

7-23-2011, COTR Texarkana

Title: Broken Relationships

Purpose: Provoke people to restore broken relationships.

Spiritual Truth: The gospel has the power to transform broken relationships.

Text: Philemon 1:9-16

Topic: Relationships, Reconciliation, Peacemaker, Conflict

Broken Relationships

I. Introduction

A. Video Sermon Spice: “Leave It Down”

1. The question is...what will he do when he figures it out?
2. A bigger question is...what do you do when somebody does you wrong? What do you do when somebody hurts you...lies to you...steals from you...forgets about you...or causes you pain and heartache?
3. The Bible has a lot to say about conflict in relationships.

B. Philemon 9-16 (NLT) [Paul’s letter to Philemon about a runaway slave] [Bible guide]

1. ⁹ ...Consider this as a request from me...¹⁰ I appeal to you to show kindness to my child, Onesimus. I became his father in the faith while here in prison. ¹¹ Onesimus hasn’t been of much use to you in the past, but now he is very useful to both of us. ¹² I am sending him back to you...¹⁵ It seems you lost Onesimus for a little while so that you could have him back forever. ¹⁶ ...He is more than a slave, for he is a beloved brother...
2. Summary: The Book of Philemon is a letter from the apostle Paul written to a Christian named Philemon about a runaway slave named Onesimus. Philemon was a wealthy slave owner in Colossae who converted to Christ under Paul’s ministry. He later started a church in his house. In Roman times it was legal to own slaves and it was a criminal offense for a slave to runaway. Onesimus had likely stolen money and run away from Philemon but later became a Christian under Paul’s ministry in Rome. Now Paul is trying to reconcile the two men.

C. Today’s message has 3 characters who play 3 different roles:

- a. Onesimus, the offender. He messed up. He’d done something really bad and had run away.
- b. Philemon, the one who been wronged. He had a choice to make: he could forgive and reconcile or stay offended and punish Onesimus. He had legal rights and he had to decide what to do.
- c. Paul the peacemaker. He tried to help two Christians settle their differences. Sometimes a 3rd person is needed to help people restore their relationship.

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II. There are lots of options for broken relationships:

A. Vengeance/ revenge/ get even/ punish them

1. Romans 12:17-21 (ESV)
¹⁷ **Repay no one evil for evil**, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”²⁰ **To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”**²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

B. Write them off/ divorce/ quit/ it’s over/ I’m out of here

1. This is the most frequent response to relationship problems.
2. Quitting is the easiest option but it doesn’t solve the problems and often extends the pain over a lifetime. Ask someone about the lingering pain of divorce with kids. It’s the pain that keeps on giving.

C. Become bitter/ close off your spirit/ shove your anger inside

1. This doesn’t solve the problem either. Unresolved anger and frustration will affect you emotionally and can alter your personality.

D. Repent, confess, forgive and reconcile

1. **Spiritual Truth: The gospel has the power to transform broken relationships**
2. Philemon 15-16 (NLT) [Paul’s appeal to Philemon]
¹⁵ It seems you lost Onesimus for a little while so that you could have him back forever. ¹⁶ He is no longer like a slave to you. **He is more than a slave, for he is a beloved brother**, especially to me. Now he will mean much more to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.
3. Onesimus was saved after he ran away. Now the same Holy Spirit who lived in Philemon lived in Onesimus. Legally they were slave and master. Spiritually they were brothers in Christ.
4. Reconciliation is God’s plan for broken relationships. Reconciliation is possible when confession, repentance and forgiveness are present.

III. Biblical lessons on restoring broken relationships

A. Onesimus, the offender. He’d done something really bad and had run away.

1. If you’re Onesimus the Biblical path for reconciliation is clear:
2. Proverbs 28:13 (NLT)
¹³ People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but **if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.**
3. Confession, i.e. admit you’re wrong, apologizing is the 1st step in restoring a broken relationship. Sadly, pride often keeps us from doing this.
 - a. Proverbs 13:1 (GNT)
¹ **...an arrogant person never admits he is wrong.**
4. Repentance, i.e. change; don’t try to justify or rationalize your behavior.
5. Restitution, i.e. give back what you stole.

B. Philemon, the one who been wronged. He had a choice to make: he could forgive and reconcile or stay offended and punish Onesimus.

1. He had legal rights. He legally owned Onesimus under Roman law. A crime had been committed but it was up to Philemon to decide what to do.
2. The Bible gives instruction to people who’ve been wronged:
3. Confrontation, i.e. go to the one who did you wrong
 - a. Matthew 18:15-17 (NLT) [Conflict among Christians]
¹⁵ **“If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.**
 - b. It’s much easier to ignore them or wait for them to come to you.

4. Forgiveness
 - a. Matthew 6:14-15 (NLT)

¹⁴ “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵ **But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.**
 - b. We must forgive whether we restore the relationship or not.
 - c. If I don’t forgive the one who hurt me I sin against them by refusing to forgive them. (Pers. ex. Teaching on forgiveness; the offender in my home]
 5. Sometimes a mature person is called to suffer loss for the sake of God’s Kingdom
 - a. 1 Corinthians 6:7 (MSG) [Christians suing one another in secular court]

⁷ These court cases are an ugly blot on your community. **Wouldn’t it be far better to just take it, to let yourselves be wronged and forget it?**
 - b. Are you willing to suffer wrong for the sake of the Kingdom of God?
 - c. Jack Wilds
- C. Paul the peacemaker.** He tried to help two Christians settle their differences. Sometimes a 3rd person is needed to help people restore their relationship.
1. Jesus calls us to help people get along
 - a. Matthew 5:9 (ESV)

⁹ **“Blessed are the peacemakers, (NLT) God blesses those who work for peace, for they shall be called sons of God. (Msg) “You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight...**

 - i. Sometimes we need someone to provoke us and help us to reconcile.
 2. Paul acted as a peacemaker attempting to reconcile Onesimus and Philemon
 - a. Philemon 17-19 (NIV)

¹⁷ So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ **If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.** ¹⁹ **...I will pay it back...**
 - b. A peacemaker can help you see the problem through the other person’s eyes and feel what they feel.

IV. Conclusion

A. Mark 12:28-31 (NIV)

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law ...asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”...³⁰ **Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”**

1. Loving people, i.e. repenting, forgiving and reconciling is pretty important to God, especially when they are members of the body of Christ.
2. Reconciliation isn’t easy. Relationships are complicated and pain runs deep. Some people don’t want to reconcile and you can’t make them. Are you willing to do your part to reconcile a broken relationship?

V. Response

A. Prayer: What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

1. Have you been wronged?
2. Are you at fault?
3. Is God asking you to be a peacemaker?

B. Souls