

Why Can't We Just Get Along?

FAMILY THEME: Broken Relationships STUDY TEXT: Matthew 18:15-20; Luke 15:11-19
November 4, 2018

Matthew 18:15

Be ready to seek resolution when relationship issues arise. Rather than sulk over an offense or complain about it to someone else, we must go to the person and tell them how we have been harmed. We should do this, however, understanding that often a perceived offense is not an actual offense—it is a misunderstanding or confusion about the facts. When we go and talk to a person about a perceived offense, we have the opportunity to clear up the issue and mend the relationship. Jesus also said to begin by talking to the person alone. We don't talk to a person about an offense in front of others (or via email by copying the entire office) because that leads to escalation rather than calming the concerns. Today, fewer people are willing to talk to someone about how they have been offended. Perhaps they are afraid of being misrepresented if the issue is not resolved well. When we confront someone privately, there is a danger of the interaction being misrepresented later, but it is necessary if resolution is our goal. Jesus reminded us that our goal should be to restore fellowship with our brother. When we keep the goal of gaining our brother in mind, we are better prepared to have the right kind of body language and voice tone that will increase the likelihood of success in mending the relationship. **Discussion:**

- Why is it often difficult to confront another brother or sister?
- What should be the goal of talking with someone who has wronged us, and how will that goal affect the way we handle the confrontation?

Luke 15:11-19

Behave biblically when working through relationship issues. Perhaps the most popular example of the reconciliation of a broken relationship is that of the Prodigal Son and his father. Reconciliation was possible because both individuals worked through the issue biblically. The Prodigal Son realized and acknowledged his offense (Luke 15:17-18). He rehearsed how he would repent to his father (Luke 15:18). He realized that because of his offense he was no longer worthy to be called his father's son (Luke 15:19). He would no longer demand his position. This is where many who have offended others go wrong. For example, sometimes an individual who engages in an affair appears to have repented and then demands that the offended spouse receive the offender back as if the offense never happened. This was not the attitude of the Prodigal Son. The Prodigal Son acted upon his plan to seek forgiveness from his father by going to him and admitting his offense (Luke 15:20-21). The father (the offended party) had compassion upon him, received him and brought him back into the fold (Luke 15:22-24). This kind of reception is possible when someone is truly repentant, as the prodigal was, and not demanding a position. The prodigal's father made it easy for the reconciliation to take place by receiving the son. It is unlikely that the father brought up the offense repeatedly as the years went by or gossiped to others about his son. **Discussion:**

- What can the offended and the offender glean from this story?
- How is humility important to this process?

Matthew 18:15-20; Luke 15:20-25

Follow biblical guidelines when dealing with broken relationships. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians he stressed the importance of believers resolving their own differences rather than going to court (1 Corinthians 6:1-11). Rather than going our own way or following conventional wisdom it is best to follow biblical guidelines in dealing with broken relationships. If you have a grievance policy at your place of work, think about that process. You might find that it is similar to the biblical guidelines—go to the person who has offended, involve others if that does not work. It is interesting that so many of these procedures seem to follow the biblical model. Why? Because it works! **Discussion:**

- How would you explain the biblical guidelines for addressing broken relationships to a coworker who is at odds with a family member?
- How does our attitude come into play when dealing with broken relationships?