

How to Restore a Wounded Relationship (Pt. 3)—James 3:13-18

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

- A. A relationship can be wounded at various levels, from being slightly injured to deeply broken. When a relationship is wounded, we are to make godly appeals to one another. Jesus taught us to go to our brother to make an appeal, both when they have *something against us* (Mt. 5:24) and when we have *something against them* (Mt. 18:15-16).
- B. We are to do all that we can to restore relationships, so far as it depends on us (Rom. 12:18).
¹⁸If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. (Rom. 12:18)
- C. We are to appeal in the right *tone, timing, process, spirit, and ratio* of affirmation to correction. The tone of our communication is a very important issue in restoring a relationship. A defensive tone hinders the process. We make appeals in a spirit of gentleness, aware of our deficiencies.
¹...you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself... (Gal. 6:1)
- D. Confessing our faults and humbling ourselves is an essential part of seeing our relationships healed and expressing our love for Jesus. To be reconciled to others, we must genuinely confess and repent of our sin or insensitivity. We cannot do this by saying, “*If you are hurt, I am sorry,*” but “*Since I sinned against you or was insensitive toward you, forgive me.*”
¹⁶Confess your trespasses to one another...that you may be healed [reconciled]. (Jas. 5:16)
- E. We all are both *victims* and *agents* of our offense and wounding. We are victims when we are mistreated, and we are agents when we respond wrongly and allow an injustice against us to become a festering wound in us. The injustice done against us does not produce bitterness, but rather it is our wrong response to the injustice that produces bitterness. If we respond wrongly, the conflict escalates to consume our time, energy, emotions, and money.
¹⁵If you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! (Gal. 5:15)

II. TWO PRIMARY OBSTACLES TO HEALING A WOUNDED RELATIONSHIP (JAS. 3:13-16)

- A. James addressed the two primary issues behind offenses in relationships that are not healed. This is a very practical passage in how to avoid or heal relational wounds. He pointed out two types of wisdom (perspectives)—heavenly and earthly (v. 15)—and their different results (v. 16, 18). He identified jealousy and selfish ambition (v. 14) as two primary causes of relational conflict.
¹³Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show, by his good behavior, his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. ¹⁵This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. (Jas. 3:13-16, NAS)

- B. **Wise and understanding:** The issue is which wisdom or perspective guides our life, the heavenly or earthly (v. 15). The person of heavenly wisdom is the one who agrees with God’s ways.
- C. **Let him show by his good behavior:** our words and actions reveal which wisdom or perspective we embrace.
- D. **Gentleness of wisdom:** this speaks of deeds being done in gentleness or meekness that comes from having wisdom or a godly perspective.
- E. **Bitter jealousy:** many offenses are rooted in jealousy or the desire to have what another has (their role, honor, money, possessions, abilities, friends, life situation, etc.).
- F. **Selfish ambition:** Many offenses are rooted in selfish ambition or the expectation to gain a better position, increased honor and recognition, more money, be invited to “join the team,” or even to have a special relationship with someone who does not respond in the same way.
 - 1. Some see themselves as being mistreated and used, or they see the unresponsive person as non-relational, instead of owning their part in the offense—in having expectations and strong desires for things that they did not get.
 - 2. Some of the most painful relational conflicts are related to having different expectations for the 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 solved.
 - 3. 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.
- G. **Do not be arrogant and lie against the truth:** this is one of the most important principles in healing relational conflicts, having a good marriage, or being of person with excellent character.
 - 1. It is a very natural response for all of us to “*lie against the truth*” by refusing to take responsibility for the truth about our unperceived jealousy and selfish ambition that has contributed to being offended and hindering the healing of the relationship.
 - 2. Some people live in bondage to “always having to be right.” When was the last time that you verbalized to someone that you had a measure of selfish ambition that contributed to the offense? The inability to see our ambition will hinder the healing process.
- H. He defined offenses rooted in our jealousy and ambition as earthly, natural, and demonic (v. 15).
 - 1. **Earthly:** this perspective demands that we be treated in a way that fulfills most of our expectations. This “wisdom” is rooted in the temporal values in our humanistic culture.
 - 2. **Natural:** our sense of entitlement to honor, comfort, inclusion, and promotion are natural.

3. **Demonic:** this wisdom gives the devil opportunity and results in bitterness that is energized and stirred by demonic influences. James was not saying that such people are demon-possessed. He was pointing out how human interests can serve demonic interests. Jesus rebuked Peter for promoting a demonic agenda in his human-centered counsel that Jesus refuse to die on the cross (Mt. 16:21-23).

²¹*Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must...be killed...*²²*Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, this shall not happen to You!”*

²³*But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” (Mt 16:16–23)*

4. Anger gives opportunity for the devil to establish a stronghold in our relationships.

²⁶*...do not let the sun go down on your wrath [anger],* ²⁷*nor give place to the devil.* (Eph. 4:26-27)

- I. **Disorder and every evil thing:** Wherever we express jealousy and selfish ambition in a specific relationship, we will contribute to the disorder in that relationship.

III. SEVEN VIRTUES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO HEALING RELATIONSHIPS (JAS. 3:17-18)

- A. He described the responses that are inevitable in any who have a heavenly perspective (wisdom).

¹⁷*But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.* ¹⁸*And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* (Jas. 3:17-18, NAS)

- B. **Pure:** this includes having pure motives that are honest about resisting our selfish ambition.

- C. **Peaceable:** to be “peace-loving” is the opposite of the disorder caused by selfish ambition.

- D. **Gentle:** this speaks of the quality of being accommodating, considerate, patient, agreeable, etc.

- E. **Reasonable:** This is translated as “willing to yield” by the NKJV. We are to be willing to yield to the appeal of others and to do things “their way,” even if it is not absolutely the best way.

- F. **Full of mercy:** We are to be merciful with the failures and deficiencies of others that are related to the relational conflict. To be “full” of mercy includes not requiring that their perspective of the conflict be 100% accurate. This includes having mercy that overlooks the bad responses of others and does not hold it against them. Mercy is acting generously towards others

⁸*Above all things have fervent love...for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” (1 Pet. 4:8)*

¹³*Mercy triumphs over judgment.* (Jas. 2:13)

- G. **Unwavering:** This is translated as “without partiality” in NKJV. This includes not having a double standard in our evaluation of the actions of others.

- H. **Without hypocrisy:** it is sincere and not simply acting kindly for show or to gain an advantage.

I. James promised that the seven virtues in verse 17 are “seed” whose fruit results in righteousness.
¹⁸And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.
(Jas. 3:17-18, NAS)

J. *The seed whose fruit is righteousness:* as we sow the seeds that are identified in verse 17, we will see the growth of righteousness in our life and relationships.

1. We will see a cascading effect on others who will also be inspired to act and speak in righteousness as our response helps them to overcome their bitterness related to a wounded relationship.
2. When we counsel our loved ones to identify even a small residue of jealousy or selfish ambition in their heart, we will be helping them to grow in righteousness and will help them to heal wounded relationships.
3. It is common to listen to a friend described how they were mistreated by someone. If we truly love them, then we will not simply justify their complaints of being mistreated, but we will be peacemakers who help them locate jealousy or selfish ambition in their heart.

K. *Sown in peace by those who make peace:* Those who make peace speak things that facilitate unity between people. Their words, actions, and attitude are unity-protecting.

1. Peacemaking is at the heart of Jesus’ teachings, and it is His standard for discipleship.
2. Jesus promised a special blessing to all who consistently seek to reconcile relationships. This involves seeking reconciliation in our personal relationships, as well as helping others reconcile their relationships.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (Mt. 5:9)

L. Frustration and anger that leads to offense and bitterness is often caused by any who violate our personal rights or block our goals for honor, comfort, money, etc.

¹What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ²...You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.
(Jas. 4:1-2, NAS)

M. Our anger or offense does not result in accomplishing God’s righteous purpose in our lives.

²⁰...for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. (Jas 1:20, NAS)

IV. 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?