

Restoring A Friendship

Matthew 18:15

“We used to be friends, until I heard that she said. . .” He and I used to hang out all the time, until he. . .” before he. . .” Any relationship sooner or later experiences conflict. The relational landscape is littered with former friendships that were broken because the people involved were unable or unwilling to resolve some kind of conflict. God’s desire is for his children to get along (Phil. 2:2-4; 4:2)! He is not honored when two Christians experience a rift in their relationship. God knows that our sin natures are still active, however, and that from time to time we will find ourselves at odds with a Christian brother or sister. For this reason, He has given us very clear instructions in Matthew 18 on restoring broken relationships.

Read Matthew 18:15

1. Resist talking to others

“between thee and him _____:”

Most of us, when wronged, instantly look for someone to tell. Perhaps it is we want to spite the person because they hurt our feelings. Perhaps we want affirmation from others that, “Yes, you are right,” and “Boy, are they wrong!” As strong as the temptation might be to tell others about the conflict, the Bible says we should keep the matter only between the involved parties. The restoration process gets off to a great start when you are able to begin the conversation by saying “We have a little problem, but I came to you right away, and I haven’t talked to anyone else about it.

2. Evaluate your motives

- *What is the goal of the restoration process, as stated in the last phrase of verse 15?*
- _____

When you get ready to go to a person, be sure your motive is not to shame him or make him pay, but to restore!

3. Schedule a peace conference

The process of restoring a relationship is not easy, and the hardest part is found in one of the smallest words in the verse: GO! Take the initiative! When we’ve been hurt by someone, our tendency is to move away from them. We see them coming and avoid them. However, Scripture tells us we should move toward them. You, as the offended party, have the responsibility to go to that person and restore the relationship.

4. Tell him his fault

Telling the other person how they have hurt you should be done very carefully. Remember, the object is not to “hurt them back,” or even to make them realize how much they have hurt you, but to restore a hurt relationship. If you are working on this as a group, make a list of common things that could cause a relational rift, and then share some examples of how you might approach a person who wronged you in that way.

5. Offer reconciliation

Remember the goal – to win your brother! When you approach the person, keep these two things in mind:

- a. Accept responsibility and ask forgiveness for any part you may have had in the conflict.
- b. Emphasize reconciliation, not resolution. Reconciliation focuses on the relationship, while resolution focuses on the problem. It is unrealistic to expect everyone to always agree about everything. We can re-establish a relationship with our brother even if we still do not resolve all of our differences.

6. Remove the offense from your record

This doesn't mean you forget that it ever happened or that there won't be ongoing consequences. It does mean that you aren't going to hold this against the person anymore.

7. Evaluate the outcome

Almost every time, following these six steps will restore the relationship with your friend. In those cases where the relationship is not restored, Scripture outlines the next steps to be taken in verses 16 and 17.

Friendships Under Fire?

List the name(s) below of anyone with whom you have a relational rift:

This is your project list! Place a check mark next to their name when you have completed the steps outlined in Matthew 18 to restoring that relationship.

NAME	RESTORED!
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____