

Relationships that work  
**Part 2: When relationships go bad**

**Recap:** Last week we talked about the importance of good relationships. Relationships can be hard work, but they can work. We also saw how our relationship with others can affect our own relationship with God. We also discussed the basics of how to make relationships work: the 3C's: commitment, communication and conclusion. Let's now read our text for this series:

**Hebrews 12:14-15** AMPC (Amplified Bible) *14 Strive to live in peace with everybody and pursue that consecration and holiness without which no one will [ever] see the Lord. 15 Exercise foresight and be on the watch to look [after one another], to see that no one falls back from and fails to secure God's grace (His unmerited favour and spiritual blessing), in order that no root of resentment (rancour, bitterness, or hatred) shoots forth and causes trouble and bitter torment, and the many become contaminated and defiled by it*

**Introduction:**

*“Strive to live in peace with everybody”* – Peace in our relationships is something we should always strive, work at, be intentional about or aim for. However, what to do when relationships go bad?

**Romans 12:18** - *If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*

This verse seems to highlight the reality of how challenging relationships can be: *“If it is possible, as much as depends on you”* ... The reality is that we can't always control how others will respond, how others will feel – sometimes the outcome is not in our hands. At times relationships can go bad.

However, the scripture says that we should remain determined to pursue peace and meaningful relationships: *“as much as depends on you”*.

Well you are not alone in that. The Bible is full of examples of people who went through all of that and we can learn from them.

**I. Relationships gone bad... in the Bible.**

In **Acts 15:36-41** we read about a big disagreement between the apostle Paul and Barnabas over his cousin John Mark. The argument was so sharp that they parted ways. Paul didn't believe the suitability of Barnaba's cousin to travel with them. However, later in life Paul changed his mind.

Another time, Paul *“withstood Peter in the face”* (**Galatians 2:11**). Later on, the same Peter complimented Paul for his wisdom in 2 Peter 3:15-16. That is some indication of Peter's humility and the good outcome of their 'confrontation'.

Sometimes relationships can go bad ... even for the great saints in the Bible. However, we believe that God can turn any bad situation or relationship around as long as we are willing to do it His way.

As much as depends on us, we should always strive to reach a conclusion that involves reconciliation.

Often, in order to understand what is really wrong with a relationship, we need to get the root of it. Many conflicts can be traced to undealt issues within our own hearts: insecurity, envy, bitterness, anger, selfishness, offense etc.

There are many examples in the bible:

- a) Leah and Rachel (we read about that in Genesis 29 and 30). This is the story of sibling rivalry. Two sisters competing against each other and envious of each other. (In Genesis 16 we read how Sarai was envious of Hagar).
- b) Saul and David. Saul's insecurity, anger, envy and resentment made him turn against David and eventually God. Saul became tormented by an evil spirit.
- c) Judas -he got offended at Jesus when He allowed the woman with the alabaster jar to pour out her expensive perfume. He loved money. That offense ultimately lead Judas to betraying Jesus.

Remember our opening text in

**Hebrews 12:15:** *“see that no one falls back from and fails to secure God’s grace (His unmerited favour and spiritual blessing), in order that no root of resentment (rancour, bitterness, or hatred) shoots forth and causes trouble and bitter torment”*,

In **Matthew 18:21-35** Jesus mentioned the story of a king who, after having forgiven a servant a huge debt, came to find out that such man was in turn unable to forgive a very small debt of one of his fellow servants. The result was that such man was delivered to torturers. That servant’s resentment brought him torment.

- d) The Older brother and the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) - The older brother’s displeasure of his younger brother came out of a place of selfishness and envy.

**Sometimes relationships go wrong and quite often they simply follow the condition of our own heart and the roots that we have growing there.**

## **II. So where to start when relationships go wrong?**

### **1. Start with the root**

... *“in order that no root of resentment (rancour, bitterness, or hatred) shoots forth and causes trouble and bitter torment”*

What's at the root of this? Before praying that God will change the other person, let us start with praying for ourselves:

**Psalm 139:23** - *Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;*

Identify possible roots growing in your own heart.

Starve any roots of resentment or bitterness of what feeds them.

**Ephesians 4:31-32 NLT** - *<sup>1</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behaviour. <sup>32</sup> Instead, be kind to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

## **2. Start with love**

That is the first commandment and the golden rule of relationships. Reject anything that doesn't look like Love, as described in **1 Corinthians 13**.

*<sup>4</sup> Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails*

There may be someone probably thinking, *'well Pastors that is all nice and noble, but I have had wrong done to me, I have been mistreated, abused, misunderstood, treated with contempt, I have had real injustices done against me. Is it really worth doing good and love?'* – We will go deeper into that question next week. However, let me say that God's ways of doing things may be opposite of the world's but they always work and never fail.

## **3. Start with God**

I know that sounds kind of basic but a lot of times we want to take matter into our own hands, do it our way and we leave God out... and yet we say we want God to help us. We can't have it both ways.

If you want to succeed in your relationships, first, more than anything else you need God. It will take faith to completely surrender the situation to him but in the end, it will work!

**When relationships go wrong, you can't go wrong with God. Allow God to have His way!**

**1 Peter 2:19-23** - *<sup>19</sup> For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. <sup>20</sup> For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. <sup>21</sup> For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: <sup>22</sup> "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth" <sup>23</sup> who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;*

It takes faith to do this – to wait for God to do justice in a situation.

- **Do not retaliate. Retaliation leads to escalation!** you have to make the decision to submit the situation to God.
- **Do not rehearse your defence.** God is well able to take care of it.
- **Resist the temptation to get even!** Good always overcomes evil (Romans 12:17-21)

### **III. Some things that we covered today:**

- 1. Relationships are hard work, but they can work.**
- 2. Relationships sometimes go bad and the Bible is full of examples that we can learn from.**
- 3. In a relationship gone bad where do you start to fix the relationship?**
  - . **Start with the root**
  - . **Start with love**
  - . **Start with God**