

Home Improvement Series: Building Healthy Relationships
Part Five: “Restoring Broken Relationships”
Pastor Dale Campfield - July 25th, 2010

Intro:

Matt 28:19 *“Go and make disciples of all nations...”*

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow... which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

We’re currently in sermon series entitled, “Home Improvement”. This series is all about Building Healthy Relationships. Thanks to Pastor John Baird for preaching for me last week while Butch and I were in Hawaii, celebrating our 30 year anniversary. He did a great job!

I would encourage you to be following along with us in our WARRANTY booklets. The WARRANTY is filled with four scriptures from God’s Word each week for you to memorize.

Today we’re going to talk about **“Restoring Broken Relationships”**

Our two theme texts are...

Philippians 2:2

“Live together in harmony and love, as though you only had one mind and spirit between you.”

God’s ideal for your relationships, whether you’re married or not (even if you’re not married you’re going to get a lot out of this series because it’s about relationships) is harmony, intimacy (love) and unity (one mind). The reality is that a lot of our relationships are disharmony, conflict and disappointment.

Ephesians 4:3

“Make every one of you keep the unity of the Spirit.”

Illus: Truck Stop / Driver / Bikers

Late one summer evening in Broken Bow, Nebraska, a weary truck driver pulled his rig into an all-night truck stop. The waitress had just served him when three tough looking, leather jacketed motorcyclist- of the Hell’s Angels type- decided to give him a hard time. Not only did they verbally abuse him, one grabbed the hamburger off his plate, another took a handful of his french fries, and the third picked up his coffee and began to drink it.

How do you think he responded? He calmly rose, picked up the check, walked to the front of the room, put the check and his money on the cash register, and went out the door. The waitress followed him to put the money in the till and stood watching out the door as the big truck drove away into the night.

When she returned, one of the bikers said to her, “Well, he’s not much of a man, is he?” She replied, “I don’t know about that, but he sure ain’t much of a truck driver. He just ran over three motorcycles on his way out of the parking lot.”

Many of us may understand how this truck driver feels. It is hard to be nice to some people. The gospel teaches us that I have an obligation to every person, not just to the people who are nice. In our series on Home Improvement, as we work on Building Healthy Relationships we will look at passages this morning where Jesus instructs his disciples on how to heal a broken relationship God's way.

Our world is littered with broken relationships. We have them in our families between husbands and wives, parents and children. We face them between employers and employees, with neighbors, different ethnic and social groups, between nations. What is the solution? Is there a way to repair the breach, to rebuild the bridge, to restore the relationship? I believe God gives us a vital keys or steps to restore broken relationships.

QUESTION: What are some of the causes of broken relationships?

A. Unkind Words Spoken

Often times our words will hurt in ways that we'll never know. An unkind word of harshness or a word spoken out of anger; or even words spoken just to "get even". Sometimes, our words are spoken to each other and these words linger for years; often a lifetime. Can you remember in your life some of the words that were spoken to you that affected you? Maybe when you were younger and your parents said something to you that cut you to the quick. Have you ever been "stabbed in the back" with someone's words?

B. Breaking of a Promise

There have been many people that have been separated because of the breaking of a promise from one to the next. When we break a promise, which is basically not following through with what we say, we're driving a wedge between us and the other person. It could even be when a family member lends money to another, promising to pay it back, and it never happens. It may be lending something to someone with the plan to get it back, and it never appears again. Broken promises divide. A promise is a covenant; covenants are not to be broken. It could be when your father promised he'd be there for your little league game and never showed up.

C. Wounding Actions

The actions of one to another can be wounding; when one "stabs" another in the back with their actions or deeds done. The purposeful actions of another to cause harm to another.

D. Simple Misunderstandings

Misunderstandings happen all of the time. The problem with them is when the misunderstanding is not addressed. We can't let these misunderstandings keep us from having a healthy relationship. Sometimes we get hurt from another individual and they don't even know it; because we may have misunderstood their words or actions.

E. Non Reciprocal Behavior

By this I mean you do something nice for someone, over and over and over again and they never return the kindness. It's a one way relationship of kindness and generosity from your end and they never return the blessings. This can cause bitterness and hard feelings and lead to a broken relationship.

F. Broken Confidences

When a friend or family breaks a confidence in you, that separates you. When you trust someone to tell them something, and they tell someone else after being asked not to, it divides. You have to be able to count on that person to hold that confidence. When you say, "please keep this in confidence, or keep this

confidential”, you’re saying “I have confidence in you that you won’t tell anybody else.” When that is broken, your confidence in that person is broken.

- **All of these boil down to one thing: Lack of TRUST**

You no longer have trust in that person because of what has taken place. You obviously once had a relationship with him/her, but due to the different things that are listed above, the trust level that you had with each other is now broken. Trust in a relationship is huge – without it, the relationship will not survive. Have you ever stopped seeing a doctor because you said you don’t trust him/her? Have you ever lost trust in someone?

If I can’t trust Butch and if she can’t trust me, then our relationship will be divided and we’ll eventually fall apart completely. Trust is huge!

- **VIDEO illus: on trust**

Can you imagine a marriage without trust? If one spouse cannot trust the other, will either one ever be comfortable in their relationship? What would happen in a family where the parents refused to trust their children? Would they ever leave the house? What if your boss didn’t trust you to do your job? How long would you stay at job where your supervisor stood right behind you all day? How long can two people stay friends if they don’t trust each other?

Trust remains one of the most important elements in a relationship. Without trust in your relationship, failure is sure to follow. Trust in a relationship gives you a measure of peace and calmness that leads to satisfaction and security. So, how do we go about rebuilding that trust? What steps can we take that will help to restore that broken relationship? Here are a few ways to rebuild the trust lost in your relationship; to restore that broken relationship.

Question: What does trusting someone signify?

Answer: “Trust, in a practical sense, means that you place confidence in someone to be honest with you, faithful to you, keep promises, vows and confidences and not abandon you.”

STEPS TO RESTORE TRUST IN A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP

Step 1: CHOOSE TO FORGIVE

Forgiveness is huge. As well, forgiveness is a choice; it’s a choice that we make. Some think that forgiveness is instantaneous, but I think that it takes time. We can choose to forgive, but it takes time to actually walk in that heart of forgiveness. For me, I have found that when I’ve been hurt by someone else, I actually say the words, “I choose to forgive so and so...”. I make that statement every time I feel the hurt, the hard feelings, the pain, etc. that the person caused me. “I choose to forgive them.” It’s a choice we must make; and if we don’t forgive, then we can’t be forgiven ourselves.

Forgiveness is not easy - you can decide to forgive someone and you can make it happen - it's a conscious choice that we make and it's not some magical insight that floats down on a glittering shower of gold - it's a conscious choice

The ability to forgive is rooted in being forgiven ourselves. In the Bible it says that God loves the world so much that he sent his only son so that we could be forgiven. As people we all make mistakes, not one of us can live up to the standard God set on our own. But God promises that if we accept what Jesus did for us, we can be forgiven.

The slate can be wiped clean no matter what has happened in the past. God promises us strength for today and bright hope for the future. Whatever happened in your yesterdays God can take care of all of your tomorrows.

Matthew 6:14-15

“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

Most will never ask to be forgiven, but you must forgive or bitterness will poison you. A resentful, grudge-bearing spirit can drive us to do strange things. Not long ago a man was divorced by his wife and the court ordered him to pay a certain amount of alimony and child-support every month-and he grudgingly paid it in nickels. Every time his alimony and child-support payment came due, 160 pounds of nickels landed at his wife’s door. Another divorced man was ordered by the court to equally divide all the joint-property of his broken marriage with his ex-wife. He chose to do so with a chain-saw. As his neighbors looked on, he carefully measured the \$100,000 suburban home that he and his wife had lived in for several years. When he found the precise mid-point of the home, he revved up his chain-saw and proceeded to cut his own home-floor, walls, ceiling, and roof-precisely in half.

Step 2: CONFRONT IN LOVE

Confront, in love, those things you can’t just overlook. There are times when you can just deal with it between you and God and let it go. You walk in forgiveness and let it go. But there are also times with you need to confront that person and deal with the issue at hand. There are issues that will heal with time; and then there are issues that must be dealt with. When your brother offends you in some way, you must talk with him/her.

Some relationships remain broken because the parties are not willing to confront each other to deal with the issue. They just let it go; and often times they end up talking with someone else about it and it gets even worse!

Matthew 18:15-17

“If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If that person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. If the church decides you are right, but the other person won’t accept it, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.”

-It will come out if not, in gossip, or angry outburst. (Like Mom’s pressure cooker that built up pressure, but didn’t keep a lid on it-resulting in soup on ceiling.)

If you can’t overlook, and or forgive than you must confront.

In a church I know well one lady slapped another ladies child in the nursery. When the lady found out about it she was furious, but she didn’t want to say anything. Her pastor encouraged her to talk to the other lady about what had happened. When she confronted her in love, the other lady apologized and tears of reconciliation flowed. If she had not confronted as the bible directs the relationship would have stayed broken.

Step 3: TAKE THE TIME

If you broke the trust: Understand that it is not as simple as telling someone to trust you again especially if you have severely wounded that person's heart causing them not to trust you. In order for these words to have meaning, your actions must work in harmony with your words. Yes this may very well mean you have to give up a little more of your privacy than you are comfortable with. If the person in the relationship means anything to you, and rebuilding the trust in your relationship is important, you gladly sacrifice your privacy. It's going to take time for you to gain the trust of your friend or family member. Let it take the time that it needs.

If someone broke your trust: you've got to give it time as well; but remember, the longer it takes, the longer you're separated, the longer the division between you. But you both must realize that it will take time to rebuild that trust factor.

Matthew 18:21-22

"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'"

Step 4: ADJUST YOUR EXPECTATIONS

People are human, frail, and sinful. Therefore, **you need a realistic type of trust when you choose to trust someone.** Trusting grows in relationships over time because as you spend time together with someone you build knowledge, understanding and authenticity. You gain insight into another person's character, needs, motivations and fears.

Sometimes, we expect more from a friendship that we should be expecting. Sometimes we end up putting our trust more in man than we do in God. We're expecting something from man that truly only God can fulfill.

When Butch and I got married, I knew I could trust her; but I can't expect her to fulfill all of my desires, needs, expectations, etc. all of the time. I'm setting her and myself up for failure if I do that. But I can put my full expectation in God!

Quote: "Trusting another person requires a realistic perspective about people and an expectation of failure."

Romans 3:23

"For all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God."

All of us miss it once in a while. No one is perfect!

Step 5: LOOK AT YOURSELF

Take a look at yourself as well. You will never be perfect and therefore, you will probably disappoint your loved one as well. You can promise to never say something hurtful or never tell a lie or never exaggerate or always keep your promises or (you name it) but since you are human you will also make mistakes and disappoint that person. **The only thing you or your loved one can promise is to grow, to seek God and ask Him for strength to change.** Then you and your loved one will become more trustworthy in your relationships, though you will never be perfect.

Romans 12:3

"Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us."

Every human relationship will suffer hurt. Thus, we all need to become better forgivers and confessors. That ability to reconcile and spirit of humbleness will prove the depth of your love and commitment.

Take responsibility for your own actions; when we're hurt we want to lash out - acknowledge that and pull back - when you say something that hurts your spouse, family member or friend - even in reaction, you can apologize for it.

The components of love, forgiveness and commitment are as necessary to trust in a relationship as is honesty. Forgiveness gives you the chance to start over and trust another fallible human being again. Love helps to nourish trust. Commitment and honesty provide accountability to one another. But even as we do these things, we must consistently have our eyes upon ourselves trying to see if there is anything that we're doing that we can change or grow in.

Step 6: CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOTS

As you are taking a look at yourself, realize that we all have blind spots. You must, check your blind spots; which means you need to have someone point them out for you. Find someone in your life that will speak the truth to you and hit you with that truth, even if it hurts. Find someone who will point out the blind spots of your relationship and ask them to show you when you're missing it.

Think of the blind spots when you drive or when you're hunting with a rifle and scope. You can see your target, but you can't see what's around you. When driving, you can see what's in front of you, but not what's beside you. Have someone close to you that will do this for you and your relationships.

Proverb 27:6

"Wounds from a friend can be trusted..."

This scripture is about the fact that sometimes your true friends will speak such truth to you that it hurts; but you can still trust them.

CREATE A SAFETY NET

This could be another step completely, but I'm going to combine it with the blind spot step. However, the blind spot person is someone who helps you personally, but the safety net people are those people in your life that help both of you. They are there for both of you in the broken relationship.

You need to create a safety net; a safety net of people; and safety net of a safe environment. An environment that is conducive for healthy conversation, and those people whom you both trust that can add that extra measure of accountability to your relationship. Just as a trapeze artist uses a safety net to practice his skills, rebuilding trust in a relationship needs to have a measure of safety given to it. For some of you, you need extra help, you need a professional counselor, friend or even doctor to help you with the brokenness of your relationship.

It's not always possible to work things out on your own; that's why you need to get help. Create a safe place with safe people that you can talk and work through the issues of your relationship.

Create an environment for your partner that makes them feel safe in your presence. Make the effort to reveal who you truly are so that your partner feels they also know your character. This makes your partner feels safe because she now is aware of how you react to different feelings, such as when you are tired, frustrated and even scared. When she knows this beforehand, she does not become frighten when she see these behaviors, rather she realizes what is going on with you is temporary and backs off.

Also, within your safety net, it's a great idea to Set goals - talk to your spouse or person that you have the broken relationship with and set the goals together - they don't have to be huge - they can be daily goals - but the sheer act of working together can foster positive feelings between you.

Step 7: TELL THE TRUTH

Tell the truth. You may have fallen in a pattern of lying to cover up your wrongdoing. Continuing on this path will come to no good. When asked a question be as truthful in your answer as you humanly can. The truth may or may not meet with your partner's approval, yet necessary to rebuilding trust in your relationship.

If you're going to rebuild and restore a broken relationship, it must be built on truth. Without truth, there will never be a solid foundation in which you can build on. Truth must be at the forefront of every relationship. If your relationship is built on lies, it will crumble. That's probably why your relationship is broken even now? So begin to tell the truth and nothing but the truth!

Let go of the secrecy. It is not worth it to continue keeping secrets from your spouse or friendships, besides it takes a tremendous amount of effort to keep them from surfacing. Hold on to this important thought. Secrets kill trust, and when trust dies, so does your relationship.

Sometimes, we think its okay and if we omit part of our story; at least we're not lying, we're just not telling everything. Eventually, it's all going to come out anyway; so stop holding back secrets.

Butch and I decided long ago that we would not keep secrets from each other but be upfront about everything and as honest as possible with no hiding of the truths.

Proverbs 11:3

"Honesty guides good people; dishonesty destroys treacherous people."

Step 8: DECLARE POSITIVE PRAYERS

When you think about the person that you have broken relationship with, begin to pray for them. When you pray for them, pray and declare the blessings of God upon them.

Matthew 5:43-44

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

This text is true; we've got to bless those who give us grief, who harm us, who hurt us, who break our hearts and destroy our lives. Prayers of blessings! Sometimes we want to call down fire from heaven and see them burned up! But, that is not the reality of what we should be doing; not by any stretch of the imagination. We must bless them.

The law of sowing and reaping comes into affect here. If you sow blessings, you'll reap blessings. What goes around comes around. It's a law of God.

Step 9: TRUST GOD COMPLETELY

There's no magic machine, you don't put in a quarter and out drops a can of trust — trust grows over time. People are complex, broken beings therefore, previous hurts, fears or losses can impede their determination to trust and/or be truthful in a relationship. But, people have the capacity and the ability to change and to grow in trust and truthfulness. You can rebuild trust in broken relationships when you make a choice to do so with the supernatural help of God.

I have learned over the years that the more I can put my trust in God, the more I can love people; and the more I can love them unconditionally. Unconditional love develops trust because as you express this kind of love towards someone — generally he or she will sense your acceptance and feel comfortable to be vulnerable and honest about their feelings. Unconditional love actually

builds self-esteem in others and alleviates their fears of rejection. People learn that they can be authentic with you about their feelings, opinions, and failures. The result is a growing trust in the other person. Not because that person is perfect but because that person is growing in honesty.

Unconditional love is patient and kind. It is not self-seeking. It does not keep a record of wrongs. When love is not patient or enduring; when love is unforgiving and always disappointed or looking for something to go wrong, it generates fear and looks for imperfections in the other person. **Fear-based love is conditional creating an atmosphere of distrust, dishonesty and instability.**

Psalm 71:5

“For you are my hope, O Lord God; I have had faith in you from the time when I was young.”

Step 10: LET IT GO

Sometimes, you just have to let it go. You can be right, but if you’re rude, you’re wrong. Is the issue that you’re dealing with in that relationship worth destroying the relationship over? Ask yourself when dealing with the issues; is it worth the end of this relationship?

Forgiveness doesn’t mean forgetting, but it means not bringing it up or holding it against the person. You’ve got to be able to let it go.

Don’t nag and complain, drop it and go on with life. It reminds me of a bad call in a football game or something. After the game, after the call, let it go; or it will eat at you. Don’t Nag or Harp on it. The fact is, if we want to keep the relationship, We have to learn to live with some things we can’t change. You don’t have to agree in order to reconcile. You may agree to disagree, but the relationship is reconciled in spite of the disagreement in this one area.

Even if you do all the right things, and use all the right channels there is no guarantee you will get a resolution of the problem. Let go of the past. When you obsess over each insult, each act, each thing done wrong - you are not giving yourself time to heal from it. You need to heal in order to begin to trust again.

Check out these scriptures...

Proverbs 17:9

“Overlook an offense and bond a friendship; fasten on to a slight and - good-bye, friend!”

Proverbs 19:11

“A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.”

Conclusion:

Relationships are important. They are important to God and his kingdom, and they are important to our spiritual and emotional health. God does not allow us to discard relationships that don't make us happy like disposable things. We are not permitted to use relationships, and then dispose of them, and go find another. We are required to reconcile the relationship if at all possible.

Here are some tips for helping restore broken relationships.

Pray first. When we talk to others about broken relationships, we tend to gossip. When we talk to God and ask his help, we work toward fixing the relationship.

Go first. It doesn't matter if you did it or they did it to you, we need to be the first one working toward getting it made right. (Humble yourself)

Think about them. Try to see it from their point of view. Arguments take two people, and you may both be right and wrong about some things.

Admit you did it too. Don't wait to see what they do, if you were in the wrong, even a little, admit what you did wrong.

Go after the problem. Don't bring up the past. Don't bring up new things. Don't insult the person. Just try to fix the real problem that got you here.

Cooperate. Don't try to fix unimportant things. Worry about the big stuff, and just try to get along when you don't see eye to eye.

Try to get back together, not get even. Marriages, friendships, even churches tend to split over little things. Work on living in peace, not trying to find out where someone is wrong and making that an issue. If they are wrong, try to work on that peaceably. Don't say, "I told you so" if they ever learn that they are wrong.

Know. Relationships are worth restoring.

Remember. "Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody." -Romans 12.18 Think about it. What relationship in my life is broken, and what do I need to do to get it right TODAY?

If you have someone in your life that you need to have a relationship restored with; do it now. Don't wait. They need you and you need them.

And as you do... You watch... you wait... you'll see! A healthy relationship will come forth!