

Biblical Dynamics of Human Relationships 5

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 0 0] This account in Luke chapter 15 is generally regarded, and rightly so, as one of the tenderest expressions of a relationship severed and then reconnected in all of the Bible.

We have made much of the idea of relationships because the Bible makes much of it. It begins with a relationship in Genesis between the creature and the creator, and as the story unfolds, the relationship is severed.

The creature and the creation, which was part of what the sovereign God originally brought into focus, had undergone a cleavage.

It was not as God created it. Something dramatic had been introduced into that that resulted in an estrangement between the creator and the creature.

And all of the rest of the story that goes all the way up through the book of the Revelation has to do with the steps that God the creator has taken in order to bring the fallen creation back to himself.

[1 : 2 2] So, we are talking about relationships, and we are in the midst of presenting a step-by-step methodology for repairing and restoring an injured relationship.

And today we are talking about the crafting of an apology. And I realize that what I am giving you kind of sounds like a formula to be followed. I do not apologize for that because I suspect that that is really what it is.

There are various steps that have to be negotiated in order for the relationship to be repaired. And many times when people do succeed in repairing a broken relationship or a damaged relationship, they simply do not realize that they have gone through these actual steps.

It doesn't matter whether you realize you have gone through them or not. Just so you go through them. Because the end goal is always restoration.

It is always the salvaging of the relationship. The repair of it. Now, sometimes that is not done. And any time it is not done, any time a broken relationship cannot be fixed, it is always, always, always.

[2 : 4 4] Because one or both parties in the broken relationship is suffering from the hardness of heart. That is a stubbornness of will.

And will not take the steps that's necessary in order to repair it. Can all relationships be fixed? Yes, provided.

Both parties are willing to do so. Sometimes you have one that is and one that isn't. Then you are at a stalemate. It cannot progress.

It cannot be realized because it takes two to restore a broken relationship. And the apology is a very critical part of this. Now, I feel like I must apologize again because I have several things written out.

I have not only deemed to speak on the crafting of an apology, but I have crafted the crafting of an apology. And if I do not read it, I will leave out something that is important.

[3 : 46] And I do not want to do that because when I take a pen in hand and start writing, I just seemingly can't quit and I end up with several pages. But if you will bear with me and examine each of these as they are given and see if you believe they have validity or not.

I, of course, do or I wouldn't be bringing them. But they are yours to weigh. So, we are in the midst of presenting a step-by-step methodology for repairing and restoring an injured relationship.

The injury results from the offenses we inflict upon one another that wounds our psyche, that hurts our feelings.

As flawed humans, we say and do hurtful things to each other that build resentment in the one we offend.

The resentment in the offender toward the offended is the opposite of contentment toward the offender. Emotional distancing occurs between the offended and the offender.

[5 : 01] Often of a mutual nature because many times we are both the offender and the offended. When we offend and hurt one another, they often offend and hurt us in return.

Both are resentful and each moves further away from the other emotionally. Some people are so emotionally distant, they are not even on speaking terms.

It is difficult for them to even be civil, and often they do not put forth the effort. Of late, if you've been following any of the news, you can't hardly escape it.

There has been talk bandied about in the halls of Washington and Congress about a new civility. And we hear about this in the media, where there needs to be a new civility in Congress.

We are told that the public, and I agree with this because I am part of the public, the public really does get fed up with all of the vitriol and the name-calling and the bad-mouthing that goes on in these political parties.

[6 : 17] And it happens on both sides of the aisle. So after a while, it really gets old. It seems like all they can do is belittle one another and engage in name-calling and all kinds of accusations.

And it really wears quite thin with the public, because all the while this nonsense is going on, there is nothing really meaningful that is taking place that is for the public good.

And it was deemed advisable by some if maybe they changed the seating arrangement. And instead of having all of the Democrats on one side and all of the Republicans on the other side, so they could talk about those on the other side of the aisle, maybe it would help the civility of the situation, and everybody could treat each other a little more kindly if they would intermingle their seating and have Republicans and Democrats seated next to each other.

And that way, they'll have an expression for a more friendly, cordial attitude. And someone suggested, yes, it will make the other much more accessible.

When you go to bury the hatchet in their head, they will be nearby, and it will be a lot more convenient. We know human nature well enough to know that sometimes that's the way it's going to be.

[7 : 43] As believers, which some in Congress are, there are a number of committed men and women who know the Lord Jesus Christ who are serving in Congress.

And we are privileged to have one right here in our midst, in the person of Jim Jordan, who is a representative in the House. But we all know, of course, that many in Congress are not believers and do not profess to be.

And for those who are believers, we are under divine obligation to love. We need not like our fellow man, nor approve of his demeanor or his conduct or his positions.

Yet, we are obligated to love him. And that is with an agape love. Now, it ought to be made clear, we have no right to expect unbelievers in Congress or any place else to manifest Christian principles and Christian standards in their behavior.

They don't have the wherewithal to do so. But for those who name the name of Christ, while we may not like another person, we are commanded to love them.

[9 : 06] And you know there are a lot of people that are not likable. That does not give you the right to mistreat them, does not give you the right to be unkind to them, and it does not give you the right to not love them.

And there is a vast distinction between liking and loving. Some people just have a really obnoxious personality and you just as soon not be around them. Let's face it.

That's true. We all know people like that. You don't like them. But you don't have to like them. You do have to love them. Well, how can I possibly love them if I don't even like them?

Well, we love them by always saying and doing the kind biblical thing toward them. Agape love, which is the kind of love with which we are to love one another, means that you do the right thing and you say the right thing on behalf of the object of your love.

We are to always set about doing good and doing the right thing one for another, for the public in general or for strangers.

[10 : 20] Just because that's the right thing to do. And their behavior may be repugnant. Maybe something that we detest. Maybe that's all the more reason that we ought to do the loving thing.

When we love as we ought, we say and do the loving thing for our fellow man whether we feel like it or not. And very often, we don't feel like it.

That's why we don't do it. Because we don't feel like it. And we are acting, quite humanly, out of our emotions rather than acting out of our intellect.

True biblical love is not a matter of feeling. It's a matter of the will. It is a matter of doing. And there is a huge difference.

This is why God has designed love to be an act of the will, not an act of the feeling or the emotions. The will can be commanded, but the feelings cannot be commanded.

[11 : 31] One may command or order another person to do a certain thing, but you cannot command or order them to feel a certain way.

That is beyond their ability. They feel what they feel. The will, however, can be. Yet in our flesh, Romans 6, the feelings often dominate because feelings are related to passion while the will or volition stem from the intellect.

And when people act primarily out of their passion and feelings, rather than out of their intellect, you get in big trouble. You do all kinds of foolish, unwise things.

Foolish, unwise responses. Foolish, unwise deeds. Because we tend to let our emotions run away with us and determine our course of action.

And it is almost always a wrong course. The key to loving behavior is for the intellect and the feelings to be on the same page.

[12 : 42] Often, they are not. When we offend another, we inflict a wound that may be of varied intensity.

We liken the hurtful things that we say and do to one another to darts and arrows and spears.

Each is increasingly large and hurtful. We ourselves cannot remove the instruments of pain that are lodged in our soul or our human spirit.

Only the one who put them there can remove them. Now, this is really important. And what this means, of course, in a great many cases is they don't get removed.

They're permanent. They're there. There are people here this morning who have wounds wounds in their psyche, wounds in their spirit that have been there since grade school.

[13 : 57] They're still there. And any time you relive the incident that put them there, it hurts all over again.

Maybe it was a wound inflicted by a parent or a sibling or someone on the school ground play yard or a teacher. And it's never been resolved and it's still there.

You would just dismiss it if you could and not even think about it anymore. But you don't have the power to do that. Because in your human spirit you have a warehouse for data.

Everything you experience goes into that warehouse. it's kind of like a log book and everything is logged there. It's there in your psyche.

And if it's something that injured you and really hurt you terribly and deeply scarred you perhaps for life. It's still there. Children in particular who were abused as a child either physically, emotionally, sexually, sexually, have a deep wound inflicted in their psyche.

[15 : 21] And more often than not they are never resolved. They take them to their grave with them. Splattered all over the media over the past few years has been heart-rending incidents incidents of young people boys in particular but girls too who were abused by those in religious authorities as a priest of a parish or something.

And they abused these children sexually and molested them and scarred them. And many of these cases have just been coming to the fore and it was like the floodgate opened once a few of these young people well many of them aren't young anymore today.

Some of them are in their 50s and even older but they come forward and then that encourages others to come forward. And we've been reading publicized accounts painful publicized accounts of child molestation inflicted by those who were supposed to be the paragons of virtue and those individuals in whom children could completely place their trust and never worry about being violated.

And when somebody like that violates you somebody to whom you are supposed to be able to look as a protector when they betray you and violate you the wound is all that much greater.

Perhaps the only way it could be even greater would be to come from a parent and that has often happened. there are all kinds of people who are walking around today and if you could see them as they really are on the inside do you know what you would see?

[17 : 25] You would see their whole body covered with darts and arrows and spears sticking out all over them.

Wouldn't that be a sight as they walk down the street? It almost sounds like a cartoon drawing but there isn't anything artificial about it.

You don't see them because they are spiritual but that doesn't mean that they aren't real. That doesn't mean that they don't hurt. and each time something happens each time something triggers the memory of that painful incident they hurt all over again.

Why is that? It's because there's no healing. Why is there no healing? Because the only one who can remove the projectile whether it's an arrow or a dart or a spear the only one who can remove it is the one who put it there.

You can't remove it yourself. I know one of my idols John Wayne when he gets shot by an Indian arrow in the shoulder who pulls it out? Big John pulls it out.

[18 : 38] He just grits his teeth and pulls that arrow out but that's only in the movies. It doesn't work that way in real life. These wounds are there and the only way healing can be affected is to get the projectile out and the only one who can get it out is the one who put it there.

Back to the movies again. Here's our hero and he's got a bullet in him and the doctor says he's got to get that bullet out. Well there's no anesthetic so what does he do?

He gives him a shot of whiskey. In a western movie there's always a bottle of whiskey nearby. Gives him a shot of whiskey and then he gives him a bullet. He says here you've got a bullet in you.

Now I want you to bite this bullet. And you know bullets were made of lead so he takes this bullet and he puts it in between his teeth and the doc is ready and he says now when I go probing for this bullet you bite down on that bullet.

And of course he's grimacing in pain and the doc's got those forceps in there and he's digging and probing and everybody watching on the screen squeamish and pretty soon he pulls it out and he drops it and it clinks in the tray and now the healing can begin.

[20 : 03] But not while the bullet's in there. It's got to come out. It's got to come out. This is why in so many relationships there are so many things that distance people one from another because the one who wounded them and often it's the one who is closest to them because listen, nobody can wound you as deeply as one who loves you and one you love.

The wound is always more pronounced when it comes from an ultra trusted source because there is that sense of betrayal with it.

People are walking around like a walking arsenal of ordinance with items lodged in their psyche and healing cannot occur. Apologies are not extended and there is no way that we can overemphasize the importance of the apology.

I was talking about John Wayne a moment ago and I might have mentioned this to you before but it bears repetition and it really fits in now. I think I used this in one of my illustrations on the Marriage on the Rock radio program I did for WEEC and I referred to it as probably the most unfortunate line that John Wayne ever uttered in all of the movies that he made and I don't know that I've seen all of them but I've seen most of them particularly the westerns you know the shoot them ups.

This was set in the Old West of course during the 1800s and John Wayne was a colonel in the cavalry and here he was with his Yankee uniform on sitting on the back of this horse and preparing to do something and a young shaved tail lieutenant came riding up to him and pulled his horse up alongside and Wayne was looking to him as though he was supposed to be reporting on something and he asked him a question and this shaved tail lieutenant says well sir he said I'm sorry I didn't get never apologize mister it's a sign of weakness and right then and there John Wayne cut that young man off and made his case quite clear never apologize mister it's a sign of weakness and I just grimaced when

[22 : 56] I saw that and heard that on the screen oh boy how many men who want to think of themselves as being really manly are going to pick up on that and take that as good advice from the Duke never apologize eyes it's a sign of weakness he couldn't be more wrong and you know what he knows that now he knows that now apology is not rendered by a weak person only by a strong person weaklings never apologize for anything and I'll tell you why they don't it's because they are not big enough to admit that they've been wrong their egos can't handle it that's what's weak about them the bigger a person's ego is the weaker they are keep that in mind men especially need to remember that to be able to take responsibility for your actions and be willing to render a heartfelt apology because you have been wrong and you have wronged someone is an indication of all too rare real strength this is why we don't have it going on a whole lot because there are more weak people than there are strong people there are more people who cherish their ego a lot more than they do about making things right and it is ego busting no question about it when you apologize and admit that you have been wrong about something you think that makes you feel good

I've done it enough to know it doesn't make me feel good makes me feel rotten makes me feel about that high makes me feel embarrassed makes me feel all kinds of negative things it does not put me in a good light it puts me in a bad light I don't like to be in a bad light I like to be in a good light this is just human nature and what I am explaining to you now involves neglected dynamics that result in relationships not being what they're supposed to be not being what they could be I don't know about you but I think I think life is too short not to enjoy it to the max and the ultimate way to enjoy life is through loving fulfilled relationships nothing is as satisfying as that nothing nothing is so powerful as an apology to begin the healing process apology paves the way for requesting forgiveness

I say requesting because forgiveness is never demanded in fact forgiveness forgiveness is not even deserved forgiveness is a gift that the offender may or may not extend to the offended more about that later apology paves the way for requesting forgiveness requesting forgiveness paves the way for extending forgiveness forgiveness and that results in reconciliation and restoration apology is produced by repentance repentance means you change your mind you change your position and as a result of that you let the one you offended in on it you make them aware of the change of mind that has taken place in your heart how are they going to know that you apologize that signals them that you have a change of heart about what you said or what you did and the apology indicates that it is very very important when you repent of the offense committed you surrender your position and you take up the position of the one you offended think of that now here's why I call these dynamics because this is the way they work or this is the way they are supposed to work but they won't work if they're not implemented and they are implemented as an act of the will when you repent of the offense committed you surrender your position and you take up the position of the one you offended you surrender your position and join with the one you offended as their ally against yourself now how common is that not very you are now admitting that you were wrong and they were right how common is that not very and sometimes we feel that yeah in my heart of hearts

I know I'm wrong and I know that they're right but I'll die before I give them the satisfaction of admitting that what is that that's my big old gigantic ego that's talking and it's talking from a position of weakness and stubbornness that is the hardness of the heart insidious now let me make something clear this does not mean that you are abandoning your position or your principles or your standards and adopting theirs you may have a legitimate philosophical difference it may be a difference of opinion regarding anything economics or politics or philosophy or you name it doesn't mean that you are sacrificing or surrendering a conviction that you're holding or a principle that you embrace but it means that you apologize for the manner or the attitude or the unkind way that you displayed your position or principles and by the way this is what has become so irresponsibly ugly in congress for the past several years name calling invective vitriol across the aisle back and forth each republican and democrat lobbing verbal bombs to each other across the aisle just like a bunch of spoiled brats on the playground and these are supposed to be refined intelligent representatives of ours carrying on with that kind of language criticism condemnation of one another demeaning of one another's motives and all the rest of it these are the best we have to offer these are the leaders of our nation remarkable people no one likes it but the media and the media is the most self serving among us the media loves that they love the name calling they love the barbs they love the conflict because that sells conflict always sells when it is ho hum everything is moving smooth and running as it ought to where's the news in that there's no drama in that no excitement in that nothing in that that will enable you to say and wait till you hear what so and so said to so and so upcoming they wouldn't have any upcoming would they and that would hurt their ratings and hurting their ratings hurts the pocketbook so don't expect anything better from the media they love it when these congressmen go at one another and call the president names and call this one names and that one names and impugn the character of this one and invective on this and assail the motives of another that's all good stuff for the media that sells they like it frankly it's a major turn off for me as I look at grown people conducting themselves that way and I think and they're supposed to be doing the nation's

business they can't even treat each other with civility and kindness playing musical chairs in congress having everybody seated among themselves mixing the politics like they do is mere window dressing that is designed to appease a fed up public don't be fooled by it nothing has changed it can only graduate from window dressing if sincere apologies are rendered that are as public as were the past invectives i'm not going to hold my breath waiting for a congressman or a senator to get on national tv and say thus and so and thus and so and thus and so i said about my colleague the other day i sincerely want to apologize i repent of that and i'm sorry that i said it and i'm asking for his forgiveness i owe him and the public an apology don't hold your breath but that's what ought to be going on if they're talking real civility and not just window dressing and you know what would happen can you imagine this have a revival breakout in congress wow that would be a first wouldn't it and you know what it could come from it could be catching it could be infectious it would be nothing more than responsible leaders of our nation treating each other as they ought that's all it would be and it would be headline news nevertheless apology and forgiveness opens the floodgates of genuine goodwill and nothing else can do this is there anything else we can do nope nothing not if you want the right result and the right result is right relationships and restoration and compatibility doesn't mean that you agree with the person's position philosophy politics goals or anything else but it means you will reign in the way you address them and treat them and the language you use about them you can be very accurate and very true and very on the mark without being unkind or nasty you can just speak the truth and state the facts and you don't have to do it in an unkind or harsh way is there anything else we can do no i've already said that no there isn't but do you know what that doesn't keep us from trying and i call it

[36 : 34] I call it apologizing on the cheap how do you apologize on the cheap well you do it in such a way that first of all you preserve the ego that's the number one goal isn't it preserve the ego none of this business of eating humble pie i hate the taste of crow don't want to eat crow so in order to apologize on the well i'll tell you what let's just suppose something with which many of you can identify husband wife spat real big fight not just a spat fight lots of unfortunate unkind things were said

i'll take the responsibility of having been the offender because in our marriage that's the way it usually was her majesty was almost always on the receiving end so short of going to her and saying honey i owe you an apology yesterday when i said thus and so and thus and so i was out of line cannot possibly justify it God has convicted me of it i'm repenting of it and i want to apologize and ask your forgiveness oh i don't want to do that no Marv there's got to be another way aha how about a dozen red roses delivered to her dozen red roses and a box of

Esther price kind that she likes i don't like she knows i won't get into them because it's dark chocolate and you've got to be a connoisseur of chocolate to like dark chocolate so get her box of dark chocolate and a dozen red roses you know what she would say you know what she would say i know exactly what she now this didn't happen but let me tell you something it could very easily have happened it is not a stretch and i know exactly what she would say i know exactly bless her heart i know exactly what she would say she say well these are very nice Mark what are these for what are these for and i was you know and she would say no i don't know and it starts getting uncomfortable and

i begin to squirm a little bit and i say well you know about what what happened yesterday and i want you to notice something this is why i call this crafting the apology about what happened yesterday what am i talking about when i say that i'm talking about a thing an event something that happened you know what she would say just like a prosecuting attorney she would say what are you talking about what happened yesterday she wants details she wants me to replay what i said and let me tell you something that's the only way the apology will take she needs to know that i know exactly what it was that offended her and how it hurt her that helps her to heal when she knows

I know how much it hurt her and as long as I am general and evasive all in order to protect my ego I'm giving her an apology on the cheap and guess what the forgiveness is going to be like you got it it will be forgiveness on the cheap and the real restoration will not take place we're talking about an in depth thing here and this is really important but when you spell it out and instead of saying this is for what for what happened yesterday almost as if I was just an innocent bystander and this thing happened you know no no that's not the way it was at all it isn't for what happened yesterday it's for what I said and did yesterday makes all the difference in the world you've got to define it spell it out that's why it's called crafting an apology and you know something with every detail you rehash in what you did wrong each one of them shoves the knife in your ego a little bit further a little bit further and that's exactly what you need that's exactly what you need and

[42 : 37] I have found myself in that position over the years of spelling out these details and eating this humble pie and all the while I am saying to myself I am saying to myself Marv you don't ever want to go here again and you know what that does it impacts my behavior anybody can repent of anything for weekend another it want other what shit we extend to what eats how my friends and need a hard choice is to give some pride is that thousand Two can be an no two can change If it isn't genuine, you can't maintain it.

You'll slip right back into the old mood again. It is changed behavior over time that is an indication of real, genuine repentance. And when the repentance is genuine, and we are really broken, and there is remorse over the offense, we will not have difficulty in crafting the apology.

Because a genuine apology issues forth from genuine repentance. It is a beautiful thing. It is just so seldom really applied, even by Christians.

More often than not, we have an argument, we have a disagreement or what. There is wounds inflicted back and forth both ways. Hurt done, damage done, distance created.

And the only thing we are willing to do to try to resolve it is just dummy up and try to pretend that it never happened.

[44 : 42] And let everything cool down and it will get back to normal. No, it won't. No, it won't. You widened the emotional distance a little bit more.

And this is on the part of both parties. And it isn't just husband and wife. It can be co-workers. It can be neighbors. It can be kids at school.

This is the way it works. These are biblical dynamics that are designed to impact and fix injured relationships on whatever level the relationship is.

And it's the only thing that works. You can go on. You can be on speaking terms. You can say hi in the hallway when you meet and everything. But it's not the way it was because there is still that issue, that thing that has never been resolved.

And my contention is life is too short to spend it that way. Parents sometimes guilty of this.

[45 : 59] Instead of making things right. Instead of a dad or a mom apologizing to a child.

Well, the child is only six years old. You don't apologize to a kid. Oh, yes, you do. Whatever gave anybody the idea that because a child is a child, they aren't entitled to an apology.

Only grown-ups get that. That's nonsense. We can hurt, wound, offend a child by broken promises, by bad behavior, by setting bad example.

And what do we do? We need to apologize. We need to apologize to the child. And do you know what a lot of parents will do? Instead of apologizing, humbling themselves, getting down on their level, and talking to them, and telling them, Daddy really blew it.

I'm sorry. That was a bad thing for me to do. A bad thing for me to say. You deserve better. I really fumbled the ball there, son. And I want you to forgive me.

[47 : 11] Instead of doing that, you know what we do? We apologize on the cheap. Just like we do with the roses and the Esther Price. You just go out and buy the kid a new toy.

And he will just get the unspoken idea that you're sorry, kind of, and you're giving him this new toy to make up for it and to smooth things over.

Well, it doesn't work, Dad. It won't take the place of humbling yourself and apologizing. And the reason apology is so important, and the Scriptures refer to this time and again, is because the word apologia in the Greek.

Apology in the English. Apologia literally means with or from aporo means with or from and logia is the word from which we get the word logic and logos which is word and apologia apology means with words with words with words you apologize with words and sometimes they can really be hard to utter we stutter and stammer around and we look for we look for ways of expressing an apology so it still won't make us look bad let me tell you something you can't do it deal with it deal with it eat it go ahead and look bad it will be good for you it will be good for you it is amazing how this works when the ego is crushed

I'm not talking about people being humiliated there's a difference between being humiliated and being humbled one is positive and one is negative no one is asking people to get on their hands and knees and crawl and beg we're not talking about humiliation we're talking about humbling and it's an admirable thing to do scripture soundly recommends humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God and he will exalt you in due time and when we refuse to apologize it is nothing but ego it is nothing but human pride that keeps us from doing it and I do not think there is anything so injurious to relationships throughout the world more than human pride I want to close with Ephesians chapter 5 and a couple of verses here verses 3 through 5 talking about fornication uncleanness covetousness let it not once be named among you as become of saints neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor jesting which are not convenient that is which is not befitting or not appropriate or as one renders it which is beneath you and this is the kind of language that sometimes people use one upon another that inflicts these wounds but rather a giving of thanks and let all things be done unto edification if we learn the fine art of crafting an apology it will only be because we have learned the fine art of repentance and that which follows the apology and this is very very important is the request the request for forgiveness and when you do that you are putting the offended party in the driver's seat and you are rendering yourself voluntarily powerless that is not a very comfortable feeling either but it's a very necessary one and you know the way these things work when you understand it you can also understand why it is so seldom applied because human nature being what it is doesn't want to do this that's our problem back to the hardness of the heart father we are so grateful for the provision that you have made for us that none of these things are beyond us even though they are difficult and even though they are crushing to the ego the wherewithal to act responsibly in fulfilling these principles is very much with us you have endowed us that way and we pray that you will impress upon our minds and hearts that any failure or unwillingness on our part to implement these things is nothing short of blatant disobedience to you thank you for having provided for us these wonderful principles that you have utilized yourself in relationship with your creatures we bless you for it

[53 : 34] we look to you for further enlightenment and understanding in Christ's name Amen