

How to Restore a Wounded Relationship, Pt. 5 (Jas. 3:17)

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

A. We are to do all that we can to restore relationships. Living peaceably involves having a spirit of goodwill with all people—in one’s marriage, family, workplace, friendships, neighborhood, etc.

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

B. ***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).

C. The Bible teaches that the foundational response to being mistreated is to entrust the results of the conflict to God’s leadership, knowing that He will answer in His way and His timing.

²³...when He [Jesus] was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. (1 Pet. 2:23)

D. When someone mistreats us, verbally or by their actions, we are to commit the situation to the Lord as we make our appeal to that person (Mt. 5:23-24; 18:15). We can have peace, knowing that God is watching and will intervene in His way and in His time, as we live before His eyes.

II. EIGHT RESPONSES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO HEALING RELATIONSHIPS (JAS. 3:17)

A. James identified eight responses that express heavenly wisdom (biblical perspective) in relational conflicts. These show us how to cultivate healthy relationships, heal wounded relationships, and live in freedom with a vibrant heart even in the midst of a conflict.

¹⁷But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. (Jas. 3:17)

B. ***Pure***: We are to respond with *pure motives* in seeking the good of others and *purity of insight* (without distortion) into how even a small residue of our self-seeking in us contributed to the conflict. A spirit of purity works in those who confess their self-seeking without rationalizing it. Having a pure heart doesn’t mean that all of our negative desires are gone, but that we are honest about them as we take responsibility for how our deficiencies contributed some to the conflict.

1. Purity of insight includes acknowledging our negative desires with humility and seeing God’s perspective of the person with whom we are in conflict. We are to seek to see people from God’s point of view—to see their dignity, excellence, and their value to the Lord; we want to see the good that they do and seek to do, not just their faults.

³As for the saints who are on the earth, “They are the excellent ones, in whom is all My delight.” (Ps. 16:3)

2. **Ratio:** A healthy relationship requires about ten positive statements to one negative one. We cannot drive a “ten-ton truck” of correction over a relational bridge that can only bear five tons. We must not speak more about someone’s deficiencies than their virtues and desire to do right. We must be grateful for the good that they have done and seek to do.
- C. **Peaceable:** We are to respond in a peaceable way rather than with accusations, complaints, anger, venting, or sarcasm. Our temptation may be to answer accusation with accusation and to answer sarcasm with more sarcasm. When resolving tension, especially in a marriage, it is best to wait until both are peaceful and have a happy spirit, instead of being angry, agitated, or annoyed.
1. We can be calm and have a peaceable spirit, knowing that the eyes of Lord are on us.
 2. Continual complaining makes others want to draw back from the relationship and can cause children to leave home prematurely (Prov. 14:1; 17:1; 19:13; 21:9, 19; 25:24). This principle applies to all people in all types of relationships, not just women in their homes.
¹⁹Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman. (Prov. 21:19)
¹³The contentions of a wife [or spouse, parent, friend] are a continual dripping. (Prov. 19:13)
 3. We must not make our appeals to others with a spirit of anger—sarcasm, sighs, huffing, slamming doors, etc.—which hinders the ability of others to hear our concern.
- D. **Gentle:** This speaks of the quality of being humble, fair, and generous in our communication. When appealing to someone to see a deficiency in their behavior or point of view, we must speak with a spirit of gentleness, being aware of our own failures and deficiencies (Gal. 6:1).
¹If a man is overtaken in any trespass [even mistreating you]...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. It is important to have a gentle and generous tone in our communication when seeking to cultivate a healthy relationship or to restore a wounded one.
¹A soft answer turns away wrath [anger], but a harsh word [tone] stirs up anger. (Prov. 15:1)
 2. A harsh tone includes anger, accusation, defensiveness, lack of patience (rushing people to answer), being exacting or a tone of lecturing (instructing them without listening), etc.
- E. **Willing to yield:** The kingdom response is to be eager to *listen carefully* and *yield* to the view of others who point out a need for us to change our behavior, ideas, or plans on how to do things (in our family, workplace, ministry, etc.). We are to seek to be accommodating and agreeable.

1. This includes being openhearted to *receive insight* about our failure, insensitivity, or deficiencies in our behavior or ideas (plans) and being quick to *take responsibility* for the deficiencies or blind spots in our behavior or ideas when someone points them out to us.
 2. This involves being teachable or easily persuaded when someone points out our faults.
 3. This is the opposite of being close-minded, stubborn, resistant, combative, entrenched, and defensive to what others think or want. We are to be open to the counsel of others.
 4. The need to *yield* implies that we are being challenged with an idea that we would not naturally accept. In being willing to yield, we are not to compromise biblical convictions or accept decisions or plans that will cause trouble or setbacks for many others.
 5. We seek to be supportive of the ideas that our family, friends, and fellow employees give us. We seek to “get on their team” to make it work for them. In agreeing to do things in the way that others want, we understand that “their way” may not be the absolute best way. There are often several right ways to do something. Each one has a downside.
 6. The person who loves the most is the one who ultimately wins in God’s eyes.
- F. **Full of mercy:** Showing mercy includes acting generously towards those who mistreat us, even if they did it intentionally. We are to forgive their failures and deficiencies in the relationship.
1. Being *full* of mercy includes not requiring their perspective of the conflict to be 100% accurate. We seek to hear what they say, even if only 10 % is accurate and 90% wrong.
 2. A response of mercy covers and overlooks the wrong responses of others (Prov. 19:11). We are to give mercy without seeking revenge and payback so that people suffer for their wrong doings. Treating someone with mercy is not the same as quickly trusting them.
8...for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” (1 Pet. 4:8)
 3. **The whole truth:** Some say, “I want the truth to come out.” We must remember that the “whole truth” about someone includes their *virtues*, not just their *failures*. God doesn’t tell us the whole truth about all of our deficiencies, knowing that it would overwhelm us.
 4. Mercy triumphs over judgment as our hearts are liberated and the healing process begins. The people who acted wrongly may be restored to obedience and confidence in God.
13Mercy triumphs over judgment. (Jas. 2:13)
- G. You are not to enable someone to abuse you by coming back to them with “mercy,” thus giving them opportunity to harm you. The context here is how to heal strife in relationship (Jas. 4:1).
- H. Wisdom, like faith, must be expressed by good deeds in our life (Jas. 2:14-17).

- I. **Full of good fruits:** A kingdom response involves more than good intentions to be merciful to our adversaries; it includes follow-through in actions.
1. Wisdom, like faith, must be expressed by good works (words and deeds) in our life.
¹⁷Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (Jas. 2:17)
 2. For example, after a reconciliation meeting, we must follow through with our words and actions by honoring the things that we committed to do in the reconciliation meeting.
- J. **Without partiality:** This includes not showing partiality to ourselves or to others who bless us. We must not hold our adversaries to a higher standard than we hold ourselves. There is to be no double standard in the kingdom. It is common for people to justify what they do wrong, but then be offended when another violates the same biblical principle yet with a different application.
1. Paul emphasized this in Romans 2:1, warning us not to judge someone for an action while violating the same biblical principle ourselves, though perhaps in a different way. Maybe they do not tell the whole truth or they fail to follow through on what they say. Do you always tell the whole truth or ever fail to follow through on what you say?
¹...you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. (Rom. 2:1)
 2. Some get quickly offended when seeing injustice with money. Yet, they omit information on their taxes, or they sell their car or house without making all the information known about it to the buyer. Some are not faithful to God in giving to the kingdom. The Lord charged His people with stealing from Him when they withheld their tithes (Mal. 3:8).
 3. James warned against showing partiality by evaluating the actions of our adversaries by a higher standard than we evaluate the people who give us favors (Jas. 2:1-9).
*²For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings...³and you...say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there” ...
⁴have you not shown partiality... and become judges with evil thoughts? (Jas. 2:2-4)*
- K. **Without hypocrisy:** This speaks of being genuine, sincere, and true to appearances, with no show of pretense to “appear to be kind” in order to gain an advantage. We are not to present ourselves as forgiving and kind to a person, and then later act and speak negatively against that person.
- L. James asserted that the eight responses in verse 17 are like a “seed” whose fruit, or harvest, will result in righteousness. As we sow this “seed,” we will see the growth of righteousness in our life and relationships. It takes a while to see the harvest, once we begin responding in the right way.
¹⁸Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (Jas 3:18)

1. **Fruit:** One way you will see a harvest of righteousness is by inspiring others to respond in humility and righteousness as they see your merciful response to them in a conflict.
2. If we truly love our friends, we will not simply justify their complaints of mistreatment. We should help them to identify even a small residue of envy or self-seeking in their heart; this helps them in a practical way to grow in righteousness and heal relationships.
3. We are to respond with a peaceful spirit to those with whom we are in conflict.

III. 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?