

Week Twenty: **“Restoring Broken Fellowship”**
Day One: **“Talk to God First/Take the Initiative”**

Read: Matthew 5:23-24 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, p. 1082)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, pp. 152-155

Reflect: Think back to times when you (a) avoided conflict, (b) created conflict, and (c) resolved conflict. In each case were you responding appropriately following the Holy Spirit’s guidance? If not, how do you now see you should have handled those situations?

Dig: When conflict arises the first place to turn is to God—or to ‘vent vertically’ as the *Purpose-Driven Life* puts it.

Read how David did this in Psalm 13 (p. 598) and Psalm 59 (p. 630).

What do you see happening throughout the course of those Psalms—in other words, map out the progression of David’s ‘venting.’

Read Matthew 5:23-24 again and note that this passage doesn’t say anything about whose fault it is. Who is instructed to take the initiative?

What if ‘your brother’ doesn’t want to reconcile?
How does Romans 12:17-18 (p. 1295) address this?

Apply: If there is someone you need to reconcile with, now is the time to seek God’s guidance. Go to God first and then allow him to direct any specific plans you make regarding when and how to approach this brother or sister.

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Day Two: **“Sympathize with their Feelings & Confess”**

Read: Matthew 7:3-5 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, p. 1085)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, pp. 155-156

Reflect: When you are in the midst of a conflict or misunderstanding with someone is your first instinct to provide a solution and to resolve the conflict or to seek to sympathize with the other person—to hear their story?

Dig: Read James 1:19 (p. 1441) and Matthew 12:36 (p. 1092). How can adhering to the admonishments given here pave the way for sympathy and empathy?

In the most recent conflict you had were you quick to listen and slow to speak?

Referring back to Matthew 7:3-5, how can being quick to listen and slow to speak enable you to detect the ‘plank in your own eye’?

Apply: After the most recent conflict you’ve had, did you confess your sin in that conflict? If not, take time to do so today—first to God and then to that other person. Today in all your interactions pay particular attention to being quick to listen and slow to speak.

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Day Three: **“Attack the Problem not the Person”**

Read: Proverbs 15:1; 16:32; 17:9 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, pp. 708, 710, 711)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, p. 157

Reflect: What secret weapons in your arsenal of ‘relational nuclear weapons’ do you most frequently resort to in the midst of conflict? See the list on page 152.

Dig: Contrast these weapons with the advice given in the Proverbs passages.

What determines what kind of words come out of our mouth? See what Matthew 12:34 (p. 1092) says about this issue.

How do we cultivate what grows in our heart? In particular, how do we cultivate good fruit? See John 15:4-5 (p. 1222).

Remind yourself of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, p. 1352).

Apply: Spend some time simply ‘abiding in Christ.’ Let him speak to you—in silence, through his word, through creation, etc.

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Day Four: **“Emphasize Reconciliation not Resolution”**

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:17-6:1 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, p. 1333)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, p. 158

Reflect: Who is someone with whom you disagree—perhaps quite strongly—and yet with whom you have a healthy relationship and genuine fellowship?

Dig: How is it that we’ve been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation? (verse 17)

According to verses 18-21, to whom are we to be reconciled and what is the message of reconciliation we should be proclaiming?

What kind of message are we sending regarding reconciliation to God if we can’t be reconciled with each other? See John 13:34-35 (p. 1221) for further insight into this.

Note 2 Corinthians 6:1. Are you receiving God’s grace in vain or are you acting upon it by being gracious to others and by inviting them to receive God’s grace?

Apply: Ask the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see how you can be a ‘minister of reconciliation’ today.

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Day Five: **Lectio Divina**

Using the “**Lectio Divina**” method of Bible study (see page 3 of this booklet), **meditate on this scripture:**

“Above all, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins.”

1 Peter 4:8 (NIV).

Lectio divina (a Latin expression which means Sacred reading) is done in three stages:

- reading: you read the passage slowly and reverentially, allowing the words to sink into your consciousness; after you have memorized the text, write down one word which strikes you and draws your attention and note why you chose that word.
- meditation: you allow the passage to stir up memories within you, so that you recognize in it your own experience or that of people who have touched your life; write down memories of events or conversations or other scripture passages.
- prayer: you allow the meditation to lead you to prayer – thanksgiving, humility and petition. Write out a prayer based on the passage.