there is a massive difference between being at peace with others and pleasing others – which is why it is possible to have strong relationships even with those that don't like me or that I don't like.

Being at peace means that I am seeking to harmonize with you – not to match you or to be you but to just not clash.

People pleasers are looking in the wrong place. In John 5:30 Jesus points out that He is not doing anything on His own – but is doing the will of His Father.

That has to be the ultimate driving force for everything in my life – to do the will of the Father. As long as I am there, then I will be okay with not being liked by everyone but living in a place of contented love.

Relationship Truths – Two Attractive

The more I share and connect the more that I find my own determination and drive growing. I was recently challenged to share on video take my wins and challenges for the week, and I spent most of my day trying to talk myself OUT OF sharing.

I had good reasons – and I had plenty of excuses.

And then the rain started and I thought – I'll just share my thoughts with a few of the rain so I can share the rain as well.

It wasn't perfect but it inspired me to do more with my day than to sit around and think up reasons not to do and settle into the excuses that are trying to hold me back.

I confess that my appearance was one of the main reasons that I struggled to step in front of the camera. I have been recovering from a sty – which I think is a fancy word for an eyelid pimple – but no matter what you call it, the experience is not fun.

My brother – Dr. Dan – diagnosed me and prescribed warm compresses and cold compresses – both of which I have been using. But the eye being the eye, this tiny little bump has talked the rest of the eye into joining in and so I look a lot like a cyclops.

Not exactly something you want to share on camera.

Once I determined to quit making excuses, I found a way. I put on my lipstick, put on my glasses – which will tint when exposed to sunlight – and used the scenery and the glasses to help reduce the feeling that all you could see was my eye.

I have a lot going for me – swollen eye or not – and when I make the choice and the investment to “use what I’ve got” then I stand bold in my unique attractiveness – and if I want to grow up relationships then I have to be attractive to others – which may not mean what you think it means.

I spent much of my life defining attractive by the rules from someone else’s game. Sharing my stories with you has helped me find a stronger foundation where I can stand. It has also allowed me to create a definition and an understanding of attractive that matches my unique place and purpose.

Being attractive is not about red carpet outfits and makeup. Being attractive is not about the standards that THEY have applied. Being attractive is about being the best me that I can be where I am and working daily to invest in better choices for my health and shine.

First, there is rest – because getting rest is the most important tool for being attractive. I need to get the right amount of sleep and take the right amount of breaks to keep my energy level on point (and to keep my emotions in check).

Second is my health – which includes what I put into my body and how I use my body. I need to eat to fuel my body. I need to drink to refresh my body. I need to move to keep all the joints and organs working properly.

Third is my heart – because what is on the inside will affect my ability to be attractive – to myself and to those around me.

Fourth is my shine – and that is what people see on the outside. Get up, get dressed, brush your teeth, and put your best foot forward – even if you are the only one that sees you that day. Investing in my shine will always keep me at my most attractive.

Fifth is my actions – my attitude, behavior – or my doing and my being. Nothing spoils the attractiveness of a person quite as fast as unattractive actions.

I have never considered myself to be a pretty person – I tend to put me more on the cute scale than anywhere else. My short stature, big hair, and my rainbows and lollipops attitude always struck me as cute – but not everyone would agree.

I still recall those words said to me when I was fourteen – you’re fat and your pants are ugly. For the longest time I was afraid to even go near boot legged pants because I didn’t want to have someone declare my pants were ugly ever again.

Then I began to understand that what one person finds attractive, another person may not. It goes back to the understanding that we are all unique and that we all have unique tastes. Being attractive is not about pleasing someone else's tastes, but about being comfortable in who I am and where I am as I journey forward into all that I am designed to be.

Attractive – at its very essences – is embracing me.

Because of past hurts (and the lies of the great THEY out there) I can remember only a few times that I felt attractive in my life. The one that stands out the most is when I was in college. I was teaching ballroom dancing – which had me on my feet for up to 10 hours a day (in 4 ½ inch heels no less). I also took a full course load in school that included dance class. And just for good measure I was doing stretching exercises every morning and every evening so that I could keep dancing.

I remember that I felt like I was in the best physical shape of my life – although I still weighed the same as I had in high school. I not only felt the best but I carried myself with an attitude that reflected that feeling.

I stopped feeling that way about the time I had my second son – in part because a good friend (or someone I had deemed to be a good friend) pointed out how much I had let myself go. I went home and looked at myself – a mother of two boys – and saw ONLY the pale skin (from not having the opportunity to go outside because of the toll the pregnancies took) and the extra weight that remained after the pregnancies.

It has taken almost a full decade to overcome those words from my friend – and there are still days when I am not there. Changing my understanding of attractiveness has gone a long ways in making it possible for me to get passed those words from my past.

First, I have learned that being attractive has a lot to do with the rest I get. This not just about the amount of rest but the type of rest that I get. I used to lie in bed for what felt like hours trying to get to sleep. If someone or something woke me during the night – say a crying baby or a barking dog – then I would have to go through the whole process again.

In the last few years, I have found a peace that makes it possible for me to sleep no matter what is going on around me – and that peace has changed my world. Most nights I get six hours of sleep. Some nights I only get around four hours. A few nights I crawl into bed around 7 pm and don't wake until my normal time of around 4:30 am. I allow myself to get the amount of rest I need – and yes, I even make time for naps now and then.

Rest makes a huge difference in my attractiveness – and sorry folks, as much as I love my coffee, no amount of coffee can make up for the right amount of rest.

You need rest to be attractive.

Second, I have to invest in my health. Several years ago I stepped up to take a Green Smoothie Challenge that focused on raw foods and getting more greens into my diet. I knew that I needed to make some adjustments in my life but I wasn't sure how to make them

Every day, I made raw dishes for me and then incorporated those into the meal plans for the rest of my family. Even my young boys were willing to try the raw chili and green smoothies as long as there was other food as well.

I became aware of the value of my food as fuel. I began to understand the importance of the drinks I consumed for keeping my health in balance. And because I was fueling my body better and keeping the body saturated in the right amounts, I had more energy to keep my joints and muscles moving – which meant my overall health improved.

I am not where I want to be, but I know that making the right choices in my health makes me more attractive in my day to day life.

Third, what is on the inside will impact my attractiveness. A heart focuses on hope and light draws more to it than a heart focused on negatives and darkness. I personally always prefer to be around bright and happy people – because they make me more bright and happy.

I knew a guy – a very “attractive” guy according to the world standards. He was tall. His hair - jet black. He had some of the bluest eyes that any human could want. When you saw him, you would think how attractive he was.

When you met him, you would not want to look at him again. His negative attitude soured even the most dashing of looks.

What is inside directly effects attractiveness.

Fourth, I need to shine to be attractive. This is that outward glow that comes from an inner confidence. It will never exist until the heart is right, but when the heart is right then everyone will be able to see it.

I went to an event the other day – not in the pique physical condition I wanted but with a heart focused on hope and possibility despite the negatives bombarding me at that time. I had a shine about me and I had more than one person mention how great I looked despite the fact that I was only wearing lipstick and I felt like a bloated fish on the side of the lack (see – lots and lots of negatives trying to push me down).

I even had one lady comment that we all got fatter as we got older, and in the past that would have haunted me – but because of my shine I was able to bat that comment aside and keep going.

Shine is the outward expression of the inward confidence that comes from a right heart and it is one of the most powerful tools for being attractive that you will ever encounter.

Fifth, my actions will reflect on my attractiveness. What I am doing and who I am being will draw people towards me. A nasty attitude will drive people away. Nasty actions will drive people away. The better behaviors and better attitudes reflect are the only way to be attractive.

Being attractive is only dictated in a small portion by my physical attributes and much more my spirit and my heart.

Foundations for Being Attractive

I have seen the models in the catalogues and the actresses on the big screen and the small screen. I get that I'm not like them – or not like most of them. There was a time in my life when I believed that they were the true marker for being attractive. I spent most of my growing up years wanting to fill out a pair of tight jeans, leather jacket, and red heels the way Olivia Newton John did in Grease – but I was not built to match her measurements – even as a young girl.

It has only been in the last few years – and as I have studied Scripture in more depth – that I have started to understand that true attractiveness comes from a place much deeper than a pair of tight pants.

In Genesis 12 and again in Genesis 20, Abram and Sarai (because God had not yet changed their names to reflect the people God was growing them up to be) but they are going into foreign lands and Abram fears for his life so he tells his wife to say she is his sister.

Now this is the cool part to me – and speaks highly of a heart focused on God things – because Sarai was probably around 65 years old and the king looks out and sees her and is so impressed with her attractiveness that he wants her as a wife.

At 65, Sarai was so hot that the foreign king wanted her.

That is true attractiveness and it came not from a physical part because Sarai was already beyond child bearing age. This beauty radiated from her heart and covered her entire being.

That is my goal in life – to be so focused on God that I radiate His light and His beauty no matter what my physical age.

It helps me to remember that this place of beauty is possible not because of anything I do – other than the focus that I choose. The beauty is there because I am uniquely designed by God – crafted on purpose with a purpose – and nothing God has ever made is a mistake or without beauty.

David made a similar proclamation in Psalm 139:14 when he said that he was fearfully and wonderfully made because he was a work of God and all God's works are wonderful.

Samuel also points to the true factor being something that goes beyond the skin. In 1 Samuel 16:7 God is guiding Samuel to anoint the next king and God tells Samuel to not consider his

appearance or his height – which is a really good sign for me because I think I've already mentioned that height is not one of my gifts.

But the point is that true beauty and that fact that attracts others to relationship with us is something that goes much deeper than the physical outer shell.

Relationship Truths – Three Not Always Two-sided

It is important that I share with you – that I invest in the connection and that I invest in the relationship. I have to be willing to take action and not just to expect things to happen to me or for me. Work is part of the equation – always – it's just that sometimes it is a little one-sided.

Actually, most of the time it is one-sided because one of us is always struggling a little more or needs a little more or is in a better place to give or help.

When my husband and I first started dating – it was him – he gave the more. He was devoted to the relationship and put the relationship first. IF I had known then what I know now, then things would have worked out very different.

But I didn't know and I wasn't willing to be as focused and determined as him – and in part (because of that lack of determination on my side) we took the long route to our currently location – the long, bumpy, painful route.

I had to learn to be willing to learn how to let someone else be the stronger one – be the more invested – or to be the one to pick me up. For most of my life, I had been the one that was the stronger and I did all the heavy lifting.

It turns out that I am not always able to keep that up.

I learned a better way and in learning that better way I came out on the other side stronger and more determined than before.

My husband and I have not been married for almost a quarter of a century – WOW! He has been my companion for more than half my life. There are days when we are fully invested in this relationship – in becoming all that God has united us to be.

There are days when it is not a team effort. Some days he is struggling just to breathe and it is my job to be the grown up in the relationship. Some days I don't want to be the grown up in relationship. The prayer is that we don't both fall into that pattern at the same time (it is not pretty when it does happen).

It makes it easier to do more and to do better when investing in relationships when I realize that relationships are rarely a two-way street. In other words, the investment is not always – and is actually quite rarely – a two-sided street. There is usually one doing more than the other for a variety of reason.

1. There may be limitations – in time, resources, or finances – that keep one from doing more than another. There has to be a surplus of some amount for that surplus to be passed on.
2. Distractions may be getting in the way. Big or small; real or imagined; distractions will hinder the ability to invest in relationships.
3. The delusions of the world (and those crafted in the mind) put up walls and barriers that get in the way of relationships. What I believe will drive what I am willing (and able) to do.
4. The condition of the heart determines the strength of relationship investment. The more my heart hurts and struggles the less strength I have available to share.
5. My expectations – of you and of the return on my investment – will make it difficult for me to keep investing. Until I let go of expectations, I will struggle to get hold of lasting relationships.

After over a quarter century of knowing each other, growing together, and seeking to find balance – you would think that my husband and I would have found that place of nirvana or Xanadu.

There are moments when I know we have – we are in perfect balance and completely in sync. And then the other one wakes up.

I suspect that as long as we are in relationship – there will always be a little more give and sometimes a little more take because we are each walking out things and issues and struggles.

That is why we are better and stronger in relationships – because when one is in that place of struggle or caught up in things then there is another to come along and carry some of the burden.

Growing up – there was a remake of the song “Lean on Me” and I have always liked the words tied up in that song because it is true that in this world we are going to have troubles and there are always times that we all need somebody to lean on.

I have to be willing to be the one that is being leaned on – but I also have to come to a place where I accept that there will be times that I am doing the leaning. It may never balance out but it will always work out – as long as I keep my focus right.

I like to think that I do it all for the glory of love – but if you won't tell my husband I said this – I KNOW he does so much more than I do. He is a man of action, so he invests in doing things to bring order and balance to the relationship. He does the dishes. He does the laundry. He keeps the yard mowed and the creek bank cut back. He goes to work at a job that he knows is not his place but that he is struggling to believe God has for him for a reason (and for a season).

What do I do? I sit and talk all day.

I suspect if you talk to my husband, then he will have a very different view of our relationship balance. He sees things different in part because he is in a different place, in part because he is a different person, and in part because we tend to focus on what we are NOT doing and what others do more of or do better.

The reality of our relationship is that in some places my husband does more and at some times in our relationship (and in your day) he carries the heavier load – and at others times and in other moments I pick up the heavier load and carry it.

1. Limitations can keep me from carrying my load. When my husband had shoulder surgery for a slap tear – which is not caused by anything that I did to him despite the way the name makes it sound and the way he liked to tell the story – but it took my husband out of commission for several months He couldn't drive. He couldn't lift ANYTHING. He couldn't use his shoulder at all.

It was bad enough that he was hurting but this man that is all about doing was put into a position where he was extremely limited on his doing abilities. It never once dawned on me to complain that I was having to do more because of his limitations – so why do I think that any other time I should have more of a right to complain.

We all are dealing with limitations every day and when I understand that (and accept that) then I am in a position to invest in relationships where I am and where you are despite those limitations – or sometimes more because of them.

2. The distractions around me can keep me from giving my all to the relationship – or even to giving what needs to be given in the moment. I may be the queen of multi-tasking, but there are times when I have so many plates spinning that I just can't keep up.

When my husband and I first started dating, I was a freshman in high school. If you want to have a life full of distractions then be a freshman in high school again. It didn't help that he had already graduated – which meant that I had to face all of the distractions alone. I ended up giving the distractions the focus and let the relationship suffer on my end because of it.

I still struggle sometimes with giving the distractions more attention than what is really important.

3. The delusions that I have created and that the world likes to feed can be the biggest hurdle when it comes to investing in relationships. The prince is supposed to ride up on the white horse. The woman is supposed to do all of the housework. The couple is supposed to be all rainbows and lollipops.

The reality of the relationship is rarely that picture perfect – although there may be picture perfect moments. I have to be determined to push past the delusions so I can find the true beauty that grows up in the reality of a well invested relationship.

4. My heart will determine my ability to invest with you. If I am in a place of hurt or struggle then I will not have much to invest. My third pregnancy resulted in a catastrophic miscarriage that was the result of a dystonic reaction to medication. My heart broke and my body was not in much better condition.

My husband made the choice to invest even more in the relationship because I was not in a position to do it. My children made the choice to invest even more in our relationships because I didn't have the heart to do it.

Their willingness to invest even when I couldn't or wouldn't not only strengthened our relationships, but those investments strengthened my heart as well.

5. Expectations are the most troublesome pests for relationships and even for contentment in life. Expectations make me think one way and then I collide with a wall of reality that can knock me so off balance that I am unable to take the next step.

I expect my husband to offer to help me even though I know he has been working (and I'm talking hard, physical labor) all day. I expect my children to jump out of bed and bring order to the chaos of our home just because it needs to be done (and they can see that it needs to be done).

I have to get to a place where I give – without expectations; where I do – without expectations.

When I let go of expectations then I give relationships the space they need to grow and flourish.

Foundations for Understanding It's NOT Two-Sided

In the relationships of my life, I have found myself on the high side of the balance – where I am doing more investing. I have also found myself on the low side of the balance – where I am not doing all that much (and may even be subtracting).

My prayer is that in the long run I will have more highs than lows but I don't always look around and think that I am moving in that direction.

I remember reading someone that relationships (in particular the relationship forged in marriage) was not supposed to be 50/50 but was supposed to be 100/100. I understand what is meant by this figure – that if I want the marriage to work out then I have to be willing to invest 100% to make it work out.

But the math doesn't add up – because I am never 100% - at least not on my own. That is why we are called together in the first place – because I am not enough on my own. First, I need to be connected to God and then through God I need to be connected with others.

Jesus called me to that relationship with Him in Matthew 11 – Jesus points out that John is the one that the prophets said would come and make the way for Him and then Jesus goes on to cry out for those cities that have not been listening. Finally, in verse 28 – 30, Jesus calls me personally to relationship with Him. “Come,” he says. “Be connected with me and yoked with

me and I will give you rest.” In other words, Jesus is saying that HE will do the heavy pulling. And when I make that connection with Him and He takes that burden from me then I find rest for my soul.

Jesus was willing to take up the burden and carry it for me – all He has ever asked is that I reach out to you and be willing to do the same.

Paul reminds me of this call in Galatians 6:2 when he says that we are to bear each other’s burdens and in bearing each other’s burdens we then fulfill the law of Christ.

Paul explains the way it “balances” out in 2 Corinthians 8: 13-14. He explains that when I have more then I need to give to others that don’t have as much or that are in more of a need and then when they have more they will give to those that need more.

It turns out that relationships are not about 100/100 but all about MY 100%. As long as I concern myself with what you are doing, or what you are not doing then I will struggle to grow up the relationships that will make a difference in my life.

Relationship Truths – Four Sacrifice

Some days I have to look a little harder for that hope than others. Some days I have a master plan that is backed with the perfect schedule only the weather doesn’t cooperate or my own body decides to rebel or someone calls out of the blue with a request or with news that turns my world upside down or at least gives it enough of a shake that nothing I had planned lines up any more.

There are those rare times when all of those things seem to collide into one super storm of chaos and I am left trying to find up so forget about getting done what I want to be done.

Things are going to happen – in life, in my personal journey, and especially in relationships. The more I have invested in a relationship or the more that I hold that relationship in regard, the more likely that things are going to happen.

I remember the sacrifice I made with my second son while I was pregnant with him – I sacrificed sleep almost every night for the last three months. It seemed that when I went to lie down, he took that as an invitation to use my bladder as a trampoline. About the time I would fall asleep he would wake me up and send me waddling to the bathroom.

I think in those last few months of pregnancy I got a total sleep count of about eight hours.

It sure felt that way.

I still make sacrifices for him and for his brothers. The relationship that we have requires me to give in, to give up, and to sometimes just give away. I would like to say that they are always grateful or that they always give back in return, but that is not how relationships work.

Sometimes it's me and sometimes it's you – and when it comes to children (at least as long as they are children) it seems the scales always fall to me.

Sacrifice can be big or it can be little – and sometimes it can be both – because what seems to me to be big may seem to you to be little and visa-versa. The key is not to look at the size of the sacrifice but the heart that is driving that sacrifice for the sake of growing up relationships.

1. I can sacrifice my time – to do something for you instead of something for me. Time is the most valuable of sacrifices because I can never make more time.

2. I can sacrifice my wants – the things that I would like to have or that I would like to do and choose instead to focus on your wants.

3. I can sacrifice my energy – by investing in you and what you are doing instead of putting that energy into work with what I want. Sacrificing energy may also involve sleep – when I go to sleep and when I get up – so that I can invest my energy in you instead of what I would prefer.

4. I can sacrifice my focus – by choosing to turn my full attention to you and your journey instead of preparing the way for my next step. When I sacrifice my focus then I make the choice to detour into your journey for a moment.

5. I can sacrifice my resources – anything from money to talents – whatever is necessary to help you accomplish the tasks, the desires or the dreams that you have asked me to be a part of.

Sacrifice is never about me – because if I am benefiting from what I am doing for you or with you then it is a joint venture and not a sacrifice. It might be uncomfortable, or different from what I wanted for my journey, but it is not a sacrifice.

Sacrifice is all about you – about me making the purposeful choice to put you before me despite what that may mean to my own walk. Sacrifice may not be all that I had planned on – but it will be a blessing (if I choose to go into it with the right heart). When I sacrifice for you then I get to see you accomplish more, experience more, and become more than you would have been on your own.

We are stronger and we are better when we are in relationship with each other – and my choice of sacrifice makes that possible – YOUR choice of sacrifice makes that possible – and in those choices we also show the world what it means to walk out relationship – we reflect Love to the world.

When we make the choice of sacrifice that reflects Love to the world then we begin to change the world. The world will change – not because of my demands or my actions but because of sacrifice.

I just have to make the choice to live out that sacrifice.

I have always been keenly aware of sacrifice. Even as a young girl I knew how much my parents sacrifices so that I would not feel deprived or I would not lack. I can remember when my dad got up every morning to go and make donuts because the job he had been working went away. He sacrificed his sleep in order to keep things balanced in my life.

To this day, when I have to sacrifice my own sleep to help my children or to keep from disrupting their lives with something I need to do – I think of my dad’s donut days. I will even wake up and say “it’s time to make the donuts.”

You may remember the Dunkin’ Doughnuts commercial where the guy kept getting up and telling his reflection that it was time to make the donuts – and then he runs into himself coming in as he is going out and he tells himself “you’ve already made the donuts.”

That’s one of the images that pops into my head when I am thinking about sacrifice – particularly of time.

I have discovered that when it comes to relationships – time is one of the top things I end up having to sacrifice.

1. Time. The other day I had scheduled out my whole week so that I could get caught up on some tasks and I could get ahead on others. My youngest son would be away at day camp for the whole week and that meant that for the first time in two decades I was going to be home alone for the entire day.

Up until now, my husband had always been around – he had summers off as a teacher and then he had days off at his last job. I didn’t have the responsibilities of the boys because they had camps they were attending, but this year I would be home alone.

I was making impressive progress when I got the call from my dad. “Can you come help me?” My dad is a capable man and I know that he could have done it all on his own if he had to – but we are stronger and better when we do it together. I had to sacrifice my time – time that I had allotted on purpose and for a purpose – but the blessings that I got from that choice are still flowing in.

Time is not something I can make more of but when I sacrifice my time for a purposeful investment in relationships then I will reap blessings from that investment.

2. Wants. I have quite a few things on my want list – although the list is not a “me” focused as it once was. Still, there are a few things I want – including a recording studio for my show and for other projects I have simmering in my head.

After the tornadoes, we were able to reconfigure the house layout so that we could add an additional bedroom. For the first time in their lives, my older sons each had their own bedrooms.

When my want for a recording studio became known, my oldest son stepped up and sacrificed his room so that we could set up my office and the recording studio in that space. His brother also sacrificed his “private” room by making space for his brother to move back in.

I, in turn, sacrifice part of the space I had been given to set up their electronic games so that they would have a place to hang out when friends came over. I also sacrifice my office space to those hangouts and take my office on the road (by choosing to use my laptop to write and work).

3. Energy. I mentioned already the energy required for pregnancy. I expected that sacrifice to some degree but nobody told me the energy that would be required to maintain a balanced marriage. It turns out that meshing together two lives can cause some serious adjustments.

My husband and I sleep VERY different. He could sleep on the floor with a shoe as a pillow and if you covered his head then he would be out (he still is a lot like a parrot in that regards). I needed quiet and still and time to get to sleep – and I did best if I was in a familiar place and even better if that place was my bed (and my side of the bed with my pillows).

Our differences became even more noticeable when he began working a second shift position. He would come in around 1 am and crawl into bed and be asleep by the time his head touched down. I would be awake. I never told him how much his schedule affected my own and simply made the choice to sacrifice an ordinary sleep which meant I had to find my rest and energy in others ways – naps and I became good friends.

4. Focus. Trying to balance a family of boys, my father in law, and now my dad takes focus – which means that my focus on my own purpose sometimes gets adjust to focus on others. I have to sometimes say no – to my focus but I also have to sometimes say no to their focus. I find my balance in my heart – if emotions are the driving force then I step back for a moment until I can get past the emotions and determine the better course of action – in truth either is going to require a sacrifice on some level.

5. Resources. When I give to you then there is less to give to me. It is that simple. If I sacrifice the last cup of milk for you then there is no milk for cereal in the morning. If I sacrifice the drive to take you town then there is not gas for the drive to that gathering I wanted to attend. The resources I have a limited and when I give to you then there is less for use in other areas.

Sacrifice is not about giving for the sack of giving, but it is about making the choice to do something better with what I have in order to build up a relationship with you and to build up purpose within you.

Foundations for Understanding Sacrifice

I don't always like sacrifice – okay, I don't like sacrifice EVER. None of us do. We all wish there was an easier way or at least a way that requires . . . well, less sacrifice. I want to get what I want to get and I still want to help you get what you want to get and I never want either one of us to miss getting that want.

But that is not how it works. I have to give up and give in and sometimes give away so that I can make room for more and make room for better.

That is what sacrifice is – it is making room for more and for better by making choices that put you first. It does NOT make sense – not when you view it in terms of this world. It is not supposed to make sense in terms of this world. But without sacrifice, then I am limited to this world.

With purposeful sacrifice founded in a heart of Love, not even this world will be able to stop me.

The unexpected power of sacrifice can be viewed in Genesis 22 – God had promised Abram that he would be a father of many nations – and God even changed his name to Abraham to reflect that promise. After many, many years of words, God finally delivered Isaac – and then asked Abraham to take Isaac and sacrifice him.

The story – as reflected in Scripture – never shows Abraham flinching at the request. Even Isaac goes along with it. In my heart, I believe that they both knew that despite how things looked, God would fulfill His promises and they didn't have to understand – but that is still a tough limb to be out on.

Abraham steps up and God steps in. The heart of sacrifice – that was all about Love and for Love – was rewarded in exceeding abundance that passed down for generations.

Hebrews 13 offers several reminders that we are to live our lives with this attitude and heart of sacrifice – because with such sacrifices – those sacrifices that put others first and that are about the good of others and for others – they please God.

I sacrifice – because it makes room for the more and the better and the exceeding abundance that God has designed for my life and for yours.

Relationship Truths – Five Unbalance

Possibility thinking- the kind that can see a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow – the kind few by the impossibility of imagination – that kind of thinking with change my life and will ultimately be what changes my world.

I keep that possibility thinking moving and growing – in part – by the relationships that I have in my life. Children are a GREAT inspiration for possibility thinking because they have a limited experience with no.

My son was possibility thinking on his way to camp. It was my first time experiencing this for my husband because when he drives the boys to their destinations and events, they listen to music.

By the way – if you have any complaints or comments about the musical tastes of my boys you can send those directly to my husband at keithelang@pecuproductions.com – he is responsible for the eclectic and often bizarre choices my boys make – and often sing without prompting.

But I talk with them – or I should say that I encourage possibility thinking and imagination growing.

So my youngest son has his imagination on overdrive and when we passed a field full of fresh green plants, he shared what he had been seeing in his imagination. He talked about the farm he would develop and even the clothes he would wear when he was making his rounds through the farm.

For those of you who have met me or listened to me, you have started to suspect that I am a talker – so when I make the CHOICE – and it is a choice – to encourage my son to let his imagination take off then I have to also choose not to run my mouth about the realities.

Imagination should never be tied down by realities – because it is only when the imagination is allowed to take off that it shatters the limitations once demanded by those very realities.

My talking balance sheet gets off balance when I make choices like this. My comfort level may be a little off balance as well because I may need or want quiet. The truth is that if I am going to build up strong relationships then I have to understand that the efforts will often be off balance.

No matter how off balance the relationship may appear, as long as I maintain my personal balance then it will all work out in the end.

I keep my balance in an unbalanced relationship by holding on to some simple ideas.

1. I know my place. I can give to you what I can give to you but I have to say no when it is outside of my place.
2. I know my limits. I have basic things that have to be accomplished in a day and if I crowd those with my giving then I edge over towards a place of person unbalance.
3. I know better. There will be times when I know a better way, or a better person to handle the activity. It's not that I can't do it the way you are asking but that if you want it done right then there is a better choice.
4. I know to keep it simple. Once it gets to complicated then it is time to walk away.
5. I know the real source. If I understand where my all and all is then I don't have to worry about being out of balance in our relationship because our balance is not determined by our individual investments but by the All and All that controls it All.

I am a mom and I am a daughter, so I know that not all relationships are balanced. I am a friend and I am a teacher – so I know that sometimes the relationship balance will tilt to one side or the other and then will teeter totter back the other way.

It rarely stays in perfect balance – that’s any relationship along the line – and the most amazing thing is that just when I think I am getting the most out of the relationship I discover that I have been giving without even knowing it. When I am invested in a relationship then I am feeding it and growing it and nurturing it because it is a part of me and I am feeding and growing and nurturing my journey.

When I understand the constant circle relationships and what that involves then I can accept that it is not balance – and that is a good thing.

I recognize that some relationships will be unbalanced – and I accept that unbalance as ordinary and expected. The relationship with a small child or an infant will require that I give more than the infant gives – at least on the surface (the truth is that even in these situations where there is an obvious unbalance there is still some giving and receiving on both parts).

I expect there to be an unbalance – but for some reason when I am dealing with people that are on an “equal” plane – those that are the same physical age as me or in a similar social standing – well, I just seem to expect more.

Or I used to anyway. I have discovered that every person I encounter (and I am including myself in this description) everyone is grown up in some places and still a child in others – and so there are always times when the relationship – no matter what level it has reached – it will become unbalanced.

I can accept the unbalance when I find a place to stand firm and hold on to my own balance.

1. I have to know my place – this is not the place that **THEY** have determined for me but the place that I have discovered for my life. I have two brothers – one lives out of state and the other lives across the county – but I am the only girl. Even before my mom got sick, I knew that it would fall on me to sort through her stuff and get things settled.

It is one of my places – when it comes to my family. I handle certain things and each of my brothers handles certain things. To someone watching from the outside, it looks like I do more – and I do more when it is in my place. My brothers do more when it is in their place. **KNOWING** my place keeps me in balance even when the circumstances look out of balance.

2. I have to know my limits. I used to ignore my limits and would push myself to do more than was healthy. I would end up sick – **LITERALLY** – and sometimes it would take days for my body to completely recover.

I am not my husband. He can work outside longer and do more physical labor than I can. Even when I was in better physical shape, he could still do more. I have learned that when it comes to

physical labor around the house or around the yard, then the unbalance falls to me. I have learned my limits and I stick within those limits so that I can give my attention to other things.

3. I may know better and because I know better I can choose to do more with that better. Sometimes my better is a detailed plan. Sometimes my better is the daring to try.

When it comes to meals around our house – I know better than my husband. It is not that I am the woman and therefore should do all the cooking – but that I am daring enough to try just about anything. Because of my practice in the kitchen and my daring to try, I can turn what looks like a relatively bare cupboard into a meal (and usually within a thirty minute time frame).

My husband defers to my talents in the kitchen, not because he can't cook (because he can and he is a good cook) but because I know a better way that gets it done faster or at least gets it down with what is available.

4. I know to keep it simple – and I know HOW to keep it simple. Keeping it simple helps me accomplish more and helps me get others to accomplish more as well.

I learned the skill of “keep it simple” early in life, but I think having so many men and boys around me all day every day has allowed me to perfect it. I have one step that needs to be accomplished. I have one idea that needs to be pursued. If there are more pieces to the puzzle then I wait until one is put in place before I reveal the next.

I am not annoyed or offended when I am expected to take on more responsibility . . . okay, I may be annoyed, but I'm not offended because I recognize that the unbalance in effort is not because of a lack of desire on the others side but because of a trust in my skill to keep it simple.

5. I know the real source for all that I have, for all that I am, and for all that I will ever need, have, or be. That one concept keeps me in balance better than anything else no matter what others are doing or asking from me.

I found myself in an awkward position with someone close to me. I was doing ALL the time. Running errands, talking on the phone, being supportive and encouraging – and every time I seemed to step out into my own life I was called upon to help again.

The relationship was so far out of balance that the line was vertical.

I could have focused on the unbalance of the situation – and I did on at least one occasion, but all that did for me was make me tired. I stayed in balance and stayed energized enough to continue to invest in the relationship when I recognized that my source for balance was never the other person. That understanding not only released me but released the person I was dealing with.

Relationships are rarely balanced – one side usually has more to give or needs more than the other. When I invest in keeping my own balance despite the unbalanced situations then I will continue to grow up relationships that will offer me a firm foundation for standing strong in this world.

Foundations for Understanding Unbalance

I will always be in a stronger position than someone and someone will always be in a stronger position than me. That is the nature of relationships – they are almost never balanced.

Paul addresses this concern in Romans 15: 1 – 11. He is teaching the importance of lifting up and encouraging each other and starts with this decree (this comes from the King James translation). “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”

THAT is where I find my balance, in the understanding that it is not to please myself – and it is not even to please you. We are following the direction of Jesus when He explained that He was doing what the Father told Him to do and nothing more.

In John 8:29, Jesus is sharing that he is doing what pleases the Father. Jesus says “I do nothing of myself.” He goes on to try and explain to the Jews that He is not there to seek His glory but to honor His Father.

When I do my part in an unbalanced relationship – when I invest more despite the understanding that I will not get more – and when I am doing it from that heart of Love then I am not seeking my own honor, but I am giving honor to my Father – and this pleases Him.

There are some moments when I am in perfect harmony and perfect balance within a relationship – and I believe that those are the times when we are both so focused on the Father that there is no other place that we could be.

Most of the time I find that one gives more than the other. I am learning that I can be okay in that place of unbalanced as long as I maintain my personal balance and focus.

Thank you so much for joining me on this journey to recognize and understand some relationship truths that give me heart to find hope to grow up the relationships for my life.

First – not everyone will like me. I know – it shocked me too. But it turns out that despite my best efforts there will be others that just do not like me.

Second – I need to be attractive which is to say that I need to be the very best me that I can be right now where I am - which will require some attention and effort on my part.

Third – It is not always a two-sided effort. There are times when I will invest more in a relationship (and there are times when YOU will be doing the more investing).

Fourth – I will have to sacrifice to grow relationships – there is just no way around this truth. I will have to give, to give up, to let go, to change, to adjust, and sometimes to choose others over self.

Fifth – It is rarely balanced. There is always more giving on one end than there is on the other.

I know that as I walk out in understanding of these truths I make it possible to build those foundational relationships that will give me the strength to stand in this world.

How are these relationship truths guiding your own journey?

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“Words have power – and I work to share words that ignite hope and possibility in those they encounter.”

Kathryn Lang continues to grow her career as a wordsmith. She shares words in talks, teachings, columns and stories to provide the hearts that hear with some fuel for hope.

Take a moment to visit <http://www.kathrynclang.com> to read more of her writings. You can also contact Kathryn to speak at your next event or conference by emailing her at kathrynlang@kathrynlang.com.

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