

Restoring Trust April 7, 2019

We have talked a lot about forgiveness which is letting go of the past.
We have talked about cleaning out the space between any two people in the present
But how about the future?
What about building or rebuilding relationships as we move into the future.

We all have relationships that have been damaged.
Rebuilding those relationships depends on one key ingredient.

TRUST = Confidence that the other person is both desirous
AND capable of protecting what's in your best interest, even
when greatly tempted to do otherwise.



When someone fails to do that, it's called . . .

BETRAYAL = A person has knowingly (or unknowingly)
departed from the expectations that are assumed to govern the
relationship.



Trust is broken.
The relationship is seriously damaged.

Can trust be restored?

Jesus will open your eyes to see the pathway to restoring trust
but it's definitely not for the faint of heart.

Here we go.

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1. Offender's action -- Repentance

Repentance takes the responsibility for the wrong that has been done and the pain that has been caused and makes a commitment to change.

This is tricky.

What's the first thing you do when you get caught doing something wrong?
You say, "I'm sorry, I won't do it again."

Sounds good!

But sometimes we can show all the signs of repentance,
when we're only just trying to lessen our consequences,
trying to get back into the other person's good graces.

There may be no deep recognition of our brokenness
and desperate need for radical change.

We may have lived with some messed-up patterns of behavior so long
that they no longer think seem all that bad to us.

So, by a person's words alone, you can't tell if the person is really repentant.

Take David, for example.

The prophet Nathan came to David and exposed his sin of adultery and murder.

David's immediate response was, **I have sinned against the Lord! 2 Samuel 12:13**

Good response!

But how deep did his repentance go?

I'll tell you when we find out.

Nathan then goes on to tell David the upcoming consequences of his sin.

You are not going to die. (relief)

**But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the LORD,
the son born to you (the son of Bathsheba) will die.**

That's a devastating consequence.

David pleads with God for the life of the child with fasting,

Spending 7 nights laying in sackcloth on the ground.

But after 7 days the child died.

This is the critical moment when we find out just how deep his repentance goes.

If he's only repenting to minimize his consequences

or just to secure the favour of the people he'd offended,

then this severe consequence would make him say,

What's the use of repenting?
I'd might as well not bother trying to change,
because it didn't do me any good.

What does David do?

His attendants were afraid to even tell David that his son had died.
If he was this distraught while the child was still alive,
what will he do when he finds out the child has died?
Will he lash out, angry over his losses, faulting God for his lack of compassion?
Will he fall into self-pity and despair, mourning his losses
and protesting the unfairness of his suffering?

Let's see. **2 Samuel 12:20**

Then David got up from the ground.
After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes,
he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped.

Sometimes what is lost as a result of our sin is permanent.
The truly repentant person will accept their losses,
put on their new clothes, and without anger and self-pity move into the future.
Yes, some doors permanently close,
but, listen to the next verse:

David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and he went to her and made love to her.
She gave birth to a son and they named him Solomon.

God closed a door, but he opened a window.

1. Offended's response -- Forgiveness

The response to repentance is forgiveness.
Forgiveness is the willingness to abandon one's right to resentment and retaliation.

Imagine if Bathsheba had held onto unforgiveness.
After all, David is to blame for the death of her son.
That's a pretty big deal!
What if she'd said:

**Get out of my sight.
I don't want anything to do with you.**

She would not have had her son Solomon – who becomes the next king of Israel.

Unforgiveness too carries a huge cost – one that we may never know.

But repentance and forgiveness, as essential as they are,
don't necessarily restore trust between two people.
Much more work needs to be done.

2. Offender's action -- Humility

Real repentance is expressed by humility in word, in action, and in attitude.

A humble person won't be saying,
“Well, I've said I was sorry. What more do you want? Get over it already!”
NOT humble.

Do you want to know what humility looks like in real time – when emotions are intense?
A humble person will always observe the rules of fair fighting.
I have **Fair Fighting Rules**. Take home and APPLY!

AND, if humility is repeatedly demonstrated . . .

2. Offended's response -- Gives grace

The proper response to seeing humility is to give grace.

This is a spiritual law that operates through the universe.

1 Peter 5:5-6

“God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”
Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,
that He may exalt you in due time.

Humility attracts grace, like a magnet.

3. Offender's action -- Commitment to truth

The offender must say, “I want to tell the truth about what happened.
I *want* you to know the truth.”

You can tell the truth and survive the storm.
Or you can hide the truth, and when found out, try and survive the hurricane.
A commitment to truth isn't figuring out what the other person knows
so you only have to admit to smallest amount possible.
A commitment to truth isn't just telling the truth because you were caught
and have no choice.

A commitment to truth is taking the *initiative* to share the truth because you've come to realize the other person has a right to know, even if it piles up your own consequences.

So, just how important this step to the restoration process?

Listen to what God says. Jeremiah 5:1

Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, look around and consider, search through her squares.

If you can find but one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city.

That's how God operates, which means that's how the universe works.

3. Offended's response -- Willingness to take a measured risk

A realistic and healing response to seeing a commitment to truthfulness is a willingness to take a measured risk.

But always, your ultimate trust is in the Lord.

If you're staying in sync with him, you can trust explicitly to have your back.

4. Offender's action -- Giving

The offender takes responsibility for giving in words, things, help, understanding, and love.

Catch this great nugget of wisdom from **Proverbs 21:14**.

A gift given in secret soothes anger,
and a bribe concealed in the cloak pacifies great wrath.

The offender now instead of being selfish and taking things away, starts to give, give, give.

And the key word is "*concealed*"

I think that indicates that there is absolutely NO expectation to receive in return.

This isn't giving to get!

Just giving, end of sentence.

4. Offended's response -- Receives gifts

The offender responds by being willing to receive gifts, not rejecting them,
and may *possibly* start to give back.

If the receiver is convinced that the gift is not
a veiled attempt to get something they want,
they can hopefully relax and enjoy the gift.

But what if the gift is given and rejected? **I don't want anything from you!**
What then?

5. Offender's action – Develops patience

The offender develops a love that endures all things
and will continue to give love even when the other cannot receive love.

The offended person will test the patience of the other over and over,
and again and again.

They're trying to resolve the *tormenting* question,

“How long will this last?”

“Haven't I heard this before?”

If they're met with an exasperated,

“Just get over this already!”

They'll add more time to the healing process. *However* . . .

5. Offended's response -- Shortens the waiting period

When the offended sees consistent patience,
there is a willingness to shorten the waiting period
and move to the next step in the healing process.

6. Offender's action -- Eases the burden of the other

The offender finds ways to ease the burden of the other.

They find ways to save time and space for the other person
and to pray for the welfare of the person they hurt.

They find ways to release the other person from pressure and from expectation.

6. Offended's response – Receives kindness

The offended person is willing to receive the kindness of the offender.

While this may seem like a passive response,

it is a huge tipping point in the relationship.
Receiving gifts generates gratitude – a healing salve that opens the door to further healing.

7. Offender's action -- Must forgive

If the healing is not yet complete, the offender will need to forgive those who haven't yet forgiven him/her.

This is perhaps the most crucial moment in the healing process.

The offender is going to be tempted to say,

This is impossible!

What's the use?

Just forget about it.

I'm out of here.

Or this self-destructive conclusions:

I might as well just go back to my old behavior!

Lethal decision, meaning the person has lost sight of something David understood.

David's words to Nathan were, "I have sinned against the Lord,"

But, wait a minute!"

Didn't David sin against Bathsheba?

And how about Uriah who he had killed?

THEY are the ones he sinned against.

I mean, if someone has betrayed me,

I want them to know they have sinned against ME!

But think about it.

If you sinned primarily against a **person**,

then if that person won't forgive you

or if that person ends up doing something even worse to you,
you kind of feel off the hook.

You'll be tempted to say,

Forget it! Forget you!

BUT, if you understand what David understood . . .

Against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

Not so easy to dismiss my need to make a radical change

regardless of how the other person responds to my attempts
to restore the relationship.
I have to answer to God! And he doesn't play games.

7. Offended's response -- Gives encouragement

Seeing the sincerity of the offender, the offended is willing to give
encouragement against possible accusations from other people.

Something is definitely changing.

Up until now, the offended person has been hyper-vigilant,
scanning the horizon for any tiny infraction.

But this must change, both for the sake of the relationship
and for the sanity of the offended person.

I love the story of Elijah, who after 3 years of draught, begins to pray for rain.
Every so often he sends his servant to "Go and look toward the sea." He's looking
for a rain cloud. Six times his servant goes and says, "There is nothing there."
And so Elijah says, "Oh well, just what I expected. That's that."

NO! the seventh time the servant reports,
"A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea."

Woohoo! And he started running to get ahead of the downpour.

We will find whatever we are looking for.
If you are waiting for the other person to screw up again,
so, you feel justified in your continuing anger,
that's what you'll probably find.

BUT if you are looking even for the smallest sign of positive change,
you may find it, welcome it, and start running in a new direction.

Watch for it! Expect it!

This also means recognizing that a person's failures don't represent the entire person.
One's failures don't erase or negate all the good that has been there all along.

Giving encourage means it's ok to highlight what the other person has done well and continues to do well.

Giving encouragement means that you are cheering for their success and actively looking for and expecting positive new growth in both of your lives.

8. Offender's action -- Understanding the pain one has caused the other

The offender begins to better realize the pain they have caused and can listen empathetically.

You'd think this step should come much earlier in the process.

But it doesn't.

It can't.

If I've betrayed someone, when I get caught, I'm overwhelmed with my own emotions:
guilt and shame over what I've done,
fear of the consequences coming my way.

There's no space for empathy over the pain I've caused the other person.

BUT there will be no ultimate healing of the relationship until the offender can weep not for their own loss, but for the losses of the other.

8. Offended's response -- Shares the pain

The offended shares the pain and thereby begins to release the pain.

If the offended senses that the offender actually feels remorse for the pain they caused and understands the full devastating effects of what they have done, the offended may begin to share their pain because they can trust they'll get an empathetic (not self-protective) response.

This release of the pain moves the healing process forward by leaps and bounds.

9. Offender's action -- Proven faithfulness

There is only one way for faithfulness to be proven – over time.

If you have truly repented in humility and are doing the hard work of change, time is on your side.

It takes time, it takes endurance, it takes persistence, it takes repeated effort, it takes consistency, it takes a willingness to give, repeatedly over a long period of time.

9. Offended's response – Trust . . . maybe

The offended is willing to say, “Maybe I can trust you again.”

Why maybe?

There are no formulas in life that can guarantee results.

We are all called to do what is right without trying to control outcomes.

As the Bible says,

“If it is possible, *as far as it depends on you*, live at peace with everyone.

