

Session 15 Relationships: Forgive, Bless, and More (Mt. 6:12-14)

I. JESUS' EMPHASIS ON RELATING TO PEOPLE WITH GENEROSITY (MT. 5-7)

- A. There are many principles for cultivating relationships throughout the Sermon on the Mount. Each of the 8 beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12) has significant application in our relationships as do resisting the six temptations (Mt. 5:21-48) and pursuing the five kingdom activities (Mt. 6:1-18).
- B. Jesus exhorted us to forgive the people who mistreat us (Mt. 6:12-14). We do this out of gratitude for the way that He graciously forgave us (Mt. 18:21-35). This principle is foundational to all that He said about building relationships in the Sermon on the Mount.

¹²And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ¹³And...deliver us from the evil one...

*¹⁴For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
(Mt 6:12–14)*

- C. He highlighted four principles as a framework in relating to those causing us pain and trouble.
1. First, He urged us to deal with our anger and quickly pursue reconciliation (Mt. 5:21-26). He stressed that our worship and relationship with God will be hindered until we do this.
²³If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there...first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Agree with your adversary quickly.... (Mt 5:23–25)
 2. Second, He called us to bless those we are in an adversarial relationship with (Mt. 5:44).
⁴⁴Bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you... (Mt 5:44)
 3. Third, He exhorted us to forgive the people who are not treating us right (Mt. 6:12-14).
 4. Fourth, He warned us to not judge (evaluate) people with a wrong spirit, with wrong information, and with a wrong process and to focus first on our failures (Mt. 7:1-5).
²For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you...⁵First remove the plank from your eye... (Mt. 7:2-5)

- D. We respond to these issues in our relationships by asking the Lord for help (Mt. 7:7-12).

⁷“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you...¹²Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them... (Mt 7:7–12)

- E. These principles are most applicable to *familiar relationships* in our families and friendships.

- F. **Jesus' premise:** God created us to love Him in four spheres of life—with our heart (affections), soul (personality), mind (thoughts), and strength (resources), because He loves us this way. We express our love to God by the way we respond from the heart to people who cause us pressure.

³⁰“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” (Mk. 12:30)

II. RESTORING INJURED RELATIONSHIPS

- A. A relationship can be injured at various levels, from being slightly wounded to deeply broken. The spirit of a relationship can be injured without the people themselves being deeply wounded. In other words, the trust and open communication can be injured between two good people who are not emotionally devastated and dysfunctional. In other words, this applies to you and me.
- B. The signs of a wounded relationship include a *closed spirit* (unreceptive), *being guarded* (unwilling to share freely), *strained communication* (defensive, argumentative, and sarcastic) and *resisting touch* (a spouse or child with a wounded spirit resists being touched).
- C. A relationship is wounded long before it is broken. A broken relationship requires much more skill and attention to heal. An offended brother speaks of a person in a familiar relationship with you such as a spouse, child, sibling, extended family member, friend or a co-worker, etc. It takes wisdom, effort, and patience to win them in a way that makes them want to open their heart.

¹⁹A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city... (Prov. 18:19)

III. BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES IN RESTORING AN INJURED RELATIONSHIP

- A. The most common way to wound the spirit of a relationship is through perverse speech. Perverse speech is more than speech about immorality (perversion), but it is speech that has a negative tone and being critical, accusatory, sarcastic, and lacking tenderness and affirmation.
⁴A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. (Prov. 15:4)
- B. Corrupt speech injures our relationships in imparting grace to the person who is being corrected.
²⁹Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit... (Eph. 4:29-30)
²¹Death and life are in the power of the tongue... (Prov. 18:21)
- C. A gentle response diffuses anger in the one you speak to; however, a harsh tone will stir it up.
*¹A soft answer turns away wrath [anger], but a harsh word [tone] stirs up anger. ²The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness [anger]...
⁴A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit [feels hopeless]...
²⁸The heart of the righteous studies how to answer... (Prov. 15:1-4, 28)*
- D. We speak our concerns in the right *tone*, *timing*, *spirit* and *ratio* of affirmation and correction.

- E. **Tone**: The tone of our communication is one of the important issues in restoring a relationship. A negative tone includes anger, defensiveness, impatience (rushing people to answer), or a tone of lecturing (instructing instead of listening), etc. Sarcasm in our tone of communication hinders us from speaking our heart and being heard by the one we are speaking to. Expressing our anger with sighs, huffing, and slamming doors also hinders the entire communication process. The tone of the communication involves our body language and facial expressions including making eye contact or looking around (at the clock, at our phone or computer).
- F. **Timing**: We must make time to communicate and not do it on the run, or when we are bothered by other issues or when angry. We must not share certain things in front of other people.
- G. **A right spirit**: Wait until you are both feeling peace instead of being agitated, pressured or angry. Many times we have to wait until a later time before initiating or responding to a correction.
- H. **Ratio**: A healthy relationship requires about ten positive statements to one negative one. Do not drive a “ten ton truck” of correction over a relational bridge that can only bear five tons. We must not speak more about their failure than their virtues. Speak to their desire for greatness and not only to their shame of failure. Seek to see who they are in God’s eyes and what they are reaching to be. Be grateful for the good in them and not only critical of their faults.
- I. **Ask the Lord**: Ask the Lord for insight on how you lacked sensitivity in the relationship and how you contributed to the wounded relationship instead of only asking Him to change the other person. Ask for insight into how He sees your spouse, child, friend or co-worker.
7“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you...¹²Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them... (Mt 7:7–12)
- J. **Ask the person**: Ask them information about what they were thinking, feeling, doing or wanting. Ask questions of the person you are in tension with instead of starting with statements of complaint. For example, “What were you thinking or feeling when you told me...?” Ask them for help. For example, “Help me understand what I heard when you told me...?”
- K. **Tell them what you feel**: Start by telling them how you feel or what you heard instead of making statements about what they did wrong. For example, “I felt rejected when you said...” or “I heard you say you wanted me off the team when you said...” “I feel you are not happy with me.”
- L. **Appeal**: Make appeals with a spirit of gentleness as we consider and confess our own weakness.
¹If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. (Gal. 6:1)
- M. **Confessing our faults**: Confession is our “love offering.” Do not say, “I am sorry, *if* I have offended you, but say I repent *since* I sinned against you (by coming up short in love).
¹⁶Confess your trespasses to one another [your spouse] ...that you may be healed (Jas. 5:16)

- N. Set your heart to approach the relationship in godly wisdom (Jas. 3:13-17).
¹³Who is wise and understanding among you?...¹⁷The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy...and without hypocrisy. (Jas. 3:13, 17)
1. **Willing to yield**: Be willing to yield to their appeal by being eager to take responsibility for our faults and insensitivity. We seek to have a teachable spirit to “hear” what they are feeling instead of defending ourselves because some of the facts are not 100% accurate.
 2. **Full of mercy**: Be merciful with their failure even when their perspective is wrong. Try to hear their pain and understand any way in which you contributed to it.
- O. **Active listening**: Listen carefully to their unspoken words, pains, fears, and desires. Then speak back to them what you “heard” them say. For example, “It sounds like you are saying...” This gives them the opportunity to clarify what you heard. We honor people by patiently listening to their point of view in the conflict.
- P. **Set boundaries**: Come to agreement (when there is not a conflict) to what the “trade-offs” are in the relationship that you agree to give each other in terms of time, service, communication, etc.
- Q. **The whole truth**: Some people say, “I just want the truth to come out.” They must remember that the “whole truth” about someone includes their *virtues* and not just their *failures*. Remember that God doesn’t tell any of us the whole truth about all our shortcomings—it would overwhelm us.
- R. **Complaining**: We are warned to not allow our complaints to dominate a relationship. Continual complaining makes people want to quit the team, discontinue the relationship, and even tempts children to leave their own home (Prov. 14:1; 17:1; 19:13; 21:9, 19; 25:24). This principle applies to all people in many different types of relationships—not just women in their homes.
¹³The contentions of a wife [spouse, parent or friend] are a continual dripping. (Prov. 19:13)
⁹Better to dwell in a corner...than in a house shared with a contentious woman...¹⁹Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman. (Prov. 21:9, 19)
¹Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife. (Prov. 17:1)
¹The wise woman [parent, leader] builds her house [team], but the foolish pulls it down... (Prov. 14:1)

IV. PRACTICAL ADVICE

- A. **Winning**: We must remember that the one *who loves most* is the one who *wins* in God’s court.

- B. **Get an arbitrator:** An arbitrator can be very helpful in solving long-term conflicts. This is a person who makes both sides listen to each other (instead of interrupting). They ask questions of both sides that are easy to lose sight of by the people in the conflict. Also, they can give a perspective that is unbiased because they have nothing to personally gain or lose in the conflict.
- C. **Pick your battles wisely:** It will be necessary to give up some things. Don't spend all your "relational equity" on small things that don't matter the most. Be willing to lose a battle to win the war. In order to gain the most important things, we will need to give up some smaller things.
- D. **Gnats:** Jesus referred to "swallowing gnats" (overlooking smaller issues) to avoid swallowing camels (to lose sight of the larger issues). Remember, it is always unpleasant to swallow a gnat.
²⁴Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! (Mt 23:24)
- E. **Proverbs:** Read Proverbs every day together in a marriage and/or with children. This is the part of Scripture that highlights communication skills. There are 31 Proverbs, thus you can read the Proverb that correspond with the date on the calendar (Prov. 15:28).