

Stressed in My Relationships

Core Competency
Kindness/Goodness
Matthew 18:15-20
Galatians 6:1-5
2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Core Competencies

Core Beliefs

- Trinity
- Salvation by Grace
- Authority of Bible
- Personal God
- Identity in Christ
- Church
- Humanity
- Compassion
- Eternity
- Stewardship

Core Practices

- Worship Prayer
- Bible Study
- Single-Mindedness
- Biblical Community
- Spiritual Gifts
- Giving Away My Time
- Giving Away My Money
- Giving Away My Faith
- Giving Away My Life

Core Virtues

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- **Kindness/ Goodness**
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- Hope
- Humility

Dear Friends,

Relational conflict — it can be among the most difficult of all the stresses we face in life. Whether the breakdown occurs between friends or family, co-workers or even casual acquaintances, unresolved conflict tears at our hearts and hurts our soul. God has made us with a longing to live in unity and love — expressed by real people in real and challenging situations. Thankfully, He has also given us instruction and direction to work through and work past challenges and hurts in relationships. I pray that you will take God's Word deeply into your heart and life this week and, where God leads you, make some courageous decisions. Let's live in faith and obedience together!

In His Grace,

Richard Gotthardt

Engaging Our Minds & Hearts

Day 1

Today's Passages:

John 17:20-23, Matthew 18:15-20, Galatians 6:1-5, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Begin your time this week in the study of His Word by asking God to reveal to you those areas of your life that do not match up with His desires and commands. Commit to Him that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, you will walk in obedience to the truths that He reveals to you this week.

This week's study includes three passages that deal with strained or broken relationships. Before we study those, let's take a look at Jesus' prayer for us and our relationships in **John 17:20-23**. What do you see from this prayer concerning God's desire for your relationships? What are our relationships to show to the world?

Read through the passages in Matthew, Galatians, and 2 Corinthians several times. If you have internet capabilities, you can go to www.biblegateway.com to access a variety of versions. As you read, make note of the people involved, the problem and the objective in each instance.

Close your time today in quiet submission before God, allowing Him to apply these basic truths to your heart and life. Allow Him to show you any relationships in your life that need to be brought in line with His revealed will.

Day 2

Today's Passage: Matthew 18

Pray first!

1. Today let's take a more in-depth look at the Matthew passage. Read over the entire chapter of Matthew 18 several times and see if you can detect a "flow" in the teaching. Outline this chapter. Make note of any additional insights you glean regarding relationships and the importance God puts on restoration.

2. If you haven't already done this in your outline, list step by step what your responsibility is when someone has done something that damages the unity of your relationship ("if your brother sins against you").

3. Taking into consideration the context of the entire chapter, what is the desired effect of your actions? What are some of the verbs used in this chapter that give a clue as to the way in which you should deal with a broken relationship.

4. The worst case scenario illustrated in **Matthew 18:15-17** is that your brother refuses to listen to you, to witnesses or to the church. Then we are instructed to treat him as a pagan or a tax collector. Read the following verses. Write down what you learn from Jesus' teachings and examples about what that treatment might "look like."
 - Matthew 5:38-48

 - Matthew 9:10-13

 - Luke 15

Read the following quote. Reflect on what you saw in Matthew 18. What do you see as missing from the church mentioned in this quote?

The Matthew 18 Church

“I worked with a congregation that called itself a “Matthew 18 church.” They said they managed conflict by following the guidelines of Jesus as laid out in Matthew 18. Those guidelines spell out a process whereby a person who has sinned is confronted first by an individual, and if the “sinner” remains unconvinced, then by individuals not involved in the dispute, and if still not convinced, then by the entire congregation.

Unfortunately, this “Matthew 18 church” simply used this method to vent anger at one another. An angry member would seek out a person who annoyed him, berate the person for his rude and thoughtless conduct, and then escape from further conversation. People didn’t seek to understand one another, let alone compromise. It was simply hit and run.”

Mastering Conflict and Controversy, **Edward G. Dobson, Speed B. Leas, Marshall Shelley**,
(Portland: Multnomah Press, 1992), p. 106 ¹

Day 3

Bible Passages: Galatians 6:1-5, Matthew 7:1-5

Pray first!

Today we will concentrate on our core passage from **Galatians 6**. Read through this passage several times. Make a list of all the things “you” are to do.

Read through **Matthew 7:1-5**. Look for any additional insights as to your responsibility in relational conflicts. Now go back to the list you made from Galatians. Apply each of these steps to a personal, specific relationship problem. Write down what you need to do.

¹Galaxie Software. (2002; 2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press.

Day 4

Today's Passage: 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Pray first!

On Day 2, we discovered what our response was to be in the “worst case scenario” if a brother is unresponsive to our attempts at reconciliation. Our passage in **2 Corinthians 2** appears to deal with a “best case scenario” where our brother has been receptive to us.

Read through this passage in your own Bible as well as *The Message* version printed here.

The Message

⁵ Now, regarding the one who started all this—the person in question who caused all this pain—I want you to know that I am not the one injured in this as much as, with a few exceptions, all of you. So I don't want to come down too hard. ⁶ What the majority of you agreed to as punishment is punishment enough. ⁷ Now is the time to forgive this man and help him back on his feet. If all you do is pour on the guilt, you could very well drown him in it. ⁸ My counsel now is to pour on the love. ⁹ The focus of my letter wasn't on punishing the offender but on getting you to take responsibility for the health of the church. ¹⁰ So if you forgive him, I forgive him. Don't think I'm carrying around a list of personal grudges. The fact is that I'm joining in with your forgiveness, as Christ is with us, guiding us. ¹¹ After all, we don't want to unwittingly give Satan an opening for yet more mischief—we're not oblivious to his sly ways!

1. What are the clear instructions from this passage?

2. What are the warnings included in this passage if we fail to follow these instructions?

Day 5

What's Good for the Soul

Forgive and forget. Easier said than done, right? Well, now studies are showing forgiveness is not only good theology, but good medicine as well. According to the latest medical and psychological research, forgiving is good for our souls—and our bodies. People who forgive:

- benefit from better immune functioning and lower blood pressure
- have better mental health than people who do not forgive
- feel better physically
- have lower amounts of anger and fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression
- maintain more satisfying and long-lasting relationships

“When we allow ourselves to feel like victims or sit around dreaming up how to retaliate against people who have hurt us, these thought patterns take a toll on our minds and bodies,” says Michael McCullough, director of research for the National Institute for Healthcare Research and a co-author of *To Forgive is Human: How to Put Your Past in the Past* (IVP, 1997).

Source: InterVarsity Press, quoted in *Lifeline*, Summer, 1997 ²

²Galaxie Software. (2002; 2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press.

The **core competency** we are focusing on this week is the virtue of **kindness/goodness**.

Our **creed** for this virtue says, "I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others."

The **key verse** is **1 Thessalonians 5:15**, "Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else."

As you reflect on the truths you have learned this week regarding our own personal responsibility in restoring broken or strained relationships, how would the virtue of kindness/goodness apply to this area?

At the beginning of the week you were encouraged to pray and ask God to reveal His truth to you and to apply it to your life. You were also encouraged to commit to walk in obedience, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to whatever He would show you. Are there relationships in your life that are strained or broken? What are the steps that God has clearly laid out in His Word as your responsibility to seek restoration? Don't delay in obedience, or it is clear from 2 Corinthians 2:11 you are then allowing Satan to take advantage of you and the broken or strained relationship.

Engage the Context

Matthew 18:15-20

¹⁵"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."

Your brother" reminds us that Jesus is talking about life in the community of His kingdom. He has laid out a full description of this community in the collection of teachings commonly called the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). In this passage Jesus will talk specifically about how sin is to be dealt with in the community.

Verse 15 is the first of a three step process commonly called church discipline. While it is true that this is the process churches should take, we do well to keep in mind that this first step should be carried out by individuals in the community. The ideal is that the following two steps are not needed.

This verse seems to imply that the people in Jesus' community are living in the types of relationships where approaching one another can happen. Jesus is very specific as to the goal of the confrontation: restoration. The goal is not to point out sin.

¹⁶"But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'"

This is the second step in the process. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 19:15 to show the OT background to the process. The appeal to two or three witnesses, with the same OT background in view, is found also in Deuteronomy 26:60 and John 8:17 (cf. Heb 6:18; Rev 11:3).³

³Hagner, D. A. (2002). *Vol. 33B: Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*. Word Biblical Commentary (Page 532). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

Feedback

What is helpful?
What could be better?
What is missing?
Is it helping you be more
prepared for Sunday?

Send your feedback to
engage@gccaz.org

¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

This final stage stands in opposition to the first stage of the process in two ways. In verse 15 the fact it is only one person who confronts is highlighted by Jesus; whereas, in this verse the multitude of “the church” is given emphasis. Also, the result has turned from restoration to excommunication.

Commentators, theologians and churches have long wrestled with exactly what Jesus meant by treating the excommunicated like a pagan or a tax collector. On one hand, Jesus could have meant to not associate with the person as they were unclean and despised by the Jews of Jesus’ day. If this is the case, the church should not let those who are under church discipline take part in services and should not be allowed in community with the believers. On the other hand, Jesus could have meant for the disciplined person to be treated as Jesus treated pagans and tax collectors. Jesus loved and included pagans in the kingdom and dined with Matthew, a tax collector (remember, it is Matthew who wrote this Gospel). Yet Jesus did not assume that such people were part of his community. If this is the case, the church ought to treat the disciplined person as they would any non-believer who walked through the doors.

Galatians 6:1-5

¹Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

Paul has just painted a lofty picture of the Christian life in the previous two chapters and now turns to the very real possibility of sin. Like the previous passage (Matthew 18), the context here is within the church. We should be careful to note that Paul does not have in mind here dealing with people outside of the community.

“Spiritual” are those who have and are led by the Holy Spirit.

“Gently” is more accurately translated, “in a spirit of gentleness.”

²Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Paul is probably referring back to 5:13-14 when he speaks of fulfilling the law of Christ.

2 Corinthians 2:5-11

⁵If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent—not to put it too severely. ⁶The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. ⁷Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. ¹⁰If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, ¹¹in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Many have posed that the offender Paul refers to in this passage is the same man who was having an affair with his step-mother in 1 Corinthians 5. In this passage from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, the church was not saddened and burdened by the sin of this brother, but rather they were arrogant (5:2) and boastful about such license in their midst (5:6). In the present passage apparently the Corinthians have taken the action Paul urged them to take in 1 Corinthians 5. However, now they have taken the discipline too far and are not willing to accept the repentant brother back into their community.