



Practical Christian Living

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you". Matthew 6:33
Course 4 Lesson 20

Building Right Relationships

Part 2: Handling Problems



KEY VERSE:

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God the Father." Romans 15:7

Friends are made by many actions, but they can be lost by only one. We must not only build right relationships but we must also maintain them. We must deal with relationship problems in God's way. In this lesson we will consider such problems as disagreements, offenses, enmity and barriers, and rejection.

DISAGREEMENTS

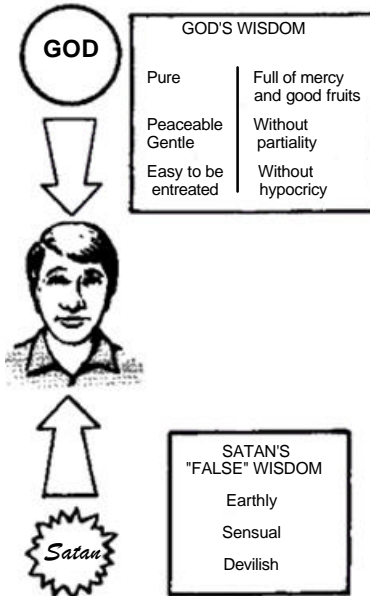
Though we are members of the one body of Christ, each believer is a unique individual. There will be times when we will disagree. There is nothing wrong with disagreements, but they can lead to serious problems. Let us consider some things we should do when there is a disagreement.

1. We must be sure that our spirit is right.

We may be right in what we say but wrong in the way we say it. When our attitude or spirit is wrong, God says that we are wrong.

Wrong attitudes come from wrong thinking. The Bible says that our "wisdom" can come from

one of two sources: It can come from God, or it can come from Satan.



Our "wisdom" can come from God or it can come from Satan.

If we have bitterness and strife in our heart, we can be sure that our "wisdom" is from Satan. The Bible says,

"If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above (from God), but is earthly, sensual, devilish (from Satan)." James 3:17

If our wisdom is from God, we will be gentle and easy to get along with. The Bible says,

"The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." James 3:17

2. We must control our tongue.

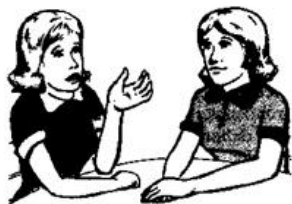
The Bible says, "A fool uttereth all his mind." Though the tongue is one of the smallest members of our body, it does more damage than all the other members put together. The Bible says,

*"The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; **IT IS AN UNRULY EVIL, FULL OF DEADLY POISON.**" James 3:6-8*

We can all recall instances when we hurt others by something we said. Words hurt and keep on hurting. We need to pray as the psalmist, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."¹

3. We must care enough to listen.

Communication is vital in any meaningful relationship. It is especially important to be able to communicate with someone when there is a disagreement. How sad are the words, "He (or she) just wouldn't listen to me."



Care enough to listen.

Usually, it difficult to deal with a problem when someone is angry and upset. In this kind of situation, the best thing one can do is to listen.

When a person is perturbed and upset, his emotions can be compared to a balloon which is blown up tightly. If there is no release and the pressure continues to build up, there is sure to be an explosion. But if you listen intently without interrupting, the "balloon" will deflate and the pressure will be relieved. Then you will be able to deal with the problem.

4. We must try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view.

There is a reason why the other person thinks and acts as he does. Try honestly to put yourself in his place and see things from his point of view. You may find that he is right and you are wrong.

"Lord, teach me the glorious less that occasionally it possible that I may be wrong."

OFFENSES

Christians should learn to be patient with other people, not taking offense easily. The Bible says, "Love suffers long and is kind." But there will be offenses. The

basic rule in handling offenses is to go to the person alone and make things right.

There are two kinds of offenses with which we must deal: (1) Those which we commit against others and (2) those which others commit against us. Let us see how we are to handle each of these.

1. Offenses which I have committed against another person.

When I have committed an offense against another person, I am responsible to make things right with him. The Lord Jesus said,

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother has aught against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."
Matthew 5:23,24

When we are wrong, a full and honest apology will go a long way toward making things right. To apologize correctly, I must:

1. Take full responsibility for my offense, laying not blame to anyone else.
2. Name the offense.
3. Ask the person to forgive me and wait for his answer.

Of course, if I have caused someone to suffer a loss, I must also make proper restitution.

2. Offenses which another person has committed against me.

When another person commits an offense against me, my first responsibility is to go to him **alone** and tell him of his fault. Jesus said,

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee

and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Matthew 18:15

When someone has offended us, our natural inclination is to tell another person how we have been mistreated. This is absolutely wrong. We must not tell anyone until we have first gone to the one who offended us. We must give him an opportunity to apologize or, in the case of a misunderstanding, to explain.

Whether we have offended someone or someone has offended us, the thing to do is to go to that person alone and make things right. When two people have trouble between them, they can solve it by humbling themselves before God and forgiving and forgetting.

Remember: The basic rule in handling offenses is to go to the person alone and make things right.

When I go to someone to make things right, I must go in the right spirit. My objective is not to make him apologize to me, but to restore him to fellowship with me and with God. If he repents, I am to forgive him. The Lord Jesus said,

"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent forgive him."
Luke 17:3



Peter asks, "Seven times?"

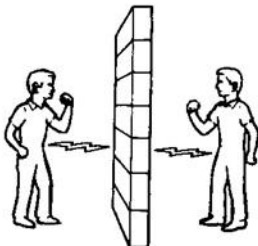
On one occasion Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus replied to Peter, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."²

Jesus is teaching us here that we must forgive boundlessly. To forgive "seventy times seven" does not mean that we are to forgive our brother 490 times and no more. No, the Lord is teaching here that forgiveness must become a habit with us. There is to be no counting of the number of times we forgive.

Remember, Jesus said that it is impossible to be right with God unless we have asked forgiveness from those we have offended, as well as forgiven those who have offended us. For a fuller understanding of the Lord's teaching on handling offenses, read chapters 5 and 18 of Matthew and chapter 17 of Luke.

ENMITY AND BARRIERS

When offenses are not properly handled, enmity and barriers come between people. Enmity is a feeling of ill-will or hostility toward another person. Barriers are like a "wall" between people. Where enmity and barriers exist, there is no fellowship and no real communication.



Barriers are like a "wall" between people.

To understand how God dealt with enmity and barriers, we must go back to the very beginning of the church. At first, the church was composed entirely of Jewish believers. Later on, the gospel

was preached to the Gentiles (Those who were not Jews), and many of them believed and were added to the church.

This created a problem because of the long-time enmity and barriers that existed between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews considered themselves superior to the Gentiles and would not even eat with them. The Gentiles likewise despised the Jews.

How did God deal with the enmity and barriers that existed between Jews and Gentiles? He dealt with it by the cross! The Bible tells us that all believers - both Jews and Gentiles - were crucified with Christ. Of the Jewish and Gentile believers, God made "one new man." Jesus Christ Himself is the Head, and believers form His spiritual body.

By His death, the Lord Jesus Christ broke down the barriers and did away with the enmity that existed between Jews and Gentiles. The Bible says,

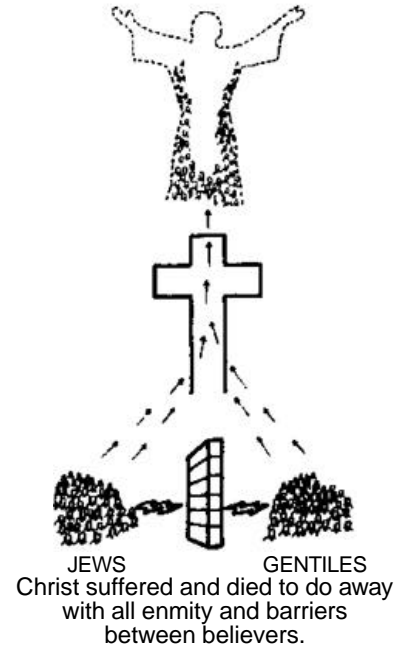
*"For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition (the barriers) between us; Having abolished in His flesh the enmity ... for to make in Himself of twain ONE NEW MAN, so making peace; And that He might reconcile both unto God IN ONE BODY by the cross, HAVING SLAIN THE ENMITY THEREBY."
Ephesians 2:14-16*

This is true, not only of Jews and Gentiles, but of all believers. We, too, have been crucified with Christ that we might become members of the one body of Christ.

By means of the cross, Christ has done away with every barrier that separates us from one another. By His death on the cross, He has "slain" all enmity between

believers. Christ has made every believer one with Himself and one with other believers.

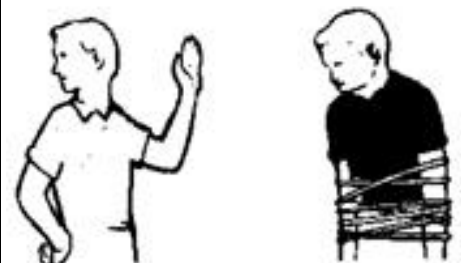
Jesus Christ suffered and died, not only to bring us to God, but also to heal our relationships it each other. **To allow any barrier or enmity to stand between me and another believer is a sin which denies the work of Christ on the cross.**



REJECTION

Concerning our relationship with another person, we can have one of two basic attitudes toward him: (1) an attitude of **rejecting** him, or (2) an attitude or **receiving** him.

To reject another person means that you do not accept him as he is. Rejection is an attitude which says, "You must change to please me if you want me to accept you."



Rejecting a person tends to "bind" him.

To receive another person means that you freely accept him as he is without placing any conditions on him. It does not mean that you do not see his faults or that you approve of all that he is doing. It simply means that you receive him just as Christ has received you. The Bible says,

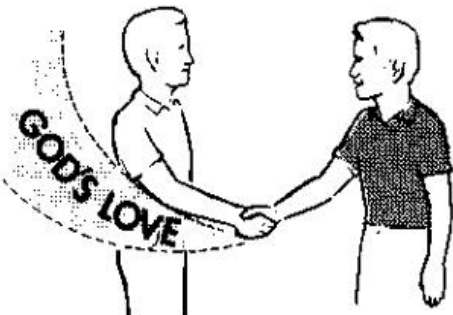
"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Romans 15:7

The reason that we are to receive one another is that Christ has received us. He died for us when we were yet sinners. He did not say to us, "I will not receive you until you change." No, He received us fully and freely, just as we were, and extended to us all the privileges and benefits of a child of God. This is the attitude God wants us to have toward others.

Whether we realize it or not, the attitude which we have toward another person has a profound effect on that person.

- **The attitude of rejecting a person** prevents God's love from flowing through you to that person. It tends to "bind" him and to prevent him from being what God wants him to be.

- **The attitude of receiving a person** allows God's love to flow through you to that person. It tends to "release" him to become what God wants him to be.



Receiving a person tends to "release" him.

A Christian father shared the following account of how God worked in his life and in his son's life.

"Do I have to go along?" Sulked our 15-year-old as he dragged his feet across the floor. "I want to stay home with my friends. Besides, the car will be full, an who wants to drive 600 miles folded up like a pretzel in a stupid old car?"

Brad's display of smoldering anger now pinpointed a growing problem which had plagued our relationship recently. Deep down, my heart confessed to an increasing resentment toward Brad. I didn't like his friends nor the way he wore his hair, and I felt especially sick about the music he was into. Communication between us had begun to be strained.

Brad unwillingly accompanied us, and somehow we scraped through the week. But when we got back home, we found ourselves, as parents, on our knees before God. "Lord," we prayed, "we know only too well that this could spell real disaster, and not just for Brad. Surely others will be hurt as well if he continue on in rebellion. We will not let him go on like this. God, you have got to give us the answer," we demanded. "Please show us."

I was hardly prepared for God's answer. He focused His searchlight on my heart attitudes, and that which had been shadowed for too long suddenly became painfully evident. "As long as you choose to reject resent, and condemn Brad, My hands are tied," God said to me. "You are standing in the way of My touching your son. You are the real problem."

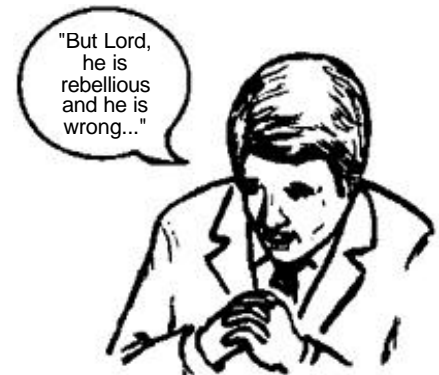
"Oh, God," I groaned in consternation. He continued searching me. "When I accepted you in My Son, Jesus, did I demand that you become holy and righteous before I accepted you? Were there not yet many things in your

life which displeased Me? Yet, I enfolded you in My love and acceptance for My Son's sake."

I fought hard with His next words. "Will you now go to your son and confess your wrong attitudes and resentment, criticism and rejection? Will you ask his forgiveness for your sin against him?"

"But Lord," I remonstrated. "He is rebellious and he is wrong!"

"I am aware of that, my child, and I have a remedy, but you are the greater problem. What about it? I can wait as long as you make Me wait, but if you refuse to break, I can't promise that you won't lose you son."



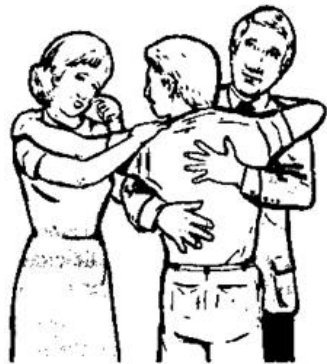
God was asking me to love and accept my son as he was.

As I struggled with God's proposition, the issue became excruciatingly clear, and while I had no promise as to what would happen in my son, I understood what I, his father, had to do. God wasn't asking me to accept my son's rebellion. He was asking me to love and accept him genuinely and unconditionally, as he was and not as I wanted him to be. While the humbling was very painful to me, suddenly I became too afraid to not let my will be broken. The consequences for Brad and for me would simply be too heavy to bear. I knew then that God was waiting for me, not my son.

The father tells what happened when he obeyed God.

As we found ourselves in each other's arms, tears washing away my built-up resentments against

Brad, an amazing thing happened. Brad, too, began to weep and with a broken heart acknowledged his rebellion and asked forgiveness. Then turning to his mom, and embracing her he wept out his wrong attitude toward her and asked her forgiveness.



Obedience to God is the way of blessing.

Two years have passed since that day. So deep was God's work at that time that, even though I have failed in many ways since then, yet Brad has moved steadily onward with the Lord.

God says He will not despise a broken and contrite heart.

And who can tell what will happen in lives when His powerful, redemptive love finds in us a channel? The power of that love is dynamite!³

GET RIGHT WITH PEOPLE NOW!

As you have read this lesson, has God spoken to your heart about some relationship that is not what it should be? Perhaps there is an offense that needs to be cleared up. It can be made right if you will humble yourself and obey God.

Is there enmity between you and another person? Is there a barrier between you and another believer? The Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died that He might "slay" the enmity and remove all barriers between believers.

Is there rejection between you and another person? You may be a son or daughter and you have rejected your father or mo-

ther. You may be a parent and you have rejected you son or daughter. You may be rejecting your wife or husband. You may have a brother or sister whom you have rejected, or it may be someone else. Whoever it may be, will you give up your rejection and allow God's love to flow through you to that person?

Obedience is the way of blessing. Whatever God is speaking to you about, will you obey Him?



Jesus Christ suffered and died to heal our relationships with each other.

1. Psalm 141:3.
2. Matthew 18:21,22
3. Will Longenecker, Used by permission.

MEDITATION GUIDE

(TO STUDY AS YOU PREPARE FOR THE NEXT LESSON)

INSTRUCTIONS

On the following pages there is a Meditation Guide for each of the three lessons in this booklet. Each Guide has a key verse, comments, and questions that will help you to see from the Bible the main message of the lesson.

AFTER YOU FINISH the Question Pages, and have sent them in, we suggest that you work on the meditations. Do NOT send in your meditations. They are for you to personally use and keep.

THE PURPOSE of the Meditation Guide is to help you learn how to study the Bible on your own. It will help you to think (meditate) about a portion of Scripture in order to understand it. It will help you learn how to get in touch with God through His Word and through prayer.

MEDITATION. What does "meditation" mean? It does not mean to let your mind go blank. Quite the contrary, meditation means that you get hold of your thoughts and bring them all

together to concentrate on a portion of God's Word. As you do this, it gives the Lord an opportunity to make Himself known to you.

PAUSE TO PRAY. Before beginning each meditation, pause to pray, quieting your heart before the Lord so that you will be ready to hear what He has to say to you from the Bible.

If there are any words you do not understand, be sure to look them up in a dictionary.

MEMORY VERSE. You may wish to memorize the Key Verses, or other verses found in these Meditation Guides. Memorizing Scripture is one of the best means to meditate on God's Word. It would also be very helpful in keeping before you the main truth of each lesson.

NOTE: The King James Bible was used in preparing these Meditation Guides.

KEEP THIS GUIDE - DO NOT SEND IT IN

Lesson 20: BUILDING RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS - Part II: Handling problemsKey Verse:

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God the Father."
Romans 15:7

Problems can arise between friends. Four problem areas have been discussed in Lesson 20. These particular problem areas are listed here with scripture that helps us in handling these problems. In this meditation we want to do some problem solving.

(Use notebook paper for your answers an for problem solving)

1. DISAGREEMENTS. Turn in your Bible to chapter 3 of James. This very important chapter should be carefully studied in its entirety, but we want to focus attention on verses 6, 7 & 8.

What apparently causes more problems than anything else?

Why? (Verse 6). Who can help with this problem? (3:8; 4:6, 7 & 8).

Problem solving. I have this problem with _____ I will solve it with him or her by doing this: _____

2. OFFENSES. Read Matthew 5:23,24; 18:15; Luke 17:3. What must I do when I offend someone? What must I do when someone offends me?

Problem solving. I have offended _____. I will try to correct this problem by _____.

I have been offended by _____. I will try to restore this relationship by doing this: _____.

3. ENMITY AND BARRIERS. Read Ephesians 2:14-16. Sometimes a thick wall can build up between friends. What can break down the wall?

Problem solving. There is a wall of offence between me and _____. I will do my part to tear down the wall by doing this: _____.

4. REJECTION. Our rejection of others can ruin a good relationship. Instead of rejecting someone, what are we to do? (Read Romans 15:7)

Problem solving. I have been rejecting _____, I will begin receiving them by doing this: _____.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Turn to the Question Page as you finish each lesson. Fill in the answers for that lesson before going on to the next lesson.
- 2. When you have studied all the lessons and have completed the Question Pages, prepare for mailing. Don't forget to write in your name and return address. Send in your ANSWER SHEET ONLY!

EXAM

Lesson 20

- 1. List four things we should do when we disagree:
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
 - 4. _____

- 2. To apologize correctly, I must:
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____

- 3. The basic rule in handling offenses is _____

- 4. To allow any barriers or enmity to stand between me and another believer is a _____

- 5. The attitude of rejecting a person _____ God's love from flowing _____ to that person. It tends to " _____ " him and to _____ him from being what God wants him to be. The attitude of receiving a person _____ God's love to flow to that person. It tends to " _____ " him to _____ what God wants him to be.

What is the most important thing that you have learned from this lesson? _____

Send your exam to the following address:
Latin Evangelical Outreach
 P.O. Box 549
 Irvington, New Jersey 07111-0549

Your Name and Address.....Please Print

Complete Name _____ Age _____

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Do you have friends who would like to receive these lessons?

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