

Restoring Broken Relationships

- **2 Corinthians 5:18 (KJV)** God ... hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.
- **2 Corinthians 5:18 (GW)** [God] has restored our relationship with him through Christ, and has given us this ministry of restoring relationships.
- **2 Corinthians 5:18 (MSG)** God ... settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other.
- Relationships are always worth restoring! Because the Christian life is all about learning how to love, God wants us to value relationships and make every effort to maintain them instead of discarding them whenever there is a hurt or a conflict.
- God has given us the ministry of restoring relationships! That's why a significant amount of the New Testament is devoted to teaching us how to get along with one another.
- **Philippians 2:1-2 (MSG)** If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care — then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends.
- Paul taught that our ability to get along with others is a mark of spiritual maturity.
- **Romans 15:5 (MSG)** May ... God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other.
- Since God wants His family to be known for our love for each other, broken fellowship is a disgraceful testimony to unbelievers.
- **John 13:35 (KJV)** By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
- That is why Paul was so embarrassed that the members of the church in Corinth were fighting and even taking each other to court. He was shocked that no one in the church was mature enough to resolve the conflict peaceably. **(read 1 Corinthians 6)**

- If you want God's blessing on your life – and if you want to be known as a child of God – you must learn to be a peacemaker.
- **Matthew 5:9 (NLT)** God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.
- Notice that Jesus didn't say "blessed are the peace lovers" because everyone loves peace! He didn't say "blessed are the peaceable" because some people are too clueless to be disturbed by anything! Jesus said "blessed are those who work for peace, who actively seek to resolve conflict." Peacemakers are rare because peacemaking is hard work!

What peacemaking is NOT:

- **It is not AVOIDING the problem**
Running from a problem, pretending it doesn't exist, or being afraid to talk about it is cowardice. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, was never afraid of conflict – sometimes He even provoked conflict!
- **It is not APPEASING the problem**
Always giving in, acting like a doormat, and allowing others to run over you is not what Jesus meant. He refused to back down on many issues, and stood His ground in the face of opposition.

How to restore a relationship:

1. **Talk to God before talking to the person.**
 - If you pray about the conflict first instead of gossiping to a friend, you give God a chance to change hearts – yours, theirs, or both!
 - All our relationships would go smoother if we would just pray more about them.
 - Read the psalms and you will learn David's secret: VENTILATE VERTICALLY! God is never surprised by your feelings anyway.
 - Most conflict is rooted in UNMET NEEDS. Any time we expect anyone to meet a need that only God can fulfill, we are setting ourselves up for disappointment and bitterness.
 - **James 4:1-2 (NIV)** What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

2. Always take the initiative.

- It doesn't matter whether you are the offender or the offended – God expects YOU to make the first move! Don't wait on them.
- Restoring broken fellowship is so important that Jesus said it should take priority over worship!
- **Matthew 5:23-24 (MSG)** If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God.
- In conflict, TIME HEALS NOTHING! It just causes hurt to fester.
- Acting quickly also reduces the spiritual damage to you, because sin (including unresolved conflict) blocks our fellowship with God and keeps our prayers from being answered.
- **1 Peter 3:7 (NJB)** Husbands must always treat their wives with consideration in their life together ... This will prevent anything from coming in the way of your prayers.
- **Job 18:4 (TEV)** You are only hurting yourself with your anger.

3. Sympathize with their feelings.

- Here's a good rule for life – use your ears more than your mouth! Begin with sympathy, not solutions. Focus on their feelings, not the facts. Listen while they unload without being defensive. You can understand even when you don't agree.
- **Psalms 73:21-22 (TEV)** When my thoughts were bitter and my feelings were hurt, I was as stupid as an animal; I did not understand you.
- Wisdom comes from hearing the perspective of others, even when we do not agree with them.

4. Confess your part of the conflict.

- Admitting your own mistakes always help you see things more clearly. We all have blind spots, and if we're not careful, how we handle a conflict creates a bigger hurt than the original problem.
- **Matthew 7:5 (NLT)** First get rid of the log from your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.
- **1 John 1:8 (MSG)** If we claim that we're free of sin, we're only fooling ourselves.

5. Attack the problem, not the person.

- You cannot fix the problem if you're consumed with fixing the blame. You must choose between the two. In resolving conflict, HOW you say it is as important as WHAT you say. If you say it offensively, it will be received defensively. You are never persuasive when you're abrasive.
- **Proverbs 15:1 (CEV)** A kind answer soothes angry feelings, but harsh words stir them up.
- **Proverbs 16:21 (TEV)** A wise, mature person is known for his understanding. The more pleasant his words, the more persuasive he is.
- Destroy your personal arsenal of relational nuclear weapons, or the "Cold War" will continue forever!

6. Cooperate as much as possible.

- Peace always has a price tag – sometimes it costs us our pride, and almost always it costs us our self-centeredness.
- **Romans 12:18 (TEV)** Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody.
- **Matthew 5:9 (MSG)** You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

7. Emphasize reconciliation, not resolution.

- It is unrealistic to expect everyone to agree about everything! We can reestablish a relationship even when we can't resolve our differences. We can disagree without being disagreeable.
- Resolution focuses on the problem, while reconciliation focuses on the relationship. When we focus on reconciliation, the problem loses significance and often becomes irrelevant.
- This doesn't mean that you give up on finding a solution, it just means that you do it in a spirit of harmony.
- Reconciliation means that you bury the hatchet, not necessarily the issue!
- **1 Peter 3:11 (NLT)** Work hard at living in peace with others.
- **Matthew 5:9 (KJV)** Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

- **Who do I need to restore a broken relationship with today?**