

How to Restore a Wounded Relationship, Pt. 2 (Mt. 5:24)

I. REVIEW: RECOGNIZING WHEN THE SPIRIT OF A RELATIONSHIP IS WOUNDED

- A. The Lord is establishing the second commandment in the Church as He empowers His people to have healthy relationships. A relationship is like a garden that must be cultivated by *watering it* (adding components that nurture it) and *weeding it* (addressing the factors that hinder it). A relationship can be wounded at various levels, from being slightly injured to deeply broken.
- B. Be alert for the signs of a wounded relationship—they include having a ***closed spirit*** (no longer receptive), ***being guarded*** (unwilling to share freely), ***strained communication*** (defensive, argumentative, sarcastic), and ***resisting touch*** (a spouse or child with a wounded spirit often resists being touched or hugged). We should be alerted if we see any of these signs.
- C. A relationship is wounded before it is broken, and a broken relationship requires much more skill and attention to heal. Addressing early signs of wounding guards against broken relationships.
- D. One of the primary ways in which the spirit of a relationship is wounded is by corrupt speech. It includes ***unfair criticism*** (accusing), ***sarcasm*** (insulting), ***“sitcom humor”*** (jokes about faults), and ***anger*** (harsh); and words that are ***demeaning*** (dishonoring), ***manipulating*** (motivating by guilt), ***condescending*** (looking down on), ***shaming*** (belittling), ***authoritative*** (overpowering), ***silencing*** (interrupting or shutting down), ***derogatory*** (labeling), ***threatening*** (intimidating), etc.

²⁹***Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. (Eph. 4:29)***

⁴***A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. (Prov. 15:4)***

- E. We are to be careful with our words and diligent to repair any damage that we cause with our words, knowing that it is far more difficult to “win” a brother once he is offended (Prov. 18:19). The offended brother often includes those with whom we are in a familiar relationship, such as a spouse, child, sibling, extended family member, friend, co-worker, etc.

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

II. BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES IN RESTORING A WOUNDED RELATIONSHIP

- A. ***Make a godly appeal***: What do we do when a relationship is wounded? We make a godly appeal. The wound occurred over a period of time, and the healing of the relationship will often take time too, involving a process of godly appeals and more. We must not be naïve in thinking that a wounded relationship will heal by itself over time. If we do not take action to heal the relationship, it will grow worse over time as we become more familiar with each other.
- B. We are to do all that we can to restore relationships, so far as it depends on us (Rom. 12:18). The Lord wants to establish a culture of honor in the Body of Christ, in which His people walk out the second commandment together, seeking reconciliation and healing in all relationships.

¹⁸***If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. (Rom. 12:18)***

- C. **Go to your brother:** Jesus taught us to go to our “brother” to make an appeal, both when we have *something against them* (Mt. 18:15) and when they have *something against us* (Mt. 5:24). Every believer is to take initiative in reconciliation instead of waiting for others to do their part. Some feel justified in waiting until the other person humbles themselves and starts the dialogue.
1. When someone mistreats us we are to go to them *privately* to share our concern, without first sharing it with others.
¹⁵If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained [won] your brother. (Mt. 18:15)
 2. When someone has something against *us*, we are to go to *them* (Mt. 5:23-24). By doing this, *we go beyond Matthew 18*—we go the second mile for love (Mt. 5:41). This is one way in which we can abound in love (Phil. 1:9) and walk out the second commandment.
²³...that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar, and go...first be reconciled to your brother... (Mt. 5:23-24)
⁴¹And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. (Mt. 5:41)
⁹...that your love may abound still more and more... (Phil. 1:9)
- D. This principle relates to reaching out to someone with whom you are in *relationship* and have *personal interaction*. The Lord is not mandating that we take initiative to seek to make everyone on Facebook happy with our statements, decisions, convictions, lifestyle, etc.
- E. Jesus called His people to be peacemakers who greatly value seeing relationships reconciled. This involves seeking reconciliation in our personal relationships, as well as helping others reconcile their relationships. Jesus promised a special blessing to all who commit to do this consistently.
⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (Mt. 5:9)
- F. It is so rare to see people doing this consistently, with humility, tenderness, and wisdom, that others will recognize such people as *being sons of God* who act like their heavenly Father.
⁴⁴...bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you...⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good... (Mt. 5:44-45)

III. GOING TO THE ONE WHO HAS SOMETHING AGAINST US (MT. 5:23-24)

- A. When someone has something against us, we are to *go to them* to seek to remove the offense.
²³...if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Mt. 5:23-24)
- B. **Leave your gift:** Our gifts to Jesus are an expression of our love for Him. We present our heart and love to God as a gift in worship, but He does not receive them if we ignore the offense we have caused a brother by our words or actions.

1. We are not to present our gifts to God in worship without attempting to heal broken relationships. Our union with Jesus in worship is connected to the way that we honor others in His Body. We must seek to treat our brother in the same way Jesus treats us.
 2. Jesus requires immediate action without delay. On the way to offer our gift, He wants us to leave it until we make things right with others. We are not to present our heart to God as a gift in worship while we speak to His children in wrong ways—especially a spouse.
⁷Husbands...giving honor to the wife...that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Pet. 3:7)
 3. The effect of Jesus' death for us is that He has made all of us *to be one with Him*. Therefore, it is impossible to be one of God's children without also being a brother or sister to His other children. His incarnation, death, and resurrection mean that He has become inseparable from all of those whom He redeemed and brought into His family.
 4. The fellowship of the Trinity has an expression on earth in the relationships in the Body of Christ. Fellowship makes visible on earth the life of the Trinity that comes to us through Jesus. The glorious community of the Church is rooted in Jesus and His mercy.
- C. **Reconciled:** Confessing our faults and humbling ourselves is an essential part of seeing our relationships healed and of expressing our love for Jesus. To be reconciled to others, we must genuinely confess and repent of our sin and insensitivity. We do not do this by saying, "If you are hurt, I am sorry," but, "I sinned against you (or was insensitive toward you); forgive me."
¹⁶Confess your trespasses to one another...that you may be healed. (Jas. 5:16)
- D. **First:** We are to seek to resolve bitterness and offense quickly, without allowing it to escalate. The consequences of bitterness and offense do not just go away; we must deal with them. Anger gives place, or opportunity, for the devil to establish a stronghold in our lives and relationships.
²⁶...do not let the sun go down on your wrath [anger], ²⁷nor give place to the devil. (Eph. 4:26-27)
- E. **Tone:** The tone of our communication is a most important issue in restoring a relationship. We are to make our appeals in a spirit of gentleness, aware of our own failure and deficiency.
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)
1. A *soft response* diffuses anger in the one to whom we speak; a harsh tone will stir it up.
¹A soft answer turns away wrath [anger], but a harsh word [tone] stirs up anger. (Prov. 15:1)
 2. A *negative tone* includes anger, defensiveness, lack of patience (rushing people to answer), or a tone of lecturing (instructing them without listening), etc.

- F. **Be non-defensive:** A defensive manner hinders communication and the restoration process. It is wise to see those who criticize us as a “free research team,” giving us insight into our blind spots.
- G. **Active listening:** Be careful not to interrupt or cut them off, but listen to discern their *unspoken* words, pains, or disappointments. 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 view of the conflict, even if it is not 100% accurate.
¹⁹But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. (Jas. 1:19, NASB)
- H. **Ask the person:** Ask them for information about what they were thinking, feeling, doing, or wanting in the situation, instead of starting with statements of complaint or correction. For example, ask them, “*What were you thinking or feeling when you told me...?*” Try to hear their pain that is unspoken. Ask them for help: “*Help me understand what you felt when I said...*”
- I. **Get an arbitrator:** An arbitrator can be very helpful in solving relational conflicts. An arbitrator helps both people *listen* to each other, instead of interrupting. They *ask questions* of both parties, highlighting things that the people in the conflict might easily overlook.

IV. APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES OF INITIATING RECONCILIATION (MT. 5:24)

- A. These principles are applied differently in our different relationships and personal interactions.
 - 1. **Family**—your spouse, children, parents, siblings, or extended family, etc.
 - 2. **Authority**—those under your authority in the marketplace, church, ministry team, etc.
 - 3. **Peers**—friends, siblings, students, or fellow workers in the marketplace.
 - 4. **Romance**—someone you are pursuing, considering pursuing, or dating
- B. **Beware:** Others may have unrealistic expectations of you, but do not let feelings of pressure or guilt manipulate you into applying these principles in an effort to fulfill unrealistic expectations.
 - 1. **Different expectations:** Some of the most painful relational conflicts arise when people have different expectations for a relationship. If someone sees you as their *best friend*, while you see them as a *casual friend*, then offenses can occur that may not be resolved.
 - 2. **Envy:** Some are offended because they want your role, honor, ability, friends, etc.
 - 3. **Being overlooked:** Some are offended because they deeply desire to be included in a certain group or promoted to a position of leadership that others do not feel is right.

V. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (e.g., FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

- 1. Identify one point that inspired or challenged you. Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
- 2. Identify one point that you want to impart to a younger believer. Why? How will you approach this?
- 3. Identify one point that you would like to gain more understanding of. How will you seek to gain it?