



Message from Pastor Paul

The greatest joys of life are shared with others. That's why when relationships stop working, the zest for life disappears. We are living in a world littered with broken relationships. When one advances their cause and ambition at the expense of another, it contributes to an unhealthy relationship. What makes reconciliation so difficult is that the sense of being wronged needs to be addressed. In our rights oriented culture, we tend to demand our rights. Another reason why reconciliation fails is we can't get past our own sense of hurt and pride or there is an inability to forgive and an unwillingness to work through the problems.

It doesn't matter what side you're on in a broken relationship. It doesn't matter if you are the one that has hurt someone else, or if you're the one that's hurting. The initiative in restoration must originate with the person who is aware of the issue (cf. Mt. 5:23-24; 18:15). You and I need to take the initiative. Why? God does that because He knows how reluctant we all are to go about restoring something that's broken. We will not do it unless God backs us into the corner and says, 'I don't care if you're right or wrong. Go!'

A right attitude is critical to the success of potentially restoring what's broken. If we are just trying to convince the other person of the rightness of our position, we will often do more damage than good. We must go in the spirit of Christ and reflect a genuine humility. In trying to bring about reconciliation in a church experiencing division, the apostle Paul wrote: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5)."

What kind of an attitude was that? Paul describes the humbleness of Christ for our sake, where Jesus became obedient even to death. If we are going to restore broken relationships, we don't exercise our rights such as I have a right to be angry or I have a right to be mad. If you start exercising those rights you will never restore that relationship. We cannot exercise that option.

The only way to come in a right frame of mind, the right attitude, is through prayer. If we are going to have relationships restored, we need to get on our face before Almighty God and get honest about it, and say "God, this is the way it is. It's true--I'm not as righteous as I would like to think. I'm part of the problem."

In the story of Jacob and Esau, their relationship was restored primarily because Jacob had an encounter with God beforehand. In Genesis 32 God couldn't prevail over Jacob. When does God lose in our lives? God loses when we put ourselves first or when we exercise our rights over His. We prevail with God when we surrender to Him.

It was in Jacob's weakness, his hip was damaged and Jacob limped away. In weakness Jacob prevailed over Esau's anger and grudge. Their meeting was nothing short of a miracle. "But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept."

(Gen. 33:4)

How do we reconcile relationships? Acknowledge the problem, take the initiative, be sensitive to where the other person is coming from, and go in humility. This can only be achieved when we first address our issues and concerns in prayer before God. God is the One who works His will in our hearts.