
BUILDING PASSPORT

By Ken Sande

The following article was written by Ken Sande and published online in May 2021. Sande is the president of RW360 (<https://rw360.org>), dedicated to strengthening relationships and promoting Jesus' command to "... love the Lord your God with all your heart ... and love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39). Ken is also the founder of Peacemaker Ministries and the author of the book, *The Peacemaker*. The article was published with permission to be used for ministry purposes.

I have dozens of passports, and I need to renew them constantly.

No, I'm not James Bond or Jason Bourne. I don't fly from country to country using alternative identities to evade the NSA, CIA, or MI6.

I just love people. I enjoy meeting, understanding, encouraging and helping them. And for that I need a lot of passports. One for my wife, four for my children and their spouses, four more for my grandchildren, over thirty for other relatives and close friends, and dozens more for the new people I meet and counsel every year.

A passport is an authorization to go someplace you have no inherent right to be. In relational terms, it is the permission that people give to others to enter into their lives, to learn their secrets, to know their struggles, to offer advice and correction.

If you want others to allow you into their lives—to have real relationship with them—you must earn a relational passport from each person you engage. The best way to do so is to relate to others in such a way that they would answer "yes" to three key questions, each of which encompasses a variety of sub-questions that roll around in people's minds when they are thinking of opening up to you:

- **Can I trust you?** Will you guard my confidences and secrets, especially the embarrassing ones? Will you lose respect for me or judge me if I allow you to see how badly I've blown it? Will you treat me with the same respect and care as you do others? Will you be gentle and patient even when I'm exasperating? Will you reject me if I don't do everything right? Will you assume the best about me or will you jump to conclusions and blame me for all my problems? Can I trust you with the "fine china" of my life?
- **Do you really care about me?** Are you just politely tolerating me or simply fulfilling an obligation? Or do you really want to help me? Why? How could anyone love a person with such

problems? Will you take time to listen to me? Do you care enough to push past my outer defenses and patiently help me sort out the tangled mess in my heart? Will you love me like Jesus does, even when I'm not very loveable?

- **Can you actually help me?** Do you have the wisdom to deal with my issues? How are you doing with your own challenges and struggles? What kind of experience do you have? Do you have a track record of successfully solving these kinds of problems? If this problem is beyond the two of us, do you have the humility and wisdom to help me find another person who has the experience I need?

Let these questions echo in the back of your mind as you relate to others. Ask God to enable you to inspire affirmative answers in others by engaging them with humility, patience, compassion, kindness, gentleness, forgiveness, honesty and wisdom (Col. 3:12; James 3:17).

If you do so, you'll be well on your way to having more passports than you ever dreamed.

– Ken Sande