

BeTool #4: Adding Value, Creating Meaning

Building a Relational Tool Box—part 4

July 4, 2021

DAY 1: Adding value, creating meaning: the example of saying “thank you”

Let’s review our relationship series:

Tool #1: Air pump. We are building life-giving relationships.

Tool #2: Stud finder. Creating understanding. Try to understand what the person is not just “saying” but also feeling, intending, and the relative importance of what they’re saying.

Tool #3: Glue. Redeeming Conflict. The goal is to be closer after a conflict than before.

Tool #4: Battery charger: Adding value, creating meaning

1. Relationships follow the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics—they are always slowly running down. You must add energy into relationships.

2. Relying on *your* own ability to re-energize relationships is like using the Energizer Bunny. Even the best batteries in the world run down. Relying on God to re-energize relationships is like having a battery charger!

Job 4:4 Your words have upheld the stumbling and have made the feeble knees.

3. This is Eliphaz’ encouragement to Job before he rebukes Job. “Job, you’re amazing at adding value and creating meaning with your words, but I suck at it, and I’ll demonstrate it right now.”

4. An example: Toddlers have to be taught to say “**Thank you.**”

Stage 1: Your child says “Thank you”.

Stage 2: Your child says “Thank you” but in a perfunctory way, as an obligation, a duty.

Stage 3: Your child says, “Thank you” without being prompted or told to say “thank you.”

Stage 4: Your child says, “Thank you,” on a regular basis.

Stage 5: Your child says “thank you” and actually means it. (Progress in Stage 5 initially depends on some *obvious* gain that the child received).

Stage 6: This is a stage that very few children or adults ever attain. It seems to be so outside the realm of human possibility that we virtually never think this way, that saying “Thank you” is an **opportunity to return an even better gift than what we were just given!**

3. We add value by:

- a. Taking someone’s ideas, feelings or actions seriously.
 - b. Communicating the value of someone’s ideas, feelings or actions to them.
 - c. Personalizing their ideas, feelings or actions to what they mean to you.
6. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: Examples of how we torpedo value and meaning in relationships

1. Yesterday we saw that a perfunctory thank you from a child adds virtually no value. How about from an adult? How much value is added by a perfunctory “thank you?” Back on the toddler Stage Chart, perfunctory thank yous are Stage 2.

2. Worse, sometimes thank yous *take away* value. A grudging “thank you” can send a disapproval message, sending negative value. Instead of moving up the stages from 1 toward 7, you’re moving from stage 1 to minus stages!

3. **We create meaning** with three components:

- It’s a statement saying “What you did mattered.”
- It’s a statement that is personal. “That meant so much to me.”
- It’s a statement saying “You matter to me.”

4. In the verses below, jot down how value is added, meaning created or either torpedoed.

*Prov. 10:8 The **wise in heart** accept commands, but a **chattering fool** comes to ruin.*

*Prov. 9:8 Do not reprove a **scoffer** or he will hate you. Reprove **a wise man** and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man and he will be wiser still. Teach a **righteous man** and he will increase in learning.*

*Prov. 12:18 **Reckless words** pierce like a sword, but the **tongue of the wise** brings healing.*

Prov. 16:24 Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

*Prov. 18:3 When wickedness comes, so does **contempt**, and with shame comes **reproach**.*

*Prov. 22:10 Drive out the **mockers**, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended.*

*Prov. 25:23 Like a north wind that brings unexpected rain is **a sly tongue**—which provokes a horrified look.*

Prov. 31:31 Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

5. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: Paul's example with Philemon—part 1

1. There are three characters in Paul's letter to Philemon.
 - a. **Paul** is the great apostle Paul. He is writing this letter to Philemon from a Roman prison.
 - b. **Philemon** became a Christian under Paul's ministry. He is leading a small church that meets at his house. He has become like a son to Paul.
 - c. **Onesimus**: Became an indentured servant in order to pay off his debt to Philemon. Onesimus made a colossal mess financially, legally, personally, and relationally. He was unwilling to pay off his years of service. He stole from Philemon and then ran away to Rome, hoping to get lost in the big city.
2. Onesimus later became a Christian under Paul's ministry. As a new Christian Onesimus became a tremendous help to Paul and Paul's ministry!
3. Paul sees a way through the mess, but needs to make "the big ask" of Philemon. Paul has no legal or financial authority over Philemon. He is not just making a personal appeal. Paul is willing to pay off Onesimus' servant debt and repay what Onesimus stole!

*Philemon 1:8 Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, ⁹ yet **I appeal to you on the basis of love**. I then, as Paul--an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ -- ¹⁰ **I appeal to you** for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. ¹¹ Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.*

4. How does Paul add value and create meaning in his relationship with Philemon?
 - a. What words strike you as important?
 - b. What attitudes do you sense in Paul that add value and create meaning with Philemon?
5. What strikes you from Paul's appeal in these verses? Is there language you would like to use? Attitudes you would like to portray to others?
6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Paul's example with Philemon—part 2

1. We continue with Paul's example of adding value and creating meaning with Philemon. Under each of the passages below, jot down how Paul does this. What words strike you? What do you sense in his attitude?

Philemon 1:12 I am sending him--who is my very heart--back to you. ¹³ I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. ¹⁴ But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced.

2. What words strike you as important?

3. What attitudes do you sense in Paul that add value and create meaning with Philemon?

Philemon 1:15 Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good-- ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

4. What words strike you as important?

5. What attitudes do you sense in Paul that add value and create meaning with Philemon?

Philemon 1:17 So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back--not to mention that you owe me your very self. ²⁰ I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

6. What words strike you as important?

7. What attitudes do you sense in Paul that add value and create meaning with Philemon?

8. What strikes you from Paul's example of adding value and creating meaning with Philemon?

DAY 5: Putting the cookies on the bottom shelf

1. Hopefully, you've picked up words, phrases and attitudes that add value and create meaning in your relationships. Let's do a little review and then make some applications.

2. We add value by:

- a. Taking someone's ideas, feelings or actions seriously.
- b. Communicating the value of someone's ideas, feelings or actions to them.
- c. Personalizing their ideas, feelings or actions to what they mean to you.

3. We create meaning:

- It's a statement saying "What you did mattered."
- It's a statement that is *personal*. "That meant so much to me."
- It's a statement saying "You matter to me."

You don't have to agree with someone's ideas, thoughts,
feelings or actions to add value and create meaning.

4. Making it simpler...

- Add the tag line: "That meant so much to me."
- Reminiscing.
"Hey I was remembering that dinner we had at Spaghetti Warehouse, the dinner where I dumped ice tea all over me. I was remembering how much we laughed, hooted and hollered that night. It was so fun being with you."
- Gratitude.
"Thank you so much for washing my car. That meant so much to me."
- High-lighting
"I know how much you wanted to help me. Yes, it didn't work out like we thought but your desire to help me was a treasure." (Here, you are high-lighting their intentions).
- Assuming the best.
"Seth, I know you've been so busy with work, and that dealing with the internet with airline tickets is frustrating. Is that something you'd like me to do? I'd be glad to."
- Sharing out of desire, not "need"

What strikes you from today's or this week's devotional?