

Heart attitude #4: I will clear up relationships

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23-24

Concept: We are called to live in fellowship with one another. When you are living in community, being open and honest, and sharing life with other people your relationships can get messy. In fact, all relationships are messy. Many people bail out when relationships get hard, but God has called us to a higher standard. As followers of Jesus we are called to examine our relationships and make sure that there aren't any wrongs, hurts or misunderstandings left unattended to with others. When someone wrongs you (or you wrong them), we are called to go back and reconcile that relationship.

Reconciliation allows us to restore broken fellowship with our brother or sister. Instead of leaving things to get worse, we can clear things up and have a clean slate. It's important to learn to keep a "short account". The Bible tells us that we are to love one another. Part of love is not keeping a record of wrong things a person has done. Instead, as soon as someone has wronged us (or we have wronged them) we go to that person *seeking to restore* the relationship. When we have clear relationships we are free to worship God with a clear conscience.

It can be really difficult to clear up relationships, because we aren't sure how the other person will respond. Or maybe we just think it's unfair that we have to be the one to clear it up when they wronged us. We are still responsible to do what the Bible says, so if you know of something that needs to be cleared up then you are responsible to do so. When we live this way we show the world that in the Kingdom of God we handle our relationships differently than movies, TV or the latest magazine tells us to. We put on display for the world around us the unconditional love of God when we consider the relationships God has given us worthy of clearing up. Rather than ditching people at the first sign of conflict, we fight for unity and peace in our relationships showing the world the kindness, love and grace that God Himself has shown to us.

Week One

Biblical Basis: What do these verses say about relationships?

Psalms 133

Matthew 6:14-15

Matthew 18:15-35

Galatians 6:1-2

Colossians 3:12-14

1 Timothy 5:19-20

Mark 11:25

Titus 3: 9-11

Luke 17:1-4

Romans 12:9-10,14-21

2 Corinthians 2:5-11

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

Illustrations:

Kleenex friendships-

You will need a tissue & a handkerchief

How do you see your relationships: a Kleenex or a handkerchief? Our friendships are NOT to "blow your nose in" obviously, but both of these get pretty...messy at times. What's the difference? With a Kleenex you use it and throw it away, but with a handkerchief you go back and clean it up. Our relationships can get messy, but we are not to throw them away and just grab at someone else you can use until it gets hard. We are called to love and

value the relationships God gives us so that they are lasting and show the world what it looks like to be unified in Christ.

Wounded-

Say you get a splinter in your hand...it hurts and you know you need to get it out, but instead you just let it go; try to ignore it. Eventually, the area around it gets red, maybe a little puffy, because there is something in there that needs OUT! If you leave it in too long what could have been taken care of quickly is now infected and causing you more and more pain each day. Eventually you will need to see medical attention due to something that could have been removed quickly if you had attended to it quickly.

Sometimes it may seem uncomfortable to clear up a relationship, (and it may well be!) but its much easier and healthier if you clear things up quickly rather than waiting. It will only cause you more stress and hurt if you let things linger. Eventually you may lose the relationship completely which could be completely avoided if you commit to clearing up your relationships from the beginning.

Personal experience-

Can you think of a time that you have been hurt or offended? Did that person clear it up with you? If so, how did that make you feel? How did it help your relationship? If not, how was that relationship affected?

Homework: Do a word study on forgiveness. What does Gods Word say about forgiving people? How does this differ from what books, TV, & movies tell us in our culture?

Clear Up Relationships
From "Bicycle for Life" by Harold Bullock

Matt 5:23-24; Eph 4:31-32; Acts 24:16; Phil 4:2-3; Tim 1:18-19; Matt 6:14-15; Rom 12:18

The **responsibility** lies with you.

❖ If you are unsure if there is a problem, explore:

· "I was wondering if I have done something to offend you. If I have I certainly would like to make it right. Have I done something wrong or out of bounds?"

❖ When you realize you have done wrong, regardless the other persons response (right or wrong) to you, you need to **ask forgiveness** for what you did.

· Don't blame.

· Don't say "If I offended you, I'm sorry."

· You can say "What I did was wrong. Will you forgive me?" Then **wait** until they respond.

· If you should make restitution, do so—pay back money, fix what was broken, etc.

❖ If you are asked for forgiveness, **forgive them.**

· Forgiveness is a commitment not to blame the other person any more, to release them from blame, and to not bring up the matter and rehearse it in your own mind again.

· Forgive and forget does not work:

· You will occasionally remember the offense, but you must not dwell on it and the hurt from it.

· When it comes up in your mind, declare out loud: *That is forgiven. I will no longer dwell on it.*

· Then turn your mind to the greatness of God's forgiveness of you.

❖ Because you are forgiven, you are **required** to forgive.

If the person will not forgive you, accept the situation and pray for them over time.

· Make sure that the lack of forgiveness is not due to your attitude or refusal to make restitution.

If the person is out of touch, pray for an opportunity think about what you will say. Take the opportunity when God provides.

❖ Do not commit confessions to writing (letter); a phone call or personal contact is better.

Answer the following questions:

I have been failing clear up relationships by....

I have been clearing up relationships by...

I plan to increase my participation in clearing up relationships by...

Clear Up Relationships
From "Bicycle for Life" by Harold Bullock

Matt 5:23-24; Eph 4:31-32; Acts 24:16; Phil 4:2-3; Tim 1:18-19; Matt 6:14-15; Rom 12:18

The _____ lies with you.

❖ If you are unsure if there is a problem, explore:

· "I was wondering if I have done something to offend you. If I have I certainly would like to make it right. Have I done something wrong or out of bounds?"

❖ When you realize you have done wrong, regardless the other persons response (right or wrong) to you, you need to _____ for what you did.

· Don't blame.

· Don't say "If I offended you, I'm sorry."

· You can say "What I did was wrong. Will you forgive me?" Then _____ until they respond.

· If you should make restitution, do so—pay back money, fix what was broken, etc.

❖ If you are asked for forgiveness, _____.

· Forgiveness is a commitment not to blame the other person any more, to release them from blame, and to not bring up the matter and rehearse it in your own mind again.

· Forgive and forget does not work:

· You will occasionally remember the offense, but you must not dwell on it and the hurt from it.

· When it comes up in your mind, declare out loud: *That is forgiven. I will no longer dwell on it.*

· Then turn your mind to the greatness of God's forgiveness of you.

❖ Because you are forgiven, you are _____ to forgive.

If the person will not forgive you, accept the situation and pray for them over time.

· Make sure that the lack of forgiveness is not due to your attitude or refusal to make restitution.

If the person is out of touch, pray for an opportunity think about what you will say. Take the opportunity when God provides.

❖ Do not commit confessions to writing (letter); a phone call or personal contact is better.

Answer the following questions:

I have been failing clear up relationships by....

I have been clearing up relationships by...

I plan to increase my participation in clearing up relationships by...

Week 2

Review "Clearing Up Conflict" sheet & talk about word study on forgiveness.

When clearing things up:

1. Pray

a. Spend time asking God what He would like you to communicate to this person. Take time to remember that this is Gods child you are going to be talking to.

2. Go in a spirit of humility

3. Confess YOUR sin, not theirs

- a. if they have done something to hurt you talk about how you responded & how what happened made you feel. You cannot make them apologize. Your goal is to restore the relationship, not accuse them. Settle in your own heart that you are seeking to restore regardless of their response.
4. If after trying to clear up the relationship there is increasing conflict; ask a wise mentor (not just your friend or someone who will take your side) to be a mediator for you.

Remember your motive: **RESTORATION**. The main goal of clearing up relationships is to restore the broken relationship. Is your goal in approaching this person to allow God to put back together what is broken? When you approach a situation with this in mind you are thinking of what's best for the other person AND the Kingdom of God. If your goal is to win, be right, or prove them wrong, then you should STOP and PRAY! This causes division among people, it quenches the Holy Spirit (He cannot work in or through you) and ultimately ruins the reputation of the Kingdom of God and your testimony as His ambassador.

Debriefing Questions:

1. Why does clearing up a relationship make you feel uncomfortable?
2. What prevents you from clearing up relationships?
3. Do you value your relationships enough to clear them up, even if it's hard?
4. What relationship do you need to go clear up?
5. Would you want God to forgive you the way you forgive people?
6. Do you see your friendships as "Kleenex friendships", something you can use and just throw away or do you want to fight to have good, God-honoring friendships?
7. What are the results when you don't clear up relationships?
8. How does clearing up relationships relate to the 1st three heart attitudes?
 - a. **You have to think of the other person, not just your own feelings; it requires a level of openness & honesty; it's easier to approach someone you know will receive it rather than get defensive; you're looking out for the interests of others, etc.**