

## HEALING BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS

Has anyone ever hurt you? Has anyone ever spoken ill of you? Has anyone ever called you names? Has anyone ever made fun of you? Has anyone ever told lies about you? Has anyone ever slapped you or hit you? Has anyone ever betrayed you? Has anyone ever let you down? If so, then Jesus has something to say to you!

We'll get to his words in a moment. But first, let's be honest and admit that it is painful. When someone hurts you, or makes fun of you, or betrays you - it is very painful! And you may be tempted to seek revenge, to strike back, to inflict some pain on the other person. Or you may be tempted to withdraw from the relationship, to write the person off, to say "forget you."

But neither reaction is good. Neither reaction is good because of what is at stake. And what is at stake is the relationship!

That relationship is valuable! In fact, every relationship is valuable. Every relationship is priceless. And especially the relationships you have with your friends, your family, your brothers and sisters in Christ. And those relationships are so valuable, so priceless that they are worth doing whatever necessary to preserve the relationship.

Relationships are some of the best gifts from God. But relationships can go sour. Any relationship can go sour. A careless word. A thoughtless action. An angry moment. A misunderstanding. Sometimes it doesn't take much.

God wants us to have healthy relationships, loving relationships, joy-filled relationships. And so Jesus teaches us what to do when a relationship is threatened.

He says, if someone sins against you, if someone hurts you, if someone lets you down, go to that person and tell that person how you have been hurt. Go to that person - but not in anger. Not in spite. Not with the intent to put that person down. Go to that person with the goal of restoring the relationship. Go to that person with the hope of healing the brokenness.

Go, talk to that person. The two of you alone. Talk. Listen. Try to understand. It may be that in one conversation, the two of you are reconciled. It may take two conversations. Or three. Or four. Or twenty. Or thirty. But the relationship is so important that you must do everything you can to restore it.

Jesus goes on to say that if it becomes evident that the two of you can't work it out alone, involve one or two others. A trusted friend. A respected neighbor. A counselor. Many times a relationship can get stuck and no amount of effort seems to work. A third person can often get the relationship unstuck. A third person can often help the two of you work things out. Again, it may not happen with the first try. Or the second. It may take a number of tries.

And if that doesn't work, then involve still others. Do you see what Jesus is saying? Do you see what he is urging us to do? He is urging us to work on our relationships. He is urging us to do everything possible to have good and wholesome relationships with others, and especially with those who are close to us.

Jesus knows about relationships. He knows how valuable they are. He was willing to give everything for the sake of your relationship with God. He was willing to suffer and die on the cross in order to restore your relationship with God. And because of what he did, a power was released, a power so great nothing can overcome it, a power so great nothing can block it, a power so great nothing can stop it. And that power is the power of forgiveness!

It works with God and it works with the people around you. Because of Jesus, God forgives you. And because of Jesus, God helps you to forgive those who hurt you. With forgiveness in your heart, you can go to the person who has hurt you and you can work on the relationship. And because of Jesus, you can work on the relationship with the confidence that forgiveness can heal and restore and rebuild the broken relationship. And that's the goal! That's what you want to happen.

Jesus teaches us to work on relationships. But as he does, he makes an absolutely awesome promise. He says, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." When you go to the person who has hurt you in the name of Jesus, you don't go alone or only in your own power, but you go with Jesus and with the power of Jesus.

Jesus says, "I am with you. I am Emmanuel. I am God and I am right here with you. I am here to help you, to support you, to empower you. I am here to forgive you and to help you forgive. I am here to heal the hurt and to mend the brokenness and to restore the relationship. I am here to make all things new and right and good. You can do it - because I am with you!"