

Building Bridges Restoring Relationships

A few weeks ago I was reading an article about the Iraq War. It talked about the weapons of mass destruction that were in Iraq and then weren't there in Iraq and now there is evidence that they were actually there in Iraq, even when people were saying that they never existed. Within the article it made references to some of the satellite guided missiles that we used during the war. It then showed a picture that I remember from the conflict of a tank that was hidden under a bridge. The next image showed a missile going under the bridge, blowing up the tank and doing no damage to the bridge. As I looked at those pictures I decided that that was an image of what I want us to focus on this morning. You see relationships are a lot like bridges. They are built intentionally. Relationships – like bridges – are weakened by stress and often need to be reinforced. Relationships and bridges can collapse because of neglect. All around us and probably even among us today are some relationships that have been weakened; need to be reinforced or have already collapsed. My intention this morning is not to heap guilt on us, we have probably already done that to ourselves. My intention is to show us from God's Word that there is a way to restore relationships, but understand it is not nor will it ever be easy, because it requires a word that's hard to swallow. The word is "Humility."

1 Peter 5:5 "...clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." NIV

That my friends is a tough set of clothes to put on because it deals with the issue of pride – and we all understand that because it hits us right in the gut.

Proverbs 13:10 "Pride only breeds quarrels..." NIV

Proverbs 16:18 "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." NIV

James 4:10 "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." NIV

Proverbs 15:33 "The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor." NIV

There are over 150 verses in the Bible that deal with aspects of pride and humility. What that tells us is that God takes the subject very seriously. God promises to bless our lives when we build humility into our lives. The problem that we face though is that humility cannot be developed by seeking it. As soon as we think that we're humble – than we probably are not. Humility is an honest evaluation of ourselves. It is us loving God and others and thinking about God and others rather than only thinking about or loving ourselves.

So, let's discover some of what God's Word tells us about steps to restoring broken relationships.

Step #1: Ask God For Help

James 4:6 "...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." NIV

James 4:6 "It's common knowledge that "God goes against the willfully proud; God gives grace to the willing humble." The Message

Friends, in order to restore a relationship that has been broken we have to get to the point of recognizing that we cannot do it on our own, that we need God's help. No amount of self-reliance or pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps will restore a relationship. It is going to take a humble spirit that says God I absolutely cannot resolve or restore this relationship and I need Your help. You see it's never easy restoring relationships, and it's never easy being humble. So Step #1 is to ask for God's help daily.

Evaluation: Write down the person's name that you need God's help to restore that relationship.

Step #2: Recognize Their Value

Philippians 2:3-4 "When you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Instead, be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves. Do not be interested only in your own life, but be interested in the lives of others." NCV

One of the ways to recognize another person's value is to give them honor and respect.

Romans 12:10 "...Excel in showing respect for each other." GWT

So, in order to restore relationships, we need to show the person respect by honoring them, or in other words show them that they and the relationship have value to us. I mentioned this last week, but one of the ways we do that is to listen to people. It shows them that they are important to us, that they matter.

Question: What are some specific things that we can do to show people that they matter to us?

Step #3 Accept Our Responsibility

Galatians 6:5 “Each person must be responsible for himself.” NCV

**Galatians 6:5 “Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.”
The Message**

Friends, in order to restore relationships, we must be willing to accept our own responsibility in the relationship. A relationship takes two people; it is never just one person’s problem. It takes humility to accept our part in the relationship breakdown. Now, let me add, I know at times one person throws everything back into our faces. We make the attempt; we are willing to accept our responsibility, and it gets thrown back in our faces no matter what we do. All I can say is that you and I are responsible for our part – not their part.

Step #4: Offer Forgiveness

Colossians 3:13 “You must make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” NLT

What God’s Word is saying to us is that since God has forgiven us then we must offer forgiveness to others. That is our obligation. Because of all that God has done for us we must respond to others with our forgiveness.

Step #5: Notice Their Needs

Philippians 2:4 “Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.” NLT

Romans 15:2-3 “We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. ³ For even Christ didn't live to please himself.” NLT

This requires an attitudinal adjustment so that we don’t just see our needs, but we also see the needs of the other person.

Galatians 5:13 “It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don’t use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that’s how freedom grows.” The Message

In order to restore relationships, we must get our focus off of me and onto them and us. In order to do that, we must serve one another in love.

Step #6: Release My Rights

Philippians 2:5-7 “Your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus had. Though He was God, He did not demand and cling to His rights as God. Instead of this of His own free will, He gave up all He had and took the nature of a servant.” GNB

Jesus Christ is God. He was involved in creation. He has the right to demand our worship, our adoration, and our praise. Instead He choose to release His rights, to be humiliated, beaten and executed, because He loves us so much. He gave up his position in Heaven to come to earth as one of us, in order to make it possible for us to be reconciled to God.

Romans 15:5 “May God, who gives endurance and encouragement, allow you to live in harmony with each other by following the example of Jesus Christ.” GWT

To live in harmony with one another we must follow the example that we have in Jesus Christ.

Now, you may be thinking that what I’m talking about is impossible and you are right. It is impossible to do all of this without Jesus Christ in our lives. It is impossible without accepting His forgiveness and receiving His Holy Spirit presence into our lives.

So, in order to begin the process of restoring relationships we must first ask Jesus Christ into our lives so that we can begin a relationship with Him. Now, after we have done that it doesn't mean it will be easy to restore broken relationships, it never is, but with God's help and His presence in our lives it does make it possible.

Application: What steps will you take this week to begin restoring the relationship that you listed early during the message?