

Restoring Damaged Relationships 4

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Preacher: Matt Smith

[0:00] going to have this, what do you call this, a venue, an opportunity to speak, this what? This class, that is true, that is true. So it just occurred to me that three men from Trinity Baptist are planning on going on the men's retreat at Spofford, Camp Spofford, on the weekend of the 20th, 21st and 22nd.

And if any other men out there are interested in such a thing, which I do recommend having gone last year, please feel free to speak to me.

There. And now, we are on. Okay, good. Let's pray. Let's pray. Heavenly Father.

Thank you for your love for us in Jesus, for reconciling us to you in your great love.

We ask that as your children, you will give us fruit in the area of reconciliation and demonstrating your love, having your love flowing through us, that the world may see that you sent Jesus, and that we are your disciples.

[1:41] We ask for the glory of Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I'd like to begin this morning by telling a story about Larry, Larry's mom and dad, forgiveness, and trust.

And I'm going to tell it from the perspective of Larry's dad speaking with his mom. You can maybe picture them alone in the kitchen one evening.

And what dad is doing is summarizing some events from the past three weeks. Yeah, it's been just three weeks since Larry took our new Volvo to go out on a date.

And before the evening ended, he had filled the car with eight kids. They drank a case of beer. And as he demonstrated how the Volvo corners, he sideswiped three cars going 40 miles an hour in the center of the town square.

Now, yes, Larry's asked us to forgive him. And we forgave him. We've only had the car back a few days now.

[3:11] And Larry asks if he can take out the car this weekend on a date. I have forgiven Larry.

But I want to know if he's learned anything from the experience. I care about Larry. I think he can be trusted with the Volvo again. Someday.

But first, I want to see some evidence that he will be more responsible in the future. That he really cares about the rest of the family being able to use an unwrecked car.

And that he will help cover the expenses of the increased insurance costs due to the accident. Here's my question.

Has dad really forgiven Larry? What do you think?

[4:11] Any follow-up questions? I hear a yes. But Larry might say, if dad says, well, no, not this weekend.

Larry might say, why not? You forgave me. If you don't have the same handout I've been handing out for four weeks, I encourage you to get one.

We'll use it a little bit today. There's copies on that chair and there's copies in the back also. And here we are at the end. Step four in a set of guidelines for restoring damaged relationships.

And this one's entitled Rebuilding Trust. But you know what? I don't want us to look there quite yet. I want to go up on the page a little bit to where it says, Forgiveness includes, and as it turns out the first two things are my step one and step two, renouncing anger, responding in love, and then canceling the moral or personal debt that someone had with regard to you.

So, we might ask, has Larry's dad canceled the personal debt? Now, of course, this is not a biblical definition that I can point to.

[5 : 49] It's a definition of forgiveness that I got from an author whose name is somewhere up here.

Augsburger. Oh, yeah, David Augsburger, right there. But what do you think? Has dad canceled the personal debt? No.

Okay. Any other thoughts? Yes. You know, why or why not? Now, Esther thought, yes.

Somebody, I don't know who that is over there. Okay, Laurie. No. Well, let me give you, this may help.

Let me give you at least what I think of as an example of somebody, in this case, dad, not forgiving Larry's debt. It's a few weeks.

[6 : 45] Yes. Uh, um, no, I can just read right here. One month after the accident, Larry says, dad, Jim's family is going to the lake house for the weekend, and they invited me to go along with them.

May I? Dad, dad, no. Dad, you've shown yourself to be completely irresponsible. But dad, you've let me go to the lake house with them several times over the past year, and there was never any trouble.

Dad, you won't be going anymore. I don't know if I'll ever be able to trust you again. Plus, I sure can think of a lot of chores that need to be done around the house this weekend.

Again, and you owe me. I owe me. I owe me. I owe me. I owe me. Okay. Okay. So, I think I gave an acceptable example of somebody not canceling the personal debt.

Uh, you know, literally, you still owe me. The price has not been paid up. Now, I'll give you my opinion.

[7 : 56] Uh, and again, I'm not saying this is something you can prove from scripture, but I would say, before Larry took out the car and got the kids in and had the accident and all of that, he did not have a right to use the new family car.

Um, and after the accident, even after he's forgiven, he still doesn't have a right to use the family car.

Um, dad and mom have the right and responsibility to decide what is an appropriate amount of trust to give to their children.

And hopefully, as a child grows, you know, that, um, the responsibility that the child has and exhibits, their amount of responsibility and trustworthiness grows, and their parents, uh, uh, trusting them with more and more responsibility grows.

Um, so I don't think just saying, uh, I, I don't think dad saying this necessarily means that he hasn't forgiven that personal debt.

[9 : 07] But, trust has been violated, and it takes time to build trust. Um, that's true in any relationship.

You meet somebody for the first time, what do you trust them with? You know, knowledge about yourself or, uh, you know, depending on them. It, it's gonna change over time.

Uh, it might grow, it might, you know, quickly crash, and you might say, well, I'm not gonna share anything with that person ever again that, uh, I don't want shouted from the rooftops.

Um, so, uh, it, it's complicated, but I do think it's helpful, I think it's helpful, to separate, uh, reconciliation, which includes repentance and forgiveness, from trust building.

Um, and, uh, let me give an example of, uh, of this with regard to Larry and Dad. Going right back to the beginning.

[10:14] Um, Dad gets a call from the police. They have the car at the town center, damaged.

They had eight kids in it. Uh, you know, they're calling all the parents. Uh, there's been drinking. So, Dad drives down in the old car. And, um, you know, deals with the police.

The accident report. Dad is probably not real happy. Um, uh, you know, he might even be angry. Uh, which I would imagine, uh, I would be.

So, um, during this, you know, Larry comes up, maybe a little under the weather. Dad, I'm so sorry. Will you forgive me?

I think it's appropriate for Dad to say, we'll talk about this later. Or even, not now! Or whatever the case may be. So, let's say, uh, uh, by the way, hopefully Dad's checked out and made sure that all eight of the kids, including Larry, are not hurt.

[11:21] And, and things like that. Okay. So, um, a day or two later, Dad's gotten over his anger. And then proceeds to step two.

Step one, renouncing anger. Step two, responding in love. Larry's dad starts thinking, okay, where do we go from here?

Um, how can, you know, I rebuild, uh, this relationship that's been damaged with, uh, Larry?

And, and how can I help him grow spiritually? We're going to assume it's a, it's a functional Christian family. Um, so he responds in love and he starts thinking about that.

And so he gets to the point where he says, uh, to Larry, let's sit down and talk about what happened now. Okay, that's Dad.

[12:19] But let's drop back to Larry. How's Larry dealing with restoring a damaged relationship? Well, at first, Larry might be angry.

Um, oh, Dan. I let him get in the car and he snuck in that case of beer. Oh.

And then Julie. She offered me a can of beer while I was driving. Why in the world did she do that? And then, while I'm showing how well I can drive and how the Volvo corners, she hits my arm.

Oh, if that hadn't happened, oh, this wouldn't have happened. Um, or. Who knows? Uh, he can probably even think of some reasons to be angry with Dad.

You know, maybe Dad's done things over the years that weren't quite right. So, um, in this case, even the person who is the offender may have anger and hurt to deal with.

[13:22] Uh, let's say, um, Larry's over that. And by God's grace, he really, at some point in a few days, really wants to do the right thing.

Um, and, um, so, when Dad says, let's get together and talk about this, he says, okay. So, uh, they get together and Larry says again, now we're up to step three, reconciliation.

We've renounced anger, we're responding in love, at least as we understand it, and now we're ready to deal with the issues. Reconciliation. Um, so, uh, Larry says, Dad, please forgive me.

In my opinion, Dad, being a wise father, says, forgive you for what? Um, that I had an accident, says Larry.

Dad says, well, remember when Mom had an accident two years ago? She didn't ask me for forgiveness. I didn't think there was any need to forgive her.

[14:30] It was an accident. And then, Larry, by the grace of God, says, Dad, please forgive me for putting eight kids in the car.

For making, you know, sure that I or other people weren't drinking in the car. Please forgive me for trying to show off about, you know, how well I could drive.

What I did was wrong, and I'm sorry for it. And so, at this point, uh, let's see.

Um, repentance. Uh, confessing evil actions and intentions. Check. Um, expressing regret for hurt caused.

Check. And, I shouldn't even make a joke out of this, should I? Because this is complicated and tough, and I don't want to communicate that, you know, this is like a magic formula.

[15:47] Um, which it is not. But, it's still good to think about these things and try and cover the bases. I don't know. Um, um, hopefully we won't have to check that one goodbye.

But, uh, uh, and thirdly, under, uh, repentance. Um, hmm. Um, uh, yeah, thank you.

Thank you. Committing to right behavior in the future. Uh, dad, I promise I won't do it again. Good. Good. And dad forgives him and cancels the moral debt.

Does that mean that Larry can use the car next weekend? Absolutely not. Children of Sammy in the future.

Uh, that's, uh, I, I think you're going to get some good tough love there. Good. Yes, I agree. Um, because when you've had a problem like this, when a relationship has been damaged, restoring trust usually takes time.

[17:02] Um, so, let me pause for a moment before we go back to Joseph and his brothers and the biblical account. Any questions, comments, arguments?

No. Not from Sam. Okay. Um, feel free to ask questions as we continue. I may not see you.

I'm probably not ignoring you. You just have to be loud. Um, so, let's, uh, turn, um, back in our Bibles, uh, to, uh, Genesis 45.

And if you're using the church Bibles, which I forgot to ask somebody to get out, it's on page 39 in the downstairs, I think, Pew Bibles. Um, um, um, and so, what I'm going to read is, um, the closest thing we have in Genesis to, uh, the initial reconciliation process for Joseph and his brothers.

Um, so, Genesis 45, beginning with verse 4. Um, Joseph said to his brothers, come near to me, please.

[18:24] And they came near. And he said, I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now, do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here.

For God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest.

And God sent me here before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to keep alive for you many survivors. So, it was not you who sent me here, but God.

He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, thus says your son Joseph.

God, um, God has made me lord over all Egypt. Come down to me. Do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me.

[19:30] You and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. There I will provide for you. For there are yet five years of famine to come.

So that you and your household and all that you have. And I probably missed something there, but will not come to poverty.

There we are. Verse 12. Verse 13. And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. You must tell your father of all my honor in Egypt and of all that you have seen.

Hurry and bring my father down here. Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept. And Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them.

After that, his brothers talked with him. And just going down to verse 24. I think this is another act of love on Joseph's part.

[20:38] Then he sent his brothers away. And as they departed, he said to them, do not quarrel on the way. Now, in the text that follows, we see that the ten, probably eleven brothers, I would think, including Benjamin, because he has his family to collect too, as well as all the others, go back to where their father Jacob is in Canaan.

And they all gather up and make their way down to Egypt. So, though we can't quite as neatly as in the case of my addition to the Larry story, you know, check off all the steps of repentance and forgiveness, I think there are at least parallels there.

So, reconciliation, from my perspective, has taken place. And they all come down to Egypt and they live happily for a long time after.

Or did they? Because, as I see it, reconciliation is not the end of restoring a relationship.

It's a step, but trust has to be rebuilt. And now we can finally look at step four, rebuilding trust.

[22:22] And right down here on the handout, you may see common barriers to rebuilding trust are unreliable repentance and insincere forgiveness.

With regard to unreliable repentance, the situation with Joseph and his brothers is very lopsided with regard to power.

Joseph has almost all the power in their relationship. And so, his brothers, you might say, would be very unwise to, if they're still feeling hatred or anger towards Joseph, to show that.

However, there are ways that they might, in speech or in action, try and maneuver for their own best interests.

For example, one of the brothers might spend a lot of time with dad. Now, they all come down to Egypt and we read that Jacob, the father, lived for 17 years in Egypt with Joseph and the other brothers before he died.

[23:44] So, imagine one brother making a special point to spend a lot of time with dad. And maybe even saying something like, boy, I wish we saw more of Joseph.

You know, he says he has a lot to do at work. But, he's governor of the land. You know, he can really spend time as he wants to. But, the Bible doesn't give any indication of that kind of thing.

That doesn't prove it didn't happen, but there's no indication of it. And, with regard to Joseph and his brothers, Joseph lived another 55 or so years in Egypt after the brothers and Jacob came down to live there too.

A long time to work on rebuilding trust and ideally having a better relationship than they had before all this happened.

Before they beat Joseph up when he was 17 and sold him as a slave. Now, the only evidence that I know of that we have in the Bible that speaks to this is that when Joseph died, he gave responsibility for what at that point might have been the most important thing to his heart into his brother's responsibility.

[25 : 25] And, for this, Genesis 50, verse 24 and following. Page 54 in the Downstairs Church Bible.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, I am about to die, but God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, God will surely come to your aid and then you must carry my bones up from this place.

So Joseph died at the age of 110 and after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt. Joseph, it seems to me, could have arranged things with his Egyptian servants to do this.

But he entrusted it to the brothers that were still alive, it seems from the text. And it was actually many years later that this happened.

[26 : 39] But this suggests to me, anyway, that their relationship had improved and that trust had been restored. So, that's what I see in the text about unreliable repentance.

There doesn't seem to be any evidence of that on the case of the Ten Brothers. But what about the other common barrier to rebuilding trust?

Insincere forgiveness. And this would be on Joseph's part, primarily. After the reconciliation, it appears that Joseph, you know, isn't holding anything against his brothers, that he loves them.

And we see evidence of that in Genesis 47, starting with verse 11, page 40, bottom right.

47, 11. So, after the 11 brothers and Jacob and all their family come back to Egypt, it says, Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Ramses, as Pharaoh had directed.

[28 : 09] Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food according to the number of their children. children, this is the first sign I see of no more favoritism.

You know, as in the past, maybe as part of the test, you know, Benjamin got five times as much on some occasion.

But here, apparently, the rules are no more favoritism. We're providing according to need, not according to who I think has treated me, you know, better or worse.

But, imagine this. The brothers continue to wonder if Joseph's forgiveness of them was really sincere.

Things look good. But, there was the possibility that Joseph was waiting until the death of their father to get even. After all, clearly, Joseph loves his father Jacob.

[29 : 27] And, if he was, you know, seeking revenge or ready to punish them, that would almost certainly cause distress to father.

Well, 17 years after they come down to Egypt, Jacob dies. And, might the brothers be wondering, ah, will the other shoe drop now?

well, we don't have to speculate if they were worried about that or not. The text tells us. And, Genesis 50, verse 15, and following.

Page 44, and then, the church bible, I think the heading is, God's good purposes. verse 15, when Joseph's brother saw their father was dead, they said, it may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for the evil we did to him.

So, they sent a message to Joseph saying, your father gave this command before he died. Well, maybe he did, but I think the implication is, probably not.

[30 : 45] Say to Joseph, please forgive the transgressions of your brothers and their sin because of the evil they did you. And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.

Joseph wept. my guess is that whether he had known that his brothers might have this worry or not, it's clear now and he has sorrow that that lack of trust, you know, their fear that his forgiveness was insincere has been percolating all this time.

Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, behold, we are your servants. Now, as I read the next few verses, I want you to ask yourselves, does this sound familiar?

But Joseph said to them, do not fear, for am I in the place of God as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good to bring about that many people should be kept alive as they are today.

[32 : 13] So do not fear, I will provide for you and your little ones. Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Almost everything that he says there, he said before, 17 years ago.

Did the brothers believe it then? Maybe, maybe to some degree. But, 17 years later, dad's dead, circumstances are different.

And that will happen in our relationships. We may be building trust, and then some new situation develops, and you wonder, on either side, you know, what will happen now?

They said this, they said they'd never do it again, but will they? He said, I was really forgiven, but has he really forgiven me?

Or will he trust me in this situation? And relationships like life is always a process. we can sin and go backwards, or by God's grace, we can be gracious, no guarantee what the other person will do, never any guarantee.

[33 : 42] But, when God is at work, you have a story that ends, like the story of Joseph and his brothers. When, by God's grace, both parties repent and forgive, and work hard to rebuild trust.

And, that's what we want, isn't it? We want relationships where we feel loved and safe, and where we are a blessing to others.

But, it's not going to be like that all the time. Relationships do get damaged. We are sinners. They're sinners. What do you expect? God is God.

And, he is at work in all things for the good of those who are called according to his purpose. And, he can restore those relationships to make them better than they ever were before.

No guarantee, but God is able. May we take the steps that God wants us to take.

[35 : 12] And, one more thing before I, one more thing. And, that is that this is not only important for us and those we're in relationship with, but it's important for God's work in the world, for evangelism.

John 17 23. Jesus is praying to the Father. And, he's speaking of believers in him.

And, says this, praise this, may they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me. To let the world know that you sent me.

and have loved them even as you have loved me. As we present the gospel, part of the power that the gospel will have in convincing people of its truth is the lives of God's people.

God's love. So, as the Bible says, may we make every effort to preserve the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

[36 : 33] peace. My presentation is done. Questions? Comments?

Can you say something about consequences? I could. Would you like to say something about consequences?

And, I don't that's fine. That's fine. I'm not going to twist your arm. Yeah. Yeah. That continue the ramifications of choices that we make.

Yes. That go out with consequences. Yes. Okay. So, you know, we've looked at the story of Joseph and his brothers. One story.

And, it's unusual because, again, of the power difference. Often, in relationships, there are significant power differences, but rarely are they as extreme as the case of Joseph and his brothers.

[37 : 43] But, yes, so, Larry, you know, I think if I were Larry's dad, no, I would not let him use the car three weeks after the first accident, there would be these consequences.

And, you might say, what caused Larry to do this to begin with? Well, if three months later, you know, on the fourth time that Larry's been able to use the new family car again, if he's arrested for drunk driving, you know, dad might say, you know, you can't use a family car again.

You know, if you want a car to drive, you're going to have to buy your own, pay your own insurance, you know. So, yes, there are consequences for sin.

So, you might say, yeah, okay, let me stop there.

It seems like, too, there could be processes, right, where the father sets up conditions of rebuilding trust. You can drive with me in the car next time.

[39 : 10] You can drive for next year as long as you don't have any passengers, because that was part of the problem. Right? And if you can keep to these things, you're building trust.

And then down the road, sure, you can pick the car again. So, to think through, part of what the rebuilding trust can do is to give opportunities, you know, from the one who is sort of the offended party in this, to say, I'm going to give you some opportunities to build trust.

But a recognition, the consequences are, if you don't follow through in these cases, then we go back to zero. You know, then the trust isn't being built, and therefore you're back to you can't use the car at all, potentially, right?

I mean, those are some of the consequences. And then the family name gets besmirched if it gets put in the paper. And if he's arrested, you know, yeah, it's going to, everyone will know, and there's all kinds of tentacles that go out.

Sin is a horrible thing. No getting around that. And I guess I just want to say this.

[40 : 34] there are those consequences, there are those tentacles, and then there's God's forgiveness of us. The personal debt is canceled with God's forgiveness, but more often than not, we continue to, in this fallen world, as fallen people suffer the results of our actions.

Yeah, I mean, I think we can see, maybe most clearly, God's relationship with us, like, he completely forgives us through Christ. He doesn't, he's not, you know, just about to, like, try and get even with us, but he does discipline us, and he does, you know, he does let us, and I think sometimes people have trouble with that when they're still experiencing the consequences of their sin, and they think, well, God must hate me, and he must just be trying to get rid of me, and it's like, no, actually, he's a good father, he's disciplining you, and he has, you know, he has really forgiven us when we repented, and at the same time, we'll still experience consequences of our sin in this life.

We won't experience consequences of our sin in hell, like, he's taken that away. But, I think also a biblical idea that sort of connects with this is the idea of restitution.

So, in some of the Old Testament, you know, if you steal something from somebody, you have to make it right by, you know, you steal their cow or ox or whatever, and you have to replace it plus some extra.

As a way of showing, like, I do really repent, and I really want to make right what's been wrong. And I don't think we're, I mean, I think some situations are so broken that we're not even really able to make right what's been wrong fully.

[42 : 28] You know, when somebody gets hurt or killed, like, there's not really a way that you can fix that, but I still think this idea of how do I, thinking, like, what's the wrong that I've committed, and what would it mean to sort of make restitution in the sense of, like, how can I help make things, do what I can to help make things right?

You know, it's more than just saying I'm really sorry for what I did, then we'll do it again, but going to the next of a thing, and I really want to, attribute to something good and healthy rather than so, under my copy of the head, though, where it says repentance includes, I don't see restitution there, so I'm writing it to think about, because, as Pastor Greg is suggesting, or what he's suggesting, I would say, fits into real repentance, repentance, repentance, repentance, repentance, yeah, let us pray,

Lord, we praise you because you are the great God who can and does use our evil actions, for good, for good.

We rejoice that nothing is too hard for you. You are the one who raises the dead. May we be encouraged to follow you.

Enable us, Lord, to do what you want us to do, that your goodness and love and glory may shine through our lives.

[45 : 01] Amen. Amen. ■ worthy. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. agog ■■■■■■■■ our enemy secured Welt yards Indom Aàn