

Beginning '24 Blessed: 10 Guidelines to Repair Relationships

“If you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them”
– Jesus (John 13:17).

On the wall of my study are the words of Henry Drummond, which I’ve tried to live by for 50 years: “I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now, let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.”

I also live by an acronym .: Helping Other People Every day.

In a world increasingly characterized by what Jesus described at the end of the age, people offended, betraying and hating (see Matt. 24:10), we need to pay particular attention to doing good by nurturing healthy relationships and repairing broken ones.

In His high priestly prayer before the cross, Jesus prayed that we would prioritize guarding our unity and love for one another so the world would believe that He came from God (John 17:21).

The biblical directive is crystal-clear: “Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (-18, ESV).

So what are we supposed to do as flawed folks (“We all err [offend] in many ways” [James 3:2]) when we encounter inevitable relational conflict?

Back to Basics

We remind ourselves that the cost of true discipleship is to deny self, pick up our cross and follow Him in obedience (), living not by emotion but decision. We remember that if we don't forgive others, Jesus said neither will our heavenly Father forgive us (Matt. 6:15). And there are no limits to forgiveness, as Jesus said it is "seventy times seven" (). It's for His glory and our good.

When we're at odds with someone in our marriage, family, church, ministry or business, let's jettison excuses that rationalize that things will just go away as we live in denial. If we don't correct, we'll reject! So, let's put on our big boy pants and anchor ourselves in the attitude of Jesus.

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"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, no looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Phil. 2:3-4, NIV).

10 Guidelines for Repairing Relationships

Consider posting these and passing them along to your church, ministry and loved ones to proactively preempt problems.

1. Affirm that getting reconciled is a directive, not an elective. Jesus said if you're coming to worship and there's an outstanding offense with someone, leave your gift and go get things right (Matt. 5:23). We're to do so respectfully and redemptively, looking to ourselves in all humility (Gal. 6:1). This requires *both* individuals to demonstrate Christlike conduct: humility, godly sorrow for sin and real repentance.

"Bill, you and I have known each other for a while, and I really value our relationship. I want to make things right

where there's been some breakdown between us, starting with me. Can we talk and face where we failed so we can make things right?" (Note: This is not to be done via text.)

2. Reject passivity and act intentionally to thwart the "accuser of our brethren" (Rev. 12:10b, NKJV) from poisoning others with a "root of bitterness" (Heb. 12:15) that can defile many. Remember how Absalom, son of David, caused division and defilement by receiving whispering evil reports and allowing them to spread?

3. Conduct ourselves in a godly manner, being "swift to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger" (James 1:19). "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion" (Prov. 18:2, ESV).

4. Honor due process, coming in a spirit of inquiry, not accusation, knowing "the first to plead his case seems right, *until* another comes and examines him" (Prov. 18:17, NASB).

5. Purpose to give people the benefit of the doubt and be loving, avoiding inflammatory, categorical statements ("You always ... You never ... You're a [disparaging word]") that are inconsistent with charitable conversation.

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"Love, suffers long, and is kind ... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. ... For we know in part ... When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, and I thought as a child ... So now abide faith, hope and love, these three. But the greatest of these is love" (1 -13).

6. Resist all prideful, self-righteous attitudes and actions in dialogue, remembering that we are all sinners saved by grace. Corrie Ten Boom, whose family members were all killed by the Nazis, encountered a former SS guard from the Ravensbrück prison camp who asked for her forgiveness. She

lovingly forgave him.

"The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9, NKJV).

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart" (Prov. 21:2, ESV).

7. Uphold the directive of Jesus to meet privately and personally to handle apparent sinful conduct thereby steering clear of gossip (sharing private information with people who are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution) and slander (telling information that may or may not be true but is designed to harm someone's reputation). The Apple corporation has a policy in its culture that they will follow this procedure as a requirement for employees.

8. If we are at an impasse after thorough interaction, we will follow the instruction of Jesus and humble ourselves to seek mature biblical counsel to help resolve the conflict (-16).

9. In repairing relationships, we will intentionally extend mercy to one another, differentiating between an isolated incident and an ongoing pattern of behavior. Grace is giving people what they don't deserve, but mercy is not giving people what they do deserve. Scripture tells us, "Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13b) and "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7, NKJV). We'll reap what we sow!

10. Celebrating God-given diversity within the Christian community, we pledge to be gracious in recognizing different preferences, personalities and positions on grey areas ("disputable matters," Rom. 14) and not let them be a source of division. None of us has it all together, but together we have it all. We make allowances for each other because we love each other (Eph. 4:2, J.B. Phillips).

Here's the Deal

In the midst of a generation experiencing incredible division and hatred, may we consecrate ourselves to repair relationships to glorify God, receive His blessing and block Satan's schemes.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! ... for there the Lord has commanded the blessing, even life forever" (Ps. 133:1, 3).

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