

## Step by Step Restoration

Number three in the series: *Make Peace Not War*

*Biblical tools for handling conflict*

January 16 & 17, 2010

### Intro:

Remember the last time you went through your stuff? Maybe you were cleaning out the garage. Has it been a long time? You were trying to decide what to keep and what to toss. You asked yourself why you've been hanging on to certain things: old cassettes, empty boxes, stacks of Sunset magazines from the 80's, and tools that don't work. You weren't sure what to do with some of the items - for instance, the old furniture. *That table* you got from your aunt is dusty, wobbly, and deeply scratched. *You may feel like just ditching it; but it's too valuable to trash.* Fortunately, there is a better option. You can follow a step by step restoration process. It takes *time* and *work* and it can be *messy*, but the beautiful results will be worth the effort.

We've been talking about *handling conflict*. Sometimes we feel like just giving up. But we don't need to trash what can be functional once again. Many broken relationships can be restored, just like furniture!

Sue in the office knew I'd be playing with this analogy, so she told me about how her husband is into restoring old furniture. *Merle's able to see the beauty beneath the damage.* Once the dust clears and the process is complete, *anyone can see value* where there once was only brokenness. *This 100 year old craftsman table* was covered with turquoise spray paint, but Merle got to work and you can see the result. What had deteriorated to the point it was worth only \$5, would now be valued at \$250. It required *a total makeover!*

Last week I talked about the fact that we don't need to address every little imperfection. Nitpicking doesn't make peace, it *demonstrates irritation* and *creates offense* like trying to fix a tiny scratch with rough sandpaper. The Scriptures

say *there are offenses* we can and should overlook. You don't need to fight every battle. There are times when we should let it go. But *there are also times when we should not let it go.* Overlooking *every* offense can be *peacefaking*.

Today I'll talk about a way to approach confrontation. We'll concentrate on one verse that provides a pattern for the process of *restoration*.

Gal 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Here we will find...

Six steps for straightening things out:

*Brothers...* This is addressed to Christians and pertains to how we deal with each other. So, step one is to...

**1. Consider what you have in common with the person you seek to correct.** Ask yourself...*Are we on the same page?* If not, you don't have a *starting point* to build your bridge. Is this person interested in honoring God? If not, then *alter your expectations*. Do you both subscribe to the authority of God's Word? If not, *don't expect them to give a rip when you start to quote the Bible.* Different methods are needed when you don't share common commitments.

We are to hold other believers accountable, and this can necessitate confrontation. **1 Cor 5:1-3** provides an example of how there must be a standard in the fellowship. **1 Cor 5:9-13** I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. *Don't expect the people who are not signed onto the team to play by the rules.* He goes on to say, *set the standard high for other Christians. Expect them to demonstrate integrity. A Christian's lifestyle should match his worldview. But a nonChristian's lifestyle will match his worldview too.* **12** What

## business is it of mine to judge those outside the church?

I've said it before, I see the Christian church making two mistakes in this regard:

1. Expecting those who are *not* Christians to act Christian.
2. *Not* expecting Christians to act Christian!

**S** - So, step one it to **consider what you have in common with the person you seek to correct.** You don't hold someone who isn't a Christian to Christian standards any more than you should be expected to act like a Buddhist. ...*if someone is caught in a sin...* Here's the second step:

### **2. Objectively evaluate the nature of the offense.**

Ask yourself, *What has this person done? Really? Have they fallen into sin, or is the real issue that you just don't like their personality?* This process is for someone who is distanced from God in some way, not just for someone you don't agree with or who doesn't agree with you. Be objective. Don't overreact fueled by your own emotional hurt. Is the problem really something that is hurting the person's relationship with God and others, or are you just being manipulative, a control freak who demands your way?

Not just **caught** meaning *busted*, but **caught up by**, meaning *overtaken*. The picture is of someone being *chased down* and *pounced upon* by sin. The word brings with it the idea of being **caught** off guard, surprised. It literally means *to be taken before*: think of a deer being *taken out before it even knew* it was being hunted. Synonyms: *snared, trapped, tangled*.

Some different principles come into play when the issue is a *deliberate* thing or *consistent* pattern. This verse is about how to help the person who has *tripped and fallen* and these steps may not be the perfect approach with the person who has *walked into the disaster intentionally*.

I saw a commercial about what appeared to be a Special Olympics race. A young man is running strong and then he falls. But the others don't just run by, they stop and lift him. Then they cross the finish line together, arm in arm.

Friends fall. They need you. This verse is about *caring enough to stop and help*. **6:2**. Even if the problem is terribly painful, you may be able to *lift your friend* and make something beautiful out of a terrible trip-up.

...*you who are spiritual...* Here's the third step:

### **3. Engage in some introspection about your qualification.**

Ask yourself, *Am I trusting in God? Or am I trusting in my own amazing abilities? Am I following the Lord's leading here, or am I just flying solo into this battle?*

What does **spiritual** mean? It *doesn't mean perfect*. That's clear from many passages all through the Bible. The context in this letter is about Spirit controlled living. The verses just before ours say, **Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other (5:25,26)**. When we are *walking by the Spirit*, we are in a position to be of help to others. The list of *the fruit of the Spirit* contrasts sharply with *the deeds of the flesh*. Read them in **Gal 5**. Which ones are driving you? **Love, joy, peace and patience, or hatred, jealousy, rage, and selfish ambition?**

Yes, **some introspection** is needed. What does being **spiritual** look like? Think of the first two lessons in this series. I've already talked about *seeking to glorify God* in every relationship. And talked about the importance of *owning our part in each situation*. These are sample aspects of handling things *spiritually*.

If I'm not thinking God's way about myself, the other person, or the problem at hand, then I'm unlikely to be of much good in peacemaking. We need God to make it work.

...*should restore him...* Here's the fourth step:

### **4. Focus on the goal, which is not to hurt but to help!**

I remember my dad's response whenever I came in

bleeding from a bike crash. *Your knee is scraped? Let's just lop off your leg.* Some parenting technique! Kids don't complain so much if your immediate response is to take them out to the garage and plug in your skill saw!

*As amputation isn't the answer for every injury, so severing the relationship doesn't do much to fix it! So, ask yourself, What am I really trying to accomplish? Hurt, or help?*

This word, translated **restore**, means *to set a broken bone*. It is also used in the Bible to refer to mending a net. Used concerning ethics, it means to *strengthen, to straighten, to make something what it should be* one again, to *repair*. This involves being honest and taking initiative.

I broke my hand playing basketball. There was a loud noise and my finger was off to the side, *nearly upside down*. No one said, *that's just Larry. He's like that*. Overlooking the problem would not have been good. No one pretended. Couldn't ignore the issue. They cared about me enough to take it seriously. They told me the truth and helped me.

When the doctor saw the x-ray, he said that it was a *spiral fracture* and that he would have to *set the bone* so it could heal properly. What needed to be done really hurt. Do a study on how God disciplines his children. What is good for us doesn't always feel good. And God can work indirectly, using someone close to us to straighten us out.

This verse is about *helping others to admit their brokenness and experience healing* so they won't go through life bent. *That's the goal in confrontation, not making yourself look good*. If you relish the chance to show the person just how wrong they are, then your heart is probably not in the right place. Eagerness displays pride. Handle it in a way that builds up the other person, not in a way that builds you up. **Eph 4:29** Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. The goal is to **restore** others, to **help**, not to **hurt**.

...**gently**. Here's the fifth step:

### **5. Keep your cool and don't seek to retaliate.**

Ask yourself, *How am I behaving? Am I lashing out to get back at this person? Am I so furious that I can't see straight?*

Behavior comes from beliefs. *Do you believe you are righteous and this other person is wicked? Actions come from attitudes. Are you full of arrogance and rage? Think of where that leads!*

**Eph 4:26 - in your anger do not sin.**

You can be firm, but if you attack in anger, nothing good will come from it. **James 1:20 - man's anger does not lead to God's righteousness.** Gentleness is more powerful than bad behavior. **Prov 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath...** Here's Paul's instructions to Timothy: **2 Tim 2:24-26 The Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses...** People tend to choke when correction is jammed down their throats. That's why Paul also said to correct **with great patience and careful instruction** (2 Tim 4:2).

**Patience** is needed because healing takes time. And **Careful instruction** is mentioned, as opposed to *careless*. Satan is active! *Remember that series I taught? He gets you thinking about what you deserve and in the name of your rights you retaliate.* Keep your cool: you're not just leveling somebody, you're lifting them, restoring them **gently**. *Don't shoot the wounded! Needs aid!* Make this a matter of prayer. After all, gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit (5:23).

*But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.* The final step:

### **6. Be careful about falling in the same hole.**

Ask yourself, *Am I about to slip into sin myself? Might I be close to dishonoring God in this situation? Am I causing damage*

to this relationship? That's what you thought the other person was guilty of doing. These are the concerns that led you to confront in the first place. Recognize that these or any other sins can be true of you!

Note an interesting nuance here: earlier the pronoun *you* was plural (*y'all*), now it switches to the singular: *I'm talking about you*. *Watch yourself*. In what areas might *you* be tempted? Anyone can fall. We need to show the humility that admits: *this could happen to me!* **1 Cor 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!**

Maybe the temptation that claims the most people is the tendency to lose love. The Bible says that without it, we are reduced to nothing. Don't give up. Love looks out for the best interest of the other person, even when it involves sacrifice. **Gal 5:13-15 ...serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.** Destruction is not our destiny. We don't want to trash that relationship that is a little wobbly and broken because there is *value* there. Instead, we **speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15)**. Love is the crucial context in which we restore relationships and make peace.

**Prayer.**