

Biblical Dynamics of Human Relationships 2

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[0 : 00] In your bulletin there is an insert with today's scripture reading on it, and it is extensive. It consists of the entire chapter of Genesis chapter 3, because we are talking about consequences of the offense, the effects of the offense.

And we've described the offense as things that we say and things that we do that injure one another. They are offenses that always are accompanied with consequences.

And this morning, in our reading, we are going to note the first offense that was ever committed in the human race and the consequences that followed.

But our scripture reading is going to be just a little different this morning. We are going to read responsibly, and I would appreciate your reading the bold print. But in addition to my reading the regular print, I'm going to read the bold print also.

And I'm doing that for the benefit of those who are listening by CD or by tape. Otherwise, there's just going to be a dropout, and they will not be able to pick up what is being read by the congregation.

[1 : 23] So I'm just going to continue reading. I'll read all of the verses. But I want you to chime in, if you would please, on the bold print, and we will cover that.

And when we get to the end of page one, just flip it over. It continues on the reverse side. All right, let's try it. Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.

And he said to the woman, Indeed, has God said, You shall not eat from any tree of the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat.

But from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die. And the serpent said to the woman, You surely shall not die, for God knows that in the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate.

[2 : 43] And she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked.

And they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves loin coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man and said to him, Where are you?

And he said, I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked. So I hid myself.

And he said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.

[3 : 49] Then the Lord God said to the woman, What is this you have done? And the woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate.

And the Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field.

On your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between your seed and her seed.

He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel. To the woman he said, I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth.

In pain you shall bring forth children. Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. Then to Adam he said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat from it.

[5 : 01] Cursed is the ground because of you. In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

And then the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil.

Now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.

Therefore, the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So he drove the man out, and at the east of the garden of Eden he stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.

[6 : 26] Thus is the record and the immediate consequences of the first offense, and the world has never been the same since.

This is still our number one problem. As we said before, so say I now again, there is only one thing that is wrong with the world, and that's the way people treat one another.

If we could only fix that, we could just have peace and tranquility. One day, it will be fixed. But now, we continue to suffer the consequences from that first offense, which of course has been magnified and followed by manifold offenses ever since, in every generation.

An offense is the wrongful or hurtful thing that you say to another person, or the wrongful, hurtful act or deed that you perform that hurts another person.

These are the only two ways that we can offend one another. But as I've said, we have found them to be adequate.

[7 : 46] We don't need anything else. So, in this ongoing series, we are going to continue pursuing this subject because it is all about relationships.

And as I've mentioned many times from this pulpit, nothing is more important than relationships, and that God is so committed to a relationship that that was the whole rationale for his sending his son into this world, to die for man's sin.

What it was all about was simply to restore broken relationships, to reconnect man and God. There had been a distancing, a separation, and we see that brought out in the text that we've been reading as a result of this initial offense, this initial sin.

First of all, there was an awareness that set in that they did not have before. They were naked before, but it didn't bother them. They knew that they had violated a standard.

They knew they had done something that they should not have done. And very often, when we violate a standard, what happens is, it triggers the emotion of guilt.

[9 : 12] And guilt triggers an emotion of fear. And Adam and Eve were hiding in the garden. They'd never found it necessary to hide from God before, but it had always been readily available to him, and had enjoyed his fellowship.

But now it is different. Now they are hiding, and God comes searching for Adam and Eve. And the exchange that takes place makes it abundantly clear as to what they had done.

And as a result, there were numerous consequences that came into play. One was expulsion from the garden. He had to put them out of the garden.

That was just one of the consequences. Another is that man is going to have to struggle against the ground to take a living from it. No longer would it be so simple as to just tend it and keep it.

Now he has to compete with it because there are going to be thorns and thistles. He's going to have to work the ground by the sweat of his brow. That's going to be different.

[10 : 23] Eve has a negative consequence that has been imposed upon all of femininity. And that has to do with the childbirth pain that is going to be a new phenomena.

I do not know what it would have been like otherwise. I suspect that Eve would have been able to be fruitful and bear children without pain.

Wouldn't that be nice, ladies? Having children without labor pains. But now, as a result of the fall, the labor pains become a predictable part of childbearing.

And what is often overlooked is that there is now not only tension between man and animals, there is also going to be tension and a struggle between man and woman.

Her desire will be for her husband. And that can be translated in different ways and is by different scholars. And I think the truth of the matter is this.

[11 : 43] Is that femininity in her fallenness is constructed in such a way with her ego that she wants to dominate the man.

That is a natural inclination. She wants to dominate the man. And the male, in his fallen masculinity, wants to dominate the woman.

There is a power struggle that ensues. And have you never seen this played out in marriages across the country? Maybe some of you are even indulging in that. where a marriage is a perpetual power struggle.

Who's going to get their way? Now, it doesn't have to be that way because divine operating assets have been made available to believers that there can be a blessed and wonderful unity, a togetherness of souls that is not a power struggle, but is a wonderful completion or a wonderful cooperation.

That's available for all who are in Christ. But for those who are not, the power struggle goes on.

There's the masculine ego and the feminine ego. And very often, down through history, it has been that the male has dominated.

[13 : 09] Why is that? The answer is simple. Because he could. He's bigger. He's stronger.

And if you look at several places throughout the world, you will find women are still in abject subjugation, still treated in an inferior way, still regarded to be of lesser value and lesser worth. Particularly is this true in the Muslim community where multiple wives are permitted, where a husband is permitted by Sharia law to beat his wife physically and never have to worry about charges being brought against him or going to jail for it.

Now this is taking place as I speak in several places throughout the world. These are all consequences of the fall.

And the subjugation of women takes place in many areas just because men can get away with it. It is sad, but it is part of the fall.

[14 : 30] It is part of the consequences that we are suffering as a result of that. offenses are not merely things that are said or done with which we disagree.

There is a great deal of confusion today as to what constitutes an offense. You are as aware as I am that you can pick up the daily paper almost any day and find that some group somewhere is offended by something.

And many of these are nothing more than simple disagreements. People have no rational basis for being offended.

An offense is something that injures you emotionally or physically. It injures you. It somehow impacts upon your person so as to disturb or wound your psyche.

Mere disagreements don't do that. And we see all kinds of things with which we disagree but we can't call them an offense. There are people who say they are offended by the American flag or by something else that speaks of anything to do with religion like a manger scene in a public square.

[16 : 02] They are offended by that. Well, the question is, tell me, how have you been injured by that? How have you been hurt by that?

Well, it isn't that I'm actually hurt, it's just that I'm deeply, deeply offended. Nonsense. That's just a disagreement. That's not an offense. You don't have a case.

An illustration perhaps might be if we are invited to some kind of public gathering like a prayer breakfast or something of that nature.

And people are there from various different faiths or beliefs, and a local clergy from the Muslim mosque, an imam, is called upon to stand and deliver a public prayer.

I would not agree with what he says because he is praying to his God, Allah, and don't you think for a moment that that is the same as the Christian God, because it is not.

[17 : 15] And he is acknowledging Muhammad as his prophet and all the rest, with which I am in complete disagreement. I don't agree with any of that.

But I'm not offended. it doesn't offend me. Why should I be offended when someone is simply being true to their own conscience?

I don't have any basis for being offended at that. I don't agree with it. But it doesn't offend me. It wouldn't offend me if it were a Jew praying and did not invoke the name of Jesus.

Well, really now, would you expect him to? How could he pray in Jesus' name when he does not believe that Jesus is the Savior or the Messiah?

As we do, the man wouldn't even be true to his own conscience or convictions. That wouldn't offend me, but I wouldn't agree with it. An offense, the things that we say and do are those things that hurt. [18:31] And I would liken them, offenses come in different sizes, and just for the sake of please forgive my artistry, nobody will confuse me with an artist, but I think of offenses in three different ways.

Here is not very big is it? We'll call that a dart.

What is an offense that's a dart? It's a little offense. It doesn't cause a deep wound. It's just a scratch.

But you feel it. It hurts a little bit, but not much. We deliver these to each other all the time.

Sometimes we're not even aware of it. We can say things that just kind of get you. You tend to dismiss it and let it pass, but it's an offense that's a dart.

[19:43] And then there is an offense there is an offense that's an arrow.

This gets your attention. This penetrates. This goes deeper. This hurts more. This sets you back.

Not a flesh wound penetrates. then how shall I draw this? Then there is the offense that's a spear.

That's a biggie. That cuts right through to the heart. It just really penetrates you.

Sends you reeling. May even bring on tears. May bring retaliation. Sometimes when we are offended our natural response is to be defensive and you offend back.

[21:07] Then we have two offenders and two who are offended. each one is trading barbs and sometimes we up the ante.

We may start out with a dart and we're flinging darts at each other and then somebody ups the ante.

They bring out bigger weapons and the next thing you know they're firing arrows at one another and as the exchange escalates they end up hurling spears at one another saying really damaging hurtful things saying the kind of things that the day after they wish they had never said but you can't take them back.

These are different kinds of offenses different levels of offense I suspect that probably all of us have been guilty of all of these if we have lived long enough and particularly is this true in marriages now I want to clarify something in this series that we are doing on offenses and their remedies and God's biblical dynamics for dealing with offenses I am not talking about marriage per se I'm talking about relationships in general these offenses work and operate the same way between friends between neighbors between people in the workplace all of these apply across the board it's just that you will find me using marriage as an illustration more often simply because a lot of people are married and they are very familiar with what you're talking about and because people who are married have much more access one to another which means there is much more opportunity for them to offend each other simply because they live together they are always almost always available as opposed to those with whom you have little contact over a period of time so

I want you to understand this is very important that this material on relationships is across the board marriage is just one facet of it and you're going to find so much of this that applies to relationships in general positive things that we say and do to one another strengthen our relationships these are the nuts and bolts in fact they are the nuts and bolts to romantic relationships as well it almost never fails that in a romantic situation or may not start out that way it's just a boy meets girl thing but the next thing you know they are spending some time together and they are what we call an item and they are dating or they are seeing each other on a regular basis and there they are look over there see them over there beautiful spring day they're over there sitting on the park bench and look and look how they're sitting very close to each other and she has her head leaning over on his shoulder and he is saying something to her do you think he is saying negative things or positive things he is telling her he doesn't know how he got along until she came along and that he thinks she is just the neatest thing that ever happened and she just looks up at him and flashes those big beautiful eyes and they are just kind of melting together what's happening there a relationship is being established and it's growing and it's being strengthened and it is feeding on the positive things that they are saying to each other and what they are saying to each other makes the other feel good feel loved feel valued feel cherished and their psyche is benefiting from that their self esteem is being raised

from that here is a person who thinks

[26 : 07] I am just wonderful I'm glad they have such good taste and we are thinking all kinds of wonderful things like that but fast forward a few years and listen in on the police radio car 24 car 24 please proceed to 826 Elm there is record of a domestic disturbance taking place the neighbor says she's not sure but she thinks she may have heard shots fired proceed with care and when the area's finest rolls in they find a shouting match taking place and they are in the business do you think they're saying positive things to each other do you think he's telling her you have just so enriched my life I don't know how

I lived before you came along he's not telling her that he's saying things that really hurt and she is very likely retaliating by saying things that really hurt him and each one knows where the other's hot button is and how to push it relationships are built upon positive exchanges both in word and in deed and you need you really need whether in a marriage or just a friendship you need to speak one to another the things that are edifying that build up now I'm not talking about laying it on thick or being phony or lying or flattery

I'm married to either it can be someone on the job or a neighbor or whatever and I'm not talking about just being some kind of goody two shoes I'm talking about if you're thinking it say it because they don't know you're thinking it unless you put it in words and tell them and what you're doing is building and solidifying a relationship parents and children ought to really concentrate on this because it's so very important so very important and the negative things that we say and do weaken relationships and they create a distance offenses offenses are a form of insulting one another think about it a verbal attack an insult is described as a verbal attack intended to hurt the feelings of another to assail another's character integrity intelligence or motive that's an insult and it's an offense you'll never amount to a thing you aren't worth a dime how many parents particularly fathers said that to their children and you know what children tend to believe it because it's coming from someone who's supposed to know and you can scar and wound a child's psyche at a very early age Barbara and I had a mutual agreement that there were certain things certain words that no matter no matter how angry I made her she couldn't say them and I couldn't say them to her and sometimes the temperature would rise because you're only human and what better place to exhibit it than a marriage right and we just said we agree by mutual agreement there are certain words that are off limits we will never say to each other never shut up you're stupid now there were times when I had to say dear I really question your reasonableness in this but not stupid no those words we could not use and we agree to that and when you tie your personal integrity to that you dare not violate it because if you compromise your personal integrity game over that's very very difficult a very lengthy process to repair can be done but not easily the nature of the offense plus the frequency of occurrence equals the net damage done to the relationship and it increases the emotional distancing between you unresolved unresolved offenses that are ongoing reduce the closeness once enjoyed and it is often not even realized often the couple doesn't even recognize that it has happened but there is that inevitable pulling apart just a little bit and you know over time over time with these offenses being repeated some of them darts some of them arrows some of them spears the distance gets further and further apart we just don't feel toward this person the way we used to feel because of all of those infractions all of the wounds we are walking around with arrows and spears and darts stuck in our spirit where's the healing where's the forgiveness how can these things be pulled out how can the healing be realized that's of course where we're going with this and it is just wonderful the provision that has been made

I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 4 for just a few verses here talking about the words that we are sharing Ephesians 4 and verse 29 and this isn't again I remind you this isn't just for the marriage this is for everybody but I would say maybe with special application to the marriage because once again we have such close proximity and availability to each other the opportunity for offenses is much greater and and the opportunity for the positive input that strengthens the relationship is there as well Ephesians 4 and verse 29 let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth but only such a word as is good for edification this is of course the word from which we get the word edifice or structure and it means to build up to strengthen to increase we are to build up or strengthen one another according to the need of the moment that it may give grace to those who hear think of that we are able to dispense grace grace to people by what we say to them do you realize that your words have that kind of power there is no object that can build a man up or tear a man down more than a woman's tongue

[35 : 38] I dare say most women most wives have almost no idea how much power leverage they have in their tongue you can destroy your husband with your tongue and husbands can do the same to the wife today we call that verbal abuse I guess that's what it is it's pretty aptly named and very often when that doesn't seem to get the desired job done it escalates to physical abuse if my words tearing her down and berating her don't bring her in line then I'll have to get physical and this has probably been brought to the fore more by an event that happened several years ago than perhaps anything since the women's movement started back in the 1920s when the issue was women's voting and that was that was

OJ Simpson's reported treatment of his wife before as most everybody thinks before he murdered her he had engaged in a lot of verbal and physical abuse and what it did sad to say somebody had to pay the price and it was his wife who did but it brought the issue of physical spousal abuse on the page one and all over the nation and in fact I understand that entire police departments all over the country changed some of their methodology and standards in dealing with cases of domestic violence like that they actually rewrote the playbook in some places in some cases because of that particular incident and the publicity that it got let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment that it may give grace to those who hear and do not grieve the

Holy Spirit of God what is that put in there for and how do you think that might fit how does that play into this picture I think the implication in the text is quite clear I think it is suggesting that if we allow unwholesome words to proceed from our mouth and words that do not build up but words that tear down demean people and belittle people that is grieving the Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption let all bitterness and anger and wrath and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice malice is is a word that

I remembered from from a kid in the eighth grade when we had to memorize Lincoln's Gettysburg address and he closed it by saying with charity for all with malice toward none and he was trying to provide some healing words for the great conflict that had taken place between the north and the south and what we call the civil war and if you have malice toward someone it's related to the term we're all familiar with malignant if you have a malignant tumor growing in your body it means to do you harm it is not a friend if you have a tumor that is described as benign that means it's not what it's supposed to be or where it's supposed to be but it won't hurt you it's harmless it's benign but if it's malicious if it's malignant it will grow and multiply and it will seek to take over your life because what it wants to do is grow and defend itself and it wants to use your body to do it it wants to eat you up from the inside that's malicious that's words words can chew people up devour them let it be put away from you along with all malice and be kind to one another tender hearted word tender hearted is just the opposite of hard hearted tender hearted means feeling compassionate flexible hard hearted

Jesus said was not so from the beginning Moses allowed you to give a bill of divorcement because of the hardness of your heart because of your stubbornness because of your unwillingness to be moved this is the opposite this is tender hearted forgiving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven you you know I've been thinking in connection with this series of messages and I've been reading over the years different things about the subject of revival and spiritual revival and I've never experienced one I don't know if anybody here has probably not but there were times in the history of Christianity when there were just mighty waves of spiritual revival that swept over an area and like I said the closest

[42 : 38] I've ever gotten to anything like this is reading about it I know there was a great New England awakening in the 1700s under the preaching of Jonathan Edwards and Whitfield and the Wesleys and men like that there was a great Welsh revival and I remember George Whitfield having gone to the fields and preached to the colliers and I wondered what in the world is a collier anyway and I come to find out that that is their name for a coal miner and he would go and preach and there would be hundreds and hundreds of coal miners out there listening to Whitfield preach and he said he could tell when the spirit of God was moving on them because their faces would give them away they come out of the coal mines just covered from head to toe with coal dust and when they were really moved with the message he said you could see the white streamlets down their cheeks that were caused by their tears flowing and it was a giveaway that they had been touched by the message revival comes when

God's people get right with God and get right with each other well what's what's to get wrong what's to get right offenses infractions injurious things that we say and do for which there is never an apology no repentance no forgiveness none granted none requested they just go on living in a perpetual kind of emotional misery revival comes and by the way it ought to be understood that revival revival is available only to believers unbelievers cannot experience revival unbelievers don't need revival they need vival they've never been alive spiritually but for someone who is alive spiritually for that person to be revived means to be refreshed renewed restarted it is it is a well again

I say I can only tell you what I have read about it because I've never experienced it but what I have read about it is manifested in attitudes and actions changing dramatically dramatically restitution being made without being required but being made voluntarily apologies being offered forgiveness being sought and forgiveness being granted all of that is nothing more than people treating each other as they ought that's all that is that is just being what we are supposed to be old wounds are healed old wrongs are made right and when something like that takes place the spirit of God honors it with his presence and with his blessing and it tends to spread and move out it's a glorious thing like

I say I've never experienced anything like that I've only been able to read about it but I don't know to what extent it could or should be available to believers today I've heard evangelists and preachers who have all kinds of formulas for revival and everybody's praying for so many days and around the clock and all the rest I'm not so sure that that's going to do the job because it hasn't seemed to have gotten the job done there is one word and I'm going to use this word you've heard me use it before it's not a new word you know it well but it is the key if there is a key to revival this has to be it and it's the word repent repent what you use to repent with is your will your volition and the only thing that you can repent of is the persuasion that you are wrong about whatever it might be that's involved because repentance is a change of mind and you have to have a good reason to change your position and that involves information and we'll talk more about that later but these things are absolutely key

I have told you before not only is this that which God has provided that works it's the only thing that does nothing else works in all the history of humanity nothing else works it starts with information and do you realize that's all I'm doing now is giving you information that's all this when you preach the gospel to people you're just giving them information you're giving them a basis for making a decision you're giving them a rationale for changing their mind about something and if it happens to be with the gospel with the good news you are giving them a reason to change their mind about themselves about their destiny about God about Jesus Christ who he is what he did why it matters why he came you're giving them information and a reason to change their mind about that when you repent you are listening and processing information mulling it over and if you have the courage and let me tell you something most people don't most people don't they don't have the courage to reverse themselves when they discover that they're wrong you know what you call that hard hearted it's stubborn when

[49 : 58] John the Baptist showed up in the wilderness preaching what was his message repent and he gave them a reason to do so he gave them new information that they didn't have and then John says now in light of what I just told you what are you going to do about it are you going to dig in your heels and say this is what I've always believed in or are you going to really weigh honestly this information and see it as the truth and get in line with it what are you going to do well the scribes and Pharisees rejected the counsel of God against themselves not being baptized by John what were they they were the hard hearted bunch they weren't going to change for them to be wrong are you serious for them to be wrong why

God forbid how could that ever be so they didn't repent when Jonah went to Nineveh what was his message repent forty days Nineveh will be overthrown and do you know what they believed him and they did and Nineveh was spared albeit only temporarily years later it was destroyed but repentance repentance always works I tell you something with this I'm going to close and I want you to think about this I don't really think there is anything more valuable more precious more acceptable to the heart of God than for one of his creatures to have the courage to say I'm wrong I have been wrong and

I am wrong and I admit it for a human to have the courage to say it's my fault it's nobody else's it's my fault hey I'm to blame in this do you not know I suspect you do because you're no different from

me do you not realize what a job this does on your ego it kind of takes it out throws it down on the ground and dances on it that's what it does with your ego and it does not feel good it is painful it hurts that's why we don't do it we protect that ego and we have that ego and we baby that ego and we protect it but to be able to say I need to reverse myself on this well the only thing that anybody ever needs to repent from is when they discover they've been wrong and maybe it's in the way you treat somebody maybe it's in things that you say to people at work maybe it's whatever we each have our own little sphere of difficulty to deal with what we are talking about what we are talking about is is really very simple and at the same time it's really very complex because nothing is simpler to understand than a human being and nothing is more complex and difficult to understand than a human being so we have a simple facet to us and a very complex facet to us and we're going to do the best we can to explore these but we have yet ahead of us some wonderful steps the information and the repentance and the apology and the request for forgiveness and the forgiveness and the restoration and the healing and every one of these steps is wonderfully provided for in scripture and the spirit of God is just urging us to apply these things and we will seek to do that and father we are grateful for everything that you've given us we realize that it has come to us through the finished work of Christ and we want to be diligent students of what you have provided we know we are so very lacking in many areas where we would like to have answers but if we will just be committed to implementing the answers that we do have not only will our lives be dramatically changed and improved but the lives of those around us as well and that's what we pray for each and every one of us in Christ's name amen amen