



Zoom Bible Study ~ Improving Your Relationships

Session 6 ~ February 16, 2021

Review

We have considered specific types of relationships that can be challenging for us to deal with in a Christ-like way:

- The Lazy Person
- The Condescending, Arrogant Person
- The Domineering Person
- The Vindictive, Hostile Person
- The Negative Person

Can you identify one or two of these types that are the most challenging for you?

Introduction

Broken relationships create all kinds of problems, whether they are work relationships, family relationships, or even casual relationships.

Are we doomed to have to live with these broken relationships? What is our duty and responsibility in trying to mend broken relationships? That is what we will consider in this study.

Jesus' "Fix" for Broken Relationships

Matthew 5:23-24: Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Who is Jesus talking to?

- anybody a religious person a disciple of Jesus Christ

Jesus is trying to teach us several important principles through this phrase: "if you are offering your gift at the altar." Consider these:

- Even committed people who are trying to do the right thing will have relationship struggles.
- Mending broken relationships takes priority over religious activities and duties.
- You can't substitute spiritual activity for trying to mend a broken relationship.

Consider what Jesus meant when he said, "*and there remember that your brother has something against you.*"

Who do you think is included in the term "brother"?

Since Jesus says, "and there *remember* that your brother has something against you," does that mean it is possible to *forget* that you have a broken relationship? What does that look like?

If you have been guilty of procrastination when you needed to try to heal a broken relationship, which of these reasons applied to you?

- I didn't know what to say or how to say it.
- I was fearful of being rejected.
- I was afraid I'd make matters worse.
- I found it difficult to say "I'm sorry."

- I thought it was more the other person's fault than mine, and therefore the first move was up to him or her.
- I just couldn't find the right time to do it.
- I was too proud and/or stubborn to do anything about it.
- I always have difficulty facing issues head on and tend to run away from problems.

Here are some people who might have "something against you:"

- A person whose feelings are hurt because of you.
- A person who misunderstood you and misjudged you.
- A person who thinks you have treated her unfairly.
- A person who thinks you have neglected her.
- A person who feels insulted by you.
- A person to whom you spoke words that were not well chosen.
- A person to whom you broke a promise or failed to keep a commitment.

Do you think Jesus meant that this applies when another person has something against you which is your fault? Would it also extend to perceptions, even if the perceptions are incorrect?

Would this principle also apply when you have something against another person? Should you follow the same prescribed way of dealing with a broken relationship if you are the injured party and you feel you have a legitimate reason to be very hurt with another person?

- It should apply even if you have something against someone else, whether they are aware of it or not.
- It should only apply when someone else has something against you.
- It would depend upon the situation. Sometimes it would be good to initiate a healing action for a broken relationship when you have something against someone else. At other times it might be necessary to bear with that hurt.

In discussing this question, consider *Colossians 3:13: Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

Why would it be necessary to "leave your gift there in front of the altar" in order to be reconciled to a broken relationship?

Think of the culture in which this was written. If someone were at the altar performing this sacred duty of offering a gift and sacrifice to the Lord, by prescribed Jewish law as given in the Old Testament, what would it mean to leave that gift in front of the altar without completing the ritual?

This action could have been viewed by others as any combination of:

- weird
- unorthodox
- incorrect
- puzzling

It could cause:

- embarrassment
- criticism
- questions
- loss of a costly sacrifice
- loss of prestige or status

Jesus knew that his hearers would fully understand the importance he placed on reconciliation by using this illustration of leaving your gift at the altar to go and find the person who has something against you.

Therefore, what is the main principle Jesus is teaching when he says “leave your gift there in front of the altar”?

Think of your work situation, your church home, your family environment. Which of these results have you witnessed because of failures to be reconciled?

- The break in the relationship grew deeper and wider.
- The reason for the break was exaggerated and amplified way beyond reality.
- Innocent people were hurt because the relationship was not reconciled.
- Gossip and backbiting increased.
- The longer it was neglected, the more difficult it was to do.
- It opened the door for illegitimate or harmful relationships to begin.
- It caused a church split.

- It caused a family split.
- It caused other relationships to deteriorate.
- It caused great financial stress.
- It adversely affected someone's testimony for Jesus Christ.
- It caused non-believers to have negative impressions of true believers.
- It caused those involved to walk away from their commitment to Jesus Christ or seriously affected them spiritually in a detrimental way.

That's a long list, and it's not exhaustive. My guess is you have checked off quite a few of those consequences of broken relationships. And the longer you put off reconciliation, the more these and other consequences will be realized.

What kind of advice do you think you'd receive from most "earthly advisors" if you told them that someone has something against you, but it's not your fault?

- It's their problem, not yours. Let him/her make the first move.
- Don't let that person manipulate you with hurt feelings.
- Some relationships are doomed; let it go.
- That person needs to grow up and learn a few lessons.

How does it make you feel to go to someone who "has something against you" and initiate a reconciliation?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> It is humbling | <input type="checkbox"/> It is humiliating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It makes me feel resentful and angry | <input type="checkbox"/> It makes me very uncomfortable |

There is a difference in humbling yourself and feeling humiliated. How would you describe that feeling of humiliation?

Don't be surprised at your feelings. Just determine to follow the directions of our Lord whether you "feel it" or not.

If you are going to someone who has something against you for the purpose of reconciliation, you would likely *not* do which of the following:

- Recite all the mistakes she has made and where she is wrong.
- Defend yourself and explain why you are not at fault.
- Tell how you have been hurt or harmed.
- Lecture the other person about his need to change.
- Lovingly accept blame for whatever you have done that has contributed to the bad feelings.
- Talk about what you are willing to do to mend the relationship.
- Explain how important the relationship is to you.
- Establish some guidelines to hopefully help avoid similar misunderstandings and hurts in the future.

Keep in mind that reconciliation is not for the purpose of airing your grievances; it is rather to cease hostility.

Scripture tells us again and again to be humble, to humble ourselves, to put on humility. It's one of those ten principles we studied. It's humbling, but it should not be humiliating.

Is Reconciliation Always Possible?

Romans 12:18: If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Do you believe it is possible to be reconciled with everyone who has something against you?

Under what types of circumstances would reconciliation be difficult if not impossible?

However, please keep in mind that being reconciled does not include:

- being someone's "doormat"
- enduring abusive treatment of any kind
- compromising your Christian principles or integrity
- lowering your standards of behavior

- enabling someone else to continue in wrong or evil behavior

So, we are not seeking reconciliation at any price. There are times where a relationship has been damaged so much that full restoration is not possible.

Describe some relationships (yours or someone else's) where there has been reconciliation but the relationship cannot be fully restored:



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