

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP?



James Pittman



introduction

What Do You Do with a Broken Relationship?

“The history of human life,” wrote Our Daily Bread Ministries founder M. R. DeHaan, M.D., “is the history of breaking.” Such brokenness extends beyond childhood toys and the family automobile. It touches everything in our world.

Nowhere do we feel the pain of brokenness more profoundly than in our relationships. There, rifts happen so easily. Thoughtless words are spoken, careless acts are committed or important

things neglected. Someone gets offended and a painful process of alienation begins. What we do next is critical.

In this booklet by James Pittman, we'll look at practical wisdom from the Bible that addresses the crucial question: What do you do with a broken relationship?

Mart De Haan

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EDITORS: Tim Gustafson, J.R. Hudberg, Peggy Willison

COVER IMAGE: Savitskaya Iryna via Shutterstock.com

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INTERIOR IMAGES: (p.1) Savitskaya Iryna via Shutterstock.com; (p.5) Orathai via AdobeStock; (p.9) Aaron Burden via Unsplash.com; (p.21) Joost Crop, Rob Martin via Unsplash.com; (p.27) Nikkytok, Africa Studio via Shutterstock.com; (p.31) Roman Samborskyi via Shutterstock.com

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Printed in USA



one

Diagnosing the Problem

We would expect the heroes of the early church to get along. So it is surprising to read of the apostles Paul and Barnabas: “They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left” (ACTS 15:39–40). The reason for their quarrel? Barnabas[■] insisted on bringing his cousin Mark, who had abandoned the team on an earlier mission. Paul strongly believed this disqualified him from further service.

Even the best friendships can hit rough spots. Co-workers can turn a worksite into a battlefield. Churches divide over personality conflicts. Family

members who ought to love and care for each other instead exchange angry threats—or worse.

🔔 *When Paul turned in faith to Christ and stopped persecuting Christians, the disciples were understandably wary of his intentions. It was **Barnabas** who took the courageous step to bring Paul into the circle of believers (ACTS 9:26–27).*

So what are we to do? It seems the only way to avoid the pain of broken relationships is to live alone on a remote island.

By identifying the telltale signs of stress in our own relationships we can take steps to address them. See if you recognize any of these:

Avoidance. Longtime friends suddenly avoid each other after a conflict. They used to enjoy one another's company; now they keep their distance.

Irritability. “What did you say?” “Leave me alone!” “She makes me sick!” “Mind your own business!” “I said no and I mean no!” “I’ve had it!” Sound familiar? We’ve all heard these fiery phrases. And most of us will admit to saying some of them.

Silence. A common response to a wounded relationship is “the silent treatment.” By refusing to talk, they hope to make the other person suffer. It also helps insulate them from further pain.

Enlisting Allies. Many people approach a strained relationship as if they’re preparing for war. They recruit allies by giving only their view of the issue. Their one-sided account becomes ammunition to

use in battle. Such behavior reveals insecurity and weakness. It uncovers our lack of confidence to handle the problem appropriately.

Terrorism. This form of personal aggression is subtle and comes without warning. With indirect and underhanded methods, it destroys the innocent along with the supposed enemy. This may involve slanderous attacks that destroy someone's influence and character, or emotional or physical abuse.

If you see any of these warning signs, your relationship may be deteriorating. Now is the time to resolve the problem.

Don't Make Things Worse

Poison ivy can make life miserable. Yielding to the temptation to scratch the itch only worsens the problem. The poison spreads, compounding the agony. The right approach is to apply some healing cream and to refrain from doing what itchy skin cries out for you to do.

Broken relationships can make life miserable too. But, like dealing with poison ivy, our natural response may only make matters worse. Let's look at what *doesn't* work.

Ignore It. Many people refuse to look at the problem. This only permits disagreements to spread, eating away at relationships.

Attack the Person. A common tactic is to attack the person instead of the issue. Name-calling and faultfinding obscure the real issue.

Manipulate. Sometimes we are more interested in getting things to work out for our own personal interests. We may feel that we have all the answers and work to get others to see things our way.

Involve the Wrong People. We may mistakenly involve individuals more interested in spreading gossip than in restoring relationships.

Talk Too Much. Are we good listeners? Do we lend an ear and try to understand? It's a bad sign if we are doing most of the talking.

Neglect Timing and Tact. We may do and say the right things but not get the results we expect. If our efforts lack proper timing and tact, we will only compound the problem.

Cover It Up. "Let's put it behind us and start all over again." This sounds good but is wholly inadequate if it is not genuine. Wounds of the heart need more than superficial words to heal.

Discard It. Sometimes relationships are treated like disposable goods. If something goes wrong, it seems too much trouble to patch things up.

Broken relationships can be made worse instead of better if we handle them the wrong way. But the necessary repair work can be accomplished when we are willing to follow the pattern given by God.



two

The Right Pattern

The idea of a lone soldier storming a well-fortified city seems the stuff of legends and action movies. The whole concept is absurd! Yet the Bible says that trying to win back the friendship of an offended person is like trying to capture an armed city. “A brother wronged is more unyielding than a fortified city; disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel” (PROVERBS 18:19).

So how are we to approach a person hunkered down behind the walls of their anger? It’s hard, but not impossible. In the Bible, we find a plan of

action modeled by God Himself. In the person of Jesus Christ, we see the steps that God took to repair the broken relationship between Himself and His creation. Christ's loving actions restored an alienated world to His heavenly Father. As Paul wrote: "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ"

(2 CORINTHIANS 5:19).

In Jesus's example we see the steps necessary to make peace with others. He loved, He humbled Himself, He suffered, He invited, and He forgave.

HE LOVED

God didn't wait for us. He took the initiative for peace by sending His Son. "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins"

(1 JOHN 4:9–10).

Loving people we are fighting with is not easy. But if a work of restoration is to be achieved, we must take the initiative. This step is so important we must be sure we understand what it means. First we will look at what love is not.

Love Is Not Merely Feelings. In a broken relationship, negative emotions overpower positive ones. It may be quite some time before we regain a sense of warmhearted acceptance. Forced smiles and false expressions of kindness are superficial. They lack the genuine quality necessary to correct the problems in a broken relationship.

God's kind of love is out of our league. Since we can't produce it, someone else has to. That person is the Holy Spirit, who lives in all Christians.■
Under His guidance, we can truly love those whose acceptance we seek to regain.

▶ *First Corinthians 6:19 tells us, "Do you not know that **your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit**, who is in you, whom you have received from God?"*

When mistreated by others, He helps us choose what is right. Jesus said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (LUKE 6:27–28). Choose to do what's right toward others, regardless of their response.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of loving others is to examine our own attitudes. Before we try to straighten out the other person, we need to make sure our heart is right. Jesus said, "First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (MATTHEW 7:5). It's hard and often painful, but it can be done. Once again, we are dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit. His work is to give us renewed hearts and minds. With His assistance we can replace anger, bitterness, and malice with kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness.

Love Makes the First Move. Our natural inclination is to avoid those with whom we have relational strife. However, if we are going to remedy the situation, we

must be willing to initiate the process. Loving them means going to them to work things out. ▀

▀ *In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus placed such a high priority on right relationships that He said, "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave you gift there in front of the altar. **First go and be reconciled to them;** then come and offer your gift" (MATTHEW 5:23-24).*

HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF

One of the biggest hindrances to settling our disputes is pride. Our egos get in the way. Any peacemaking action can be viewed as weakness. Since we don't want others to think we are weak, we protect our dignity by not approaching them or by making ourselves unapproachable. But this kind of obstinacy for the sake of personal esteem is wrong. If God in Christ could humble Himself to be at peace with sinners, we can humble ourselves to be at peace with each other. With this in mind, it's important to understand what humility really is.

Humility Defined. Humility means we should not think of ourselves more highly than we should. We should take an interest in the needs and concerns of others. When we think this way, we are showing that we have the Spirit of Christ.

Humility in Practice. First of all, genuine humility doesn't consider any deed too small or any sacrifice too big to make things right. Second, if we are

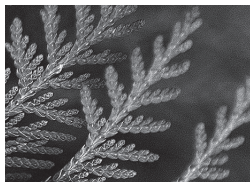
sincerely interested in what concerns other people, then their feelings and opinions will become as important as our own. Finally, if we are humble, we will respect people even when we disagree. We will try to serve them in helpful ways even if they do not appreciate our efforts. Relationships can be mended if we have the mind of Christ and humble ourselves as He did (PHILIPPIANS 2:5). Then we will also be prepared to accept personal suffering, which is the next important step.

HE SUFFERED

Sin ruined our relationship with God, and only a painful sacrifice could make things right. Peter wrote, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit” (1 PETER 3:18). In giving His Son to die, God made that sacrifice for us so we could live in peace with Him.

Peter urged us to imitate Jesus in His example of suffering: “Since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude” (1 PETER 4:1). Jesus Christ was the God-man dying for the sins of the whole world. In that sense, the suffering of Christians could never be like His. But there are many ways we can follow His example. No one wants to suffer, but it develops the following Christlike characteristics in us:

Commitment. Christ was determined to do the Father’s will, regardless of the suffering. In the garden



*If personal
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of Gethsemane the night He was betrayed, Jesus faced the ultimate broken relationship—separation from His heavenly Father. He prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (MATTHEW 26:39). By accomplishing His Father’s will through His death on the cross, Christ made the way for our broken relationship with God to be mended.

It is our heavenly Father’s will that we live peaceably with all people. When conflicts arise—and they will—we work toward reconciliation, aware that suffering is a part of the process.

Courage. Christ knew that His suffering would be great, yet He faced it bravely. Luke tells us, “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem” (LUKE 9:51). When things go wrong in our relationships, we may lack the heart to confront the problems because of the pain. Even though suffering may be involved, we must courageously face the issues.

Confidence. Jesus placed Himself into the hands of the Father in spite of the things He suffered (1 PETER 2:23). This is the key to getting the best out of bad situations. When we put our confidence in

God, He not only strengthens us, but He also works everything out for His good purposes.

Empathy. Jesus identified with us completely in our sorrow. [➤] His expressions of understanding and compassion attracted people who needed to be reconciled to God. We too can greatly influence the people we are alienated from when we share their problems and pain. The apostle Paul echoed Christ when he said, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn” (ROMANS 12:14–15).

➤ *The prophet Isaiah predicted the suffering of the Messiah with these words that show His empathy for us: “He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. ... **Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering**” (ISAIAH 53:3–4).*

Endurance. Christ set the standard. He faced His suffering with patient endurance, and so should we. Suffering because of a broken relationship is hard to accept. Criticism, misunderstanding, and rejection cause pain that we naturally seek to avoid. But if personal conflicts are to be resolved, the pain of the process must be endured. That’s what it takes to regain a lost friendship or repair a broken marriage.

HE INVITED

Through Christ, God has made an offer of peace based on the sacrifice of His Son. We have the opportunity to face the reality of our separation from

God and come to Him. “He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit” (EPHESIANS 2:17–18). The door of access to the Father is open.

When we dispute with others, one of the hardest things to do is to sit down and calmly talk it over. It’s so easy to avoid them or to allow angry emotions to spill out during what we intended to be a quiet discussion of our differences. But a confrontation is absolutely necessary if relationships are to be repaired. Whenever conflict arises, we must invite the other party to talk about the issues. Our differences cannot be resolved without this vital step.

The Command. Jesus said, “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over” (MATTHEW 18:15). An invitation to reconciliation is an expression of obedience to that command. Whether we have knowingly offended others or they have offended us, our responsibility is to go to them and resolve the problem. Getting them to cooperate may be difficult, but the Lord has instructed us to do it. We have no reasonable option but to obey.

The Need for Honesty. A face-to-face encounter has no value unless we are open and sincere. If someone has wronged us, we are to tell them. If we are hurt or angry, we must say so. However, this should not be done for the sake of argument or to get even.

Rather, we should let the other person know that we are being candid because we want things to be right between us.

The Importance of Privacy. The conflict is often made worse when the problem is not confined to the parties involved. We must be discreet. Whatever we have to say should be said privately to the one who is at fault. This keeps us from the sins of slander and gossip. It also guards the reputations of all involved and shows respect to the individual, increasing the likelihood of restoring the relationship.

The Time for Mediators. If a face-to-face encounter with the other person does not resolve the problem, Jesus instructed us to “take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses’ (MATTHEW 18:16). The wisdom and influence of others can be helpful. Even if the problem persists, they are witnesses to guard against any misrepresentation of the things discussed. Then, if we’re still unsuccessful, the next step is to take the issue to the church.

When we have strife with others, we must invite them to confront the issues and work with us to resolve them. That’s what Christ commanded us to do.

HE FORGAVE

A Sunday school teacher was explaining forgiveness to her first-graders. She said that if a classmate mistreated one of them, they had to be kind in return.

And if the offender said he was sorry, it was not to be held against him. The class members looked at one another with troubled faces until finally one of the little girls blurted out, “But teacher, that’s hard!” She was right. It’s hard for all of us. Yet broken relationships cannot be repaired unless we are ready to do what is difficult. We must be willing to acknowledge our offenses and forgive one another as God has forgiven us. But how is our response to others to reflect God’s forgiveness?

Judicial Forgiveness. What is judicial forgiveness? Simply this. Judicial forgiveness is not a matter of overlooking or excusing the offenses of others, but recognizes the wrongness of what people do to each other and the rightness of proper punishment. It also recognizes that since Jesus has already taken the punishment, we are free to forgive without violating the just law of retribution. The harm people do to each other still hurts, but Christ has paid the penalty. Forgiving each other is the right thing to do.

Conditional Forgiveness. As God has forgiven us, we must be willing to forgive each other. But that forgiveness is not complete unless those who have offended us are willing to repent. Jesus taught: “If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them” (LUKE 17:3-4). Without a genuine

acknowledgment of the wrong done, relationships can't be repaired.

Decisional Forgiveness. We must choose to forgive in spite of our feelings. Even though God is grieved and angered by our sin, He chooses to forgive us. We must also be willing to forgive, regardless of what may have been said or done to offend us.

Emotional Forgiveness. Forgiving each other not only involves the use of our will but also the attitude of our heart. Paul pointed this out in his letter to the Colossians. He said that we should have heartfelt compassion toward others, along with kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. He wrote, "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (COLOSSIANS 3:13).

Admittedly, these ideals are not easy to put into practice when someone has wounded us deeply or is still hurling insults our way. But we can respond graciously when we allow the Holy Spirit to control our hearts. Paul points us to the right attitudes. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other" (GALATIANS 5:22–26). If we truly want to honor God, we must let His Spirit work in us so that ours will be a forgiveness that comes from the heart.

Rather than hold our sins against us, God wants to forgive us through His Son. This undeserved kindness can be hard to comprehend if we live by the slogan, “I don’t get mad; I get even!” God doesn’t want to get even; He wants to restore us to a right relationship with Him. If we are willing to be restored, He will freely forgive us.

God’s Pattern/Our Practice. It may seem unlikely, but many people choose to ignore God’s pattern for repairing broken relationships because they actually enjoy the conflict. Some neighbors express no desire to be on good terms with the people on the other side of the fence. Business associates continue to battle it out as they move up the ladder of “success.” Some church members seem to feel it is their calling to stir up trouble at business meetings.

The Bible tells us that the reason for these wrong attitudes is rooted in people’s hearts. James tells us, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?” (4:1). In contrast, God’s way is the unselfish way. In His effort to reconcile us to Himself, He modeled love, humility, suffering, invitation, and forgiveness. It is the ultimate in ingratitude to receive such grace and then refuse to show the same grace to others who have wronged us. If we truly recognize all that God has done for us, we can determine to follow His pattern as we live with people.



three

What If It Doesn't Work?

God does not hold us responsible for results, but He does hold us responsible for what we do and how we do it. As far as broken relationships are concerned, it is our duty to imitate our heavenly Father and follow the steps modeled by Him. If we have made a sincere effort to do so and the issues are still unresolved, then take the following to heart:

Don't Blame Yourself. The psalmist wrote, "Too long have I lived among those who hate peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war" (PSALM 120:6–7). Can you identify with his frustration?

Sometimes it may seem that you have tried everything to make peace but the other person keeps attacking. Like the psalmist, we may be for peace but “they are for war.” Their attitude hinders the restorative process. It may be bitterness, fear, anger, shame, resentment, or pride. Whatever the reason, if we have done all we can and the relationship remains strained, they must answer to God for it.

Trust God to Change the Other Person. Paul wrote to Timothy: “The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth” (2 TIMOTHY 2:24–25). When others oppose us, we should not be quarrelsome but gentle and patient. We should talk to them meekly and courteously. And even though our efforts may not make a difference, God is able to change their attitudes and their behavior.

Get the Help of a Third Party. While in prison, the apostle Paul mediated a dispute between a servant named Onesimus and his master Philemon. Evidently, the servant had wronged his master and deserted him. Some time later, Onesimus met the apostle and became a Christian. Paul wrote a letter to Philemon to let him know what had happened. In a wonderful expression of Christian love, Paul appealed to Philemon to restore Onesimus not merely as a servant but as a Christian brother.■ Paul also made himself

accountable for any loss that Philemon may have suffered at the hands of Onesimus (PHILEMON 16–18).

✎ *Many scholars believe that when Paul wrote to Philemon “Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask,” that **he was asking Philemon to give Onesimus his freedom** (PHILEMON 21).*

Like Philemon and Onesimus, we may need a negotiator too. Our mediators should be godly, wise, and loving. They should be people who understand us and the situation. They should be impartial and objective. And above all, they must be sensitive to God’s leading. Whether it be a pastor, a counselor, or a trusted friend, a mediator can be effective where we have failed.

✎ *“**Love** is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 CORINTHIANS 13:4–7).*

Love Them Unconditionally. Even though our attempts at reconciliation may be unsuccessful, we must love the other person anyway. Our desire should be to treat them graciously no matter how they feel or act toward us. In 1 Corinthians 13:4–7, Paul outlines the qualities of unconditional love for others:✎

- **Be patient.** This requires a conscious and often difficult effort to refrain from reflexive

retaliation. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can learn to respond with Christ-honoring patience when we are wronged.

- **Practice kindness.** Choosing to do deeds of kindness gives us the ability to respond to mistreatment with goodness. Our adversary will be thrown off guard by such an unexpected response.
- **Avoid jealousy.** When our enemies succeed, we should not covet their good fortune. Although they may not deserve what they are receiving, we must entrust ourselves to God.
- **Check our pride.** Pride and boastfulness set up barriers to resolving conflicts. Pride keeps us from making the personal sacrifices necessary to patch up tattered friendships.
- **Reject rudeness.** You don't put out a fire by pouring gasoline on it, and you certainly won't subdue anger with more harsh words. No matter how badly we have been hurt, disrespectful or inconsiderate comments are out of place.
- **Refrain from selfishness.** We are not to be concerned only with our own wants and needs. We



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must train ourselves to be equally interested in the concerns of those with whom we are at odds.

- ***Don't be quick-tempered.*** When people irritate us, do we lash out without thinking? This doesn't please God. A person with a hair-trigger temper needs to engage his mind before speaking.
- ***Reject holding a grudge.*** If we don't keep mental records of wrongs done against us, our innate desire for revenge will evaporate.
- ***Don't delight in evil.*** When our adversaries suffer a downfall or an injustice of any kind, we are not to gloat over their misery.
- ***Rejoice with the truth.*** When God is honored and people respond properly to problems, we should praise God and rejoice.
- ***Protect the other person.*** Honest concern for those with whom we have strife will keep us from hanging out their "dirty laundry" for all to see.
- ***Be trusting.*** Instead of anticipating the worst from people or looking suspiciously at those who reject us, love gives the benefit of the doubt.
- ***Choose hope.*** Love is optimistic about the possibility for reconciliation and always expects positive change.



- ***Practice loyalty.*** Love endures even when the going gets rough. It means remaining consistent in our attitude and actions toward those with whom we disagree. When others refuse to be at peace with us, our commitment should still be to love them.



Although we may fail in our attempts to repair a broken relationship, we should not give up. God is patient with sinners and wants all of us to be restored to a right relationship with Him. Following His example, we must leave the door open for reconciliation and do all we can to see that it happens.



four

Relationship Maintenance

No one wants to experience the pain and embarrassment of a broken relationship. We would much rather have things go well between us and others. But healthy relationships are not easy to maintain. They require a diligent effort from everyone involved.

Talk Openly. When we freely and regularly share our thoughts and feelings with each other, we gain more understanding. It gives us the ability to know each other better and to respond in the appropriate manner.

Communicate Honestly. The apostle Peter instructed us to get rid of all deceit and hypocrisy (1 PETER 2:1).

And Paul wrote that we should not lie to one another (COLOSSIANS 3:9). Honesty builds trust and brings us closer together.

Respect Each Other. Having the esteem of others is fundamental to our personal well-being. Friends and loved ones can affirm our worth even as we affirm theirs. When personal regard is mutually expressed, it causes us to respond to one another with a warmhearted acceptance. And this acceptance is maintained as we continue to honor one another (ROMANS 12:10).

Resolve Your Anger. The Bible says, “In your anger do not sin.”[¶] Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (EPHESIANS 4:26). Our anger should not be permitted to simmer.

¶ “When Paul wrote this, he quoted from **Psalm 4:4**.

Be Patient. All of us have character flaws. Instead of judging and criticizing others, we should be humble and tolerant. After all, we want others to be patient with us too.

Share One Another's Problems. We each have the responsibility to handle our own troubles, but there comes a time when we all need the help of a friend. In fact, the Bible tells us that we should share each other's burdens and in this way we obey the Lord's command (GALATIANS 6:2). We need each other!

Give Constructive Criticism. The Bible says that open rebuke is better than secret love (PROVERBS 27:5).

We may be reluctant to confront others about their faults, but it's more loving to say something than to keep quiet and allow them to continue on as they are. Truthful and loving criticism has the best interests of the other person in mind. Although this kind of criticism hurts, it is the pain of friendship. Through constructive criticism we become better people and our relationships improve.

Serve One Another. Rather than asking what we can get, we should be asking what we can give. As Paul reminds us, “Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up” (ROMANS 15:2). An attitude of servanthood recognizes that selfishness only ruins a relationship, but self-sacrifice builds it up. When we serve one another our relationship is maintained and everyone involved benefits.

Reconciliation is possible

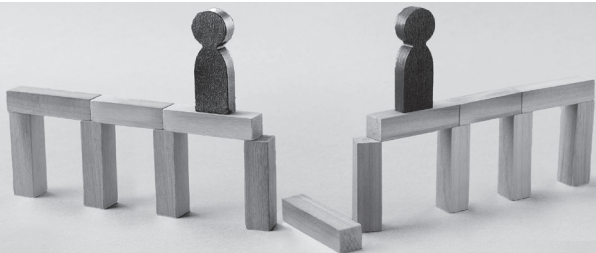
Paul and Barnabas suffered a rift in their relationship over Mark's youthful lack of perseverance (SEE ACTS 15:37-38). But that isn't the end of the story. God used that disagreement to multiply the ministry. Barnabas went one way with Mark, and Paul went another direction with Silas. In other words, God redeemed that angry separation by doubling the work accomplished, and the entire world has benefited from it. But the split wasn't permanent.

In 60 AD, as Paul sends his closing greetings to his friends in Colosse, he says, “My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, *as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas*” (COLOSSIANS 4:10, EMPHASIS ADDED).

This was approximately 10 years after his falling out with Barnabas. He wrote a similar message in Philemon at about the same time, calling Mark his “fellow worker” (v. 24).

But it is near the close of Paul’s life and ministry in about 67 AD that we see the complete restoration of the friendship. As the apostle awaits his execution, he sends this message to Timothy: “Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry” (2 TIMOTHY 4:11).

That is the beauty of God’s love and redemption at work over a lifetime. That is a broken relationship restored.



five

Take the First Step

How do you handle your broken relationships? Ignore them? Attack the person? Manipulate the situation? Neglect timing, tact, and courtesy?

The right thing to do is to repair it by following the steps modeled by Christ: love, humility, suffering, invitation, and forgiveness. No one has all the answers, but following biblical principles can make a huge difference.

Perhaps your first consideration should be the broken relationship between you and God. Because of one man's act of disobedience, all humanity is separated from God. Yet because of His great love for

His creation, He did something to repair that broken relationship caused by sin. He sent His Son into the world to rescue us. Jesus Himself explained it in simple terms: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (JOHN 3:16). Jesus Christ, God’s Son, died for our sins. He made it possible for us to be restored to God. “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (JOHN 3:17).

Believe Him and accept the restored relationship God offers you. Take that vital first step.



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