

The Path to Fruitful Relationships

...first be reconciled to thy brother... Mat 5:24

Since we are...

- Created in the image of God
- With emotions - the ability to feel pain, rejection, humiliation, betrayal, injustice, etc.
- Our sense of justice injured; feeling it wasn't fair.

- Unrealistic expectations
- Conflicting goals
- Complex personalities
- Sarcastic comments
- All forms of abuse

Fallen nature

FRUITS

ROOTS

- Ministry of Encouragement
- Sympathy and empathy
- Tenderness to the hurting
- Sensitivity to others hurts

- Spiritual growth
- Assurance
- Fresh vision of God's forgiveness
- Freedom of spirit

- A Christian witness
- Deepening respect
- Tolerance and forbearance
- Growth in perspective
- Agree on common goals

- Communication is easy. Mistakes are allowed. Trust is evident.
- Treasuring communication opportunities with each other
- Sharing compliments about each other

HURTS

Stages of a hurt

- Loss and denial
- Anger - turned outward - turned inward
- Genuine grief
- Acceptance

FORGIVENESS

- A personal choice made alone
- A reflection on one's Christian maturity
- Faith - seeing God
- Humility - having a moderate opinion of ones self
- Trust in God - He allowed it for my good

RECONCILIATION

- A collective choice made together
- Agreeing on what we disagreed about
- Finding common ground
- Agreeing to mutual respect
- Genuine apologies

TRUST

- Willingness to invest in each other
- Vulnerability
- Accepting hurts without personal offense
- Agree to talk out conflicts

Resentment - choosing to feel the pain over and over again → Increased sensitivity to hurts. Suspicious, cynical, alienated, alone. Tempted to plot revenge. → Finding comfort in wrong sources. Justifying pleasure in sins. Addictions become a way of life.

life.” Rom 5:10

And yet, when we are deeply grieved it is easy for us to lose sight of the fact that He has done more to reconcile us to Himself than we will ever have to do for others.

From the out-start, let us observe that God does not command that we trust everyone, not even all of the brethren in the church. But this is the Biblical ideal and we should do all we humanly can to achieve this ideal.

Since we are... and so begins our journey with our feelings. God could have created us as the animals (and possibly the angels). We are not told whether either of these created classes have emotions or that they are created in the image of God, but we are. God feels pleasure and He experiences pain. Will He in eternity in the future? We don't know. We know our ability to feel pain is limited to the here and now. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Rev 21:4

Our pain is increased because of the presence of sin and our own fallen nature. Each of us has unrealistic expectations and the tendency to misunderstand each other. Each of us has a very selfish nature that has the capacity to injure others all the while not even realizing what we are doing.

Hurts are real. While hurts may not be measurable by any physical standard, emotional wounds are undeniable.

All emotional injury brings a package of adjustment along with it. First we are stunned by what seems to come from nowhere and impulsively deny it has even happened. Eventually we come to accept it as fact, a new reality.

Hurts have the potential of bringing character development and growth. But this only comes when a person chooses to accept the wound as being from a loving heavenly Father.

Resentment (literally re-feel) is the choice to experience the hurt over again instead of letting it

go. This only increases the pain and damage of the original hurt until it destroys all purpose for living.

Forgiveness is the divine answer to hurts. When a person's roots go down deep into a relationship with God, then the fruits of forgiveness become a powerful witness of the blessing of God in one's life. Forgiveness is a personal journey, it is not accomplished between the wounded and the offender. It is accomplished when the wounded finds divine grace from his God.

Reconciliation can only happen when two sincere followers of Christ choose to keep their eyes on the big picture. If either one refuses to take responsibility for his part, or refuses to lay down charges, then reconciliation comes to a standstill. In Mat 5:24, the word “reconcile” comes from a Greek word meaning to “change completely.” If either party is determined not to budge in the relationship, the progress will stall.

Trust is the ultimate goal for relationships between all believers. Trust comes when people genuinely care for the well being of each other. It has fragile roots, but followers of Jesus will remember that Jesus did far more for us in opening the door for us when all we had ever proved is that we were selfish and willing to take advantage of every opportunity for our own purposes.

Jesus' path for fruitful relationships is an unnatural one. It isn't natural for people to use deep hurts as a way to become sensitive and caring for others. It isn't natural for people to forgive, and be sweet and loving to those who have selfishly used them. It isn't natural for two brothers who have felt deeply betrayed by each other to work toward a common understanding and working relationship. It doesn't make sense for someone who has been taken advantage of to lay down all defenses and work with his former enemy. But Jesus still works miracles today, give Him the opportunity to work in your life.

~ H. Stephen Ebersole

“...First Be Reconciled to thy Brother...”

Matthew 5:24c

Finding Jesus' Path to Fruitful Relationships

Mark 9:50 “...have peace one with another.”

Romans 12:10 “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love...”

Romans 12:17-18 “Recompense to no man evil for evil...Live peaceably with all men.”

2 Corinthians 13:11 “...be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace...”

One writer wrote that he loves mankind; it's just people he has problem appreciating. Another poet came up with the following lines.

“To dwell above with the saints we love,

Oh that will be glory.

But to live below, with the saints we know—

Well that's a different story!

All of us struggle with relationships at some level. This little handout is intended to trace the journey from hurts (whether they be petty annoyances to deep and bitter grievances) all the way to reconciliation and trust.

It is not right for Jesus' followers to forsake His answers for relationship problems, nor to settle for less than the end goal which He has designed for His disciples – reconciliation and trust.

As Christians, we acknowledge we owe all we have to God for His efforts to provide reconciliation for us. Paul says it this way, “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his