

Growing Disciples – Witness To The World

Growing Disciples Series – Living In The Word.

What True Discipleship Requires

Week 2: The Importance of Healthy Relationships (PG)

VERSE TO MEMORIZE

"If you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift."—Matthew 5:23-24

If your life is in turmoil today, I venture to say it's because of a ruptured relationship with someone. One purpose of this study is to explore what may be the causes of our broken relationships and to show how they can be mended so that we can reach out with God's love to those around us.

As we journey through this study my prayer is that God will help you experience restored relationships and begin to experience the best life has to offer. Right relationships will be a blessing not only to you but also to others around you. Your family will be blessed. Your friends, relatives, and coworkers will be blessed.

The key to a fulfilled life is relationships. Things do not satisfy; relationships do. The first relationship is with the Father. When He becomes the Lord of our lives, we forfeit forever the right to choose whom we will love. When He becomes Lord, He releases His love in us to build right relationships.

Through right relationships God's love can flow to bless all of the lives it touches. Will you allow God to use your life and your relationships as a channel for His love to flow to others?

OVERVIEW OF WEEK 2

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Day 1: A Lifelong Need

God's Word for Today

"If you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

↕ **Read and meditate on "God's Word for Today" (this week's verse to memorize) above and spend a moment in prayer as you begin today's lesson. Remove the Scripture-memory card from the back of your book and begin committing this verse to memory.**

Oscar tells the story of one particular flight to San Francisco. After finding his seat the man on his right seemed very busy trying to get some writing done. He was a Hollywood producer. He greeted his new neighbor but did not bother him. After a time the man put his pen down, and they began talking. He asked Oscar, "What do you do for a living?" Oscar was hesitant to tell him that he was a Baptist preacher, instead he replied, "Well, I'm a teacher." Then he waited.

He asked, "What do you teach?" He wasn't about to tell him that he taught evangelism at a theological seminary, so he said, "That's interesting you should ask. I basically teach that the most important word in the English language is *relationship*. If we can solve the relationship problems in this world, we will have solved domestic problems, neighbor problems, city problems, and international problems."

The man looked out the window and thought for a moment, and then he said, "Hey, that's right!" Oscar picked up a copy of *Time Magazine* and started reading. But his neighbor persisted, "Is that all you are going to tell me?"

Oscar said he wasn't surprised, so he responded by asking "You mean you want to know more?" So he explained that there are two types of relationships. There are horizontal relationships with people. Then there is the vertical relationship with the Creator of the universe, who has laid down the basis for all our other relationships. We are made by His design. If we follow His design, things work. If we do not follow His design, things do not work. Because man hasn't followed God's design, relationships are not working very well. Fortunately for us, however, God has also given us a plan to establish those right relationships. He told the man on the plane, "That plan is best seen in the teaching of Jesus Christ."

"Oh!" he said, "I've read the Bible. I agree with many things Jesus said. Now I don't believe everything the Bible says, but ..."

"Well, Oscar said, that's what I teach." Oscar went back to reading *Time* for a while and let him sort of hang there. "Tell me some more," the producer said.

To make a long story short, they talked for a long time during that flight. The man had many problems with the Scriptures. But many people in the secular world have rejected the Scriptures because they have heard only a caricature, not because they know anything about them. Similarly, most people have not rejected Jesus Christ but a caricature of Him. They have rejected "churchianity," but they haven't rejected Jesus Christ, because they have never really heard about Him. That is the tragedy. The producer and Oscar talked about that. Then they talked about the person of Jesus Christ.

"How do you know who He is and what He is?" the man asked.

Oscar responded that either Jesus was who He said He was, or He was psychotic, or He was a great fraud. "Dick," Oscar said, "you are going to have to decide ultimately who He is on the basis of the evidence. You cannot just conclude that Jesus was the greatest teacher who ever lived. You see, this great teacher said, 'I am God.' And no great teacher is a falsifier. You are either going to have to take Jesus at His word or reject Him." Then he went back to reading *Time*.

Oscar began to pray, "Father, O Father, I cannot convince this fellow." He was having trouble in relationships with his workers and his family.

The latter part of that flight, Oscar saw tears forming in his eyes as he looked out the window. Then he turned to him and said, "Oscar, this morning I got down on my knees in a motel room in Dallas. I prayed, 'Dear God, if there is a God, I have to have help. Please send somebody.'" He reached over and took Oscar by his elbow and said, "God sent you. Now what do I do?"

Oscar replied, "The first thing you have to do is surrender to the absolute authority of Jesus Christ and let Him be the Master of your life. You have to accept His conditions for coming to God. You cannot come on your own conditions.

"Dick, if you read the biography of every great Christian in history, you would find something very interesting. George Whitefield, John Wesley, Martin Luther, and many other great men of God intensely struggled in their search for God. All of them had one basic problem: though they were seeking God with all their hearts, they were seeking Him on their conditions. Only when they abandoned their conditions in coming to God did God accept them. When each one finally gave up and said, 'I will accept your conditions, whatever they are and whatever they cost me,' then instantly, immediately, God revealed Himself."

As Dick got off the plane, he looked over and said, "Thank you, Oscar. I have needed this all my life."

That is how God worked in the life of Oscar on his flight, God desires to work the same way in our lives. God will arrange the appointments assign the seats make the introductions and cause the conversations to turn Godward if we will be led by him and not be afraid, ashamed or too insensitive to the promptings off the Holy Spirit.

① **Think about a lost person you know. What do you think he or she is refusing to give up to accept God's conditions for salvation?**

- Pride
- Lifestyle
- Priorities
- Status
- Sin
- Pleasure
- Assumptions
- Other: _____

↕ **Praying for My Circles Today**

Spend time thanking God for the meaningful relationships in your life. If you had an unhappy home life, ask Him to help you heal. Ask Him to teach you how to develop healthy relationships through this study.

Remember to pray for the lost persons in your life and for your role in leading them to Christ.

Day 2: Healthy Relationships

God's Word for Today

"I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their message. May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me. I have given them the glory You have given Me. May they be one as We are one. I am in them and You are in Me. May they be made completely one, so the world may know You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me" (John 17:20-23).

↕ **Read and meditate on "God's Word for Today" above and spend a moment in prayer as you begin today's lesson.**

I believe the most important word in the English language, apart from proper nouns, is *relationship*. You may say, "But *love* has to be the most important word." I ask you, though, where is love going if there is no relationship? Relationship is the track. Love is what rolls over the track. Love moves through a relationship. But the thing that satisfies the deepest longing of your being is a relationship with someone.

You may think you want to be a Henry David Thoreau and go to a secluded Walden Pond to get away from the world. But Thoreau did not stay there forever, and neither could you. Why? There is something built into the nature of people that desires to be wanted, to be needed, to be fulfilled. Those desires are fulfilled only in relationships.

If we cannot get along with people, going off by ourselves may seem best. But we will not be fulfilled, because something in our nature cries out for fellowship. We have caused barriers in our relationships with others.

Rare is the individual who wants to be a loner. In being a loner, a person loses the purpose for existence, because God wants to reveal His character through a Christian's life. He does this by loving through you within relationships with others. John said, "What we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may have fellowship along with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

Consider warm, wonderful times of joy and happiness you have experienced. Do you remember—

- the warm caress of your parents' hands?
- the giggles and laughter as you romped with your friends or brothers and sisters in the bright sunshine of a summer afternoon?
- the ecstasy of your first date with that bright-eyed boy or girl?
- the joy or enthusiasm of those with whom you work?

① Identify two or three of the happiest experiences in your life and identify persons who were involved in those experiences with you.

All of these relationships make you who you are. Right relationships with parents leave you mentally and emotionally ready for the new relationships of marriage and parenting. The special days of happiness—birthdays, anniversaries, Thanksgiving, Christmas—are fulfilling because of warm, wonderful relationships. Right relationships allow you to experience the best life has to offer.

The home is the basic institution in which God seeks to teach the sacredness of relationships and the skills for establishing and nourishing relationships. The home is the only institution designed to teach relationships. When this institution fails, a child is left mentally, emotionally, and spiritually crippled. To a large degree, the reason the world is coming unglued is because our best school for teaching relationships, the home, is not teaching correctly. If you solve relationship problems at home, you solve problems between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters.

② List the top five most memorable or significant relationships you have ever had in your life.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

It is likely that most of your most significant relationships have been with family members. The home is the context in which God places us to teach us how to have right relationships. The home under God should be the place to learn about relationships—husband and wife, parent and child, child and child. Here is where a person learns to love and to meet needs. A helpless baby who is placed in the hands of parents matures and develops the ability to love and to meet needs. A child is taught to submit his wayward, self-centered will to the will of the parents. Here selfishness, which is the root of sin, is replaced by the discipline needed to build relationships and to meet the needs of others.

God designed the home to be the school of relationships. The dearest, the closest, the most intimate human relationship is between husband and wife. They then teach their children to value and nurture relationships. Properly taught and modeled, these skills will serve them for a lifetime.

↕ **Praying for My Circles Today**

Thank God for happy memories and meaningful relationships. Turn to page 90 and pray for your immediate-family members, especially those who are lost.

Day 3: Broken Relationships

God's Word for Today

"We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And we have this command from Him: the one who loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:19-20).

↕ **Read and meditate on "God's Word for Today" above and spend a moment in prayer as you begin today's lesson.**

Reflection on the importance of relationships will lead to obvious but amazing conclusions. Think about the crisis times of your life:

- As a child separated from your parents
- As a child angry with your parents
- As a teenager breaking up with your sweetheart
- The resentment and misunderstanding that separated you from a friend
- The emptiness and heartbreak of losing a parent or spouse
- An argument or maybe even divorce from your husband or wife
- A crisis with an employee or employer
- Times of resentment and rupture in the family
- Distress in business or in your church

① Identify two of your most dark, sad experiences and write the initials of persons who were involved in those experiences with you.

If you think about all of the dark, sad times in your life, you will realize that the vast majority of these times were created by ruptured, strained, or broken relationships.

Every broken business, every broken home, every broken friendship involves broken relationships. Every local, national, or international problem, every crime committed, and every war from the beginning of time has resulted from ruptured relationships.

When society ceases to treasure relationships, it becomes decadent. Manners become coarse and cheap. Common courtesy is soon forgotten. Hearts become thankless, ceasing to show appreciation. As human history so painfully demonstrates, bad relationships produce—

- broken marriages;
- broken homes;
- unsuccessful businesses;
- divided churches;
- weak governments;
- chaotic nations.

When believers experience broken relationships, they hinder the movement of the Spirit of God. They neutralize our witness and lessen its importance. Broken relationships shut off the divine well that can flow to all our world. To keep the divine well flowing, we Christians need to right all broken relationships.

Because of broken relationships, your conscience may not be clear. You may feel guilty over an offense, or you may feel like a hypocrite asking a person to be reconciled to God when you cannot reconcile with another person. Do whatever is necessary to right any broken relationships you may have. Then the Holy Spirit can have a clear channel through which to flow. To be prepared to share the gospel with others, you must get right with others.

② Turn to "Your Horizontal Relationships with Others" on pages 15-18 and complete the inventory.

③ If you could improve or be reconciled in one relationship in your life today, which one would it be?

↕ Praying for My Circles Today

Pray about the relationship you identified at the end of today's lesson. What do you sense God wants you to do to get that relationship right? Ask Him. Record His directions here:

Day 4: Restored Relationships

God's Word for Today

"Christ's love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: if One died for all, then all died. And He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them and was raised. In Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ; certain that God is appealing through us, we plead on Christ's behalf, 'Be reconciled to God'" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 19-20).

↕ **Read and meditate on "God's Word for Today" above and spend a moment in prayer as you begin today's lesson.**

If all relationship problems were solved, there would be no divorce, racism, no employer-employee or labor-management disputes. Solve the relationship problems of the world, and humanity's most perplexing problems are solved, because right relationships produce solid marriages, stable homes, successful businesses, ministering churches, good governments, and strong nations.

We know that God wants to meet our needs. He builds beautiful relationships in the body of Christ. He intends that we love one another the way He loved us (see John 15:12). He wants to meet our needs through the body of Christ so that we will all be healthy parts of a functioning body. We need one another.

Jesus came to earth to meet our deepest need. He died on the cross to redeem the world to Himself. He ascended to heaven, and He left the body of Christ on earth to go out and enlarge the body and strengthen the body.

Let's say the church is a divine hospital. The world is full of sickness. Many, many people come to the hospital for help, and the church realizes that all of us need help. We continually need help.

"This is My command: love one another as I have loved you."—John 15:12

① Describe a time when a relationship in your church helped you heal.

We come and come and come to the church for help, and we receive it. The only tragedy is that if we do not mature and join the hospital staff and start meeting other people's needs, we become a liability, and the flow is always directed inward. So we stagnate, and that hurts the body of Christ.

After we have come for help and have received it, God wants us to go out and build relationships with others. Then we become part of the helping staff. When we reach out to meet another person's needs, we find that our own needs are met.

As God begins to use a person, He begins to knock down walls of resistance and bad attitudes in that person's life. Perhaps some relationships in your own life are not right. God wants to use even those relationships for His glory.

Often the first thing that comes to mind when we think about a ruptured relationship is, *If I am a Christian and I admit that I have been wrong, what will the other person think of me?* That is the voice of pride. Who cares what the other person thinks of you? The important thing is what God thinks of you when you are acting in obedience to get a relationship right. Also consider what the person will think of Jesus if you do not make the relationship right.

② Is there a ruptured relationship in your life?

- Yes
- No

③ Read Matthew 5:23-24 below. What did Jesus tell you to do about a ruptured relationship?

"If you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift."—Matthew 5:23-24

Matthew 5:23-24 says that even if your brother is upset with you, go to him and be the reconciler. Because you are the one who is living in victory, you are to be the reconciler.

By seeking to right wrong relationships, you keep your conscience clear. If the Holy Spirit brings something to your mind that is wrong in your life, set it straight. Deal with it. Keep short accounts with God and with others. In your personal walk with God, let Him work out His redemptive purpose in and through your life.

Sometimes I meet people who have difficulty with concentric circles because they do not want to reconcile relationships in those circles. But it is impossible to be right with God and wrong with those around us. Would you be willing to sacrifice a right relationship with God over any human relationship you have? If you would, then you really do not know God the way He wants you to know Him. Nothing could be more valuable than being right with God.

Your world needs you. People throughout your concentric circles need you. Be a channel of God's love. There is no greater thrill in life than letting the Lord love through you and meet needs through you. That is the Christian life.

I know hundreds of people who once had ruptured relationships with their family members but eventually God led those family to the Himself through the reconciliation of the ruptured or strained relationships. Now they have liberty because the ruptures and strains are healed. If you get right with others in your concentric circles, God's love can flow through you to forever change their lives for His glory.

↕ **Praying for My Circles Today**

Look over your list of immediate-family members on last week's (*Discipleship Helps*). Take time to pray for each person. Look for opportunities to share God's love with them.

Day 5: A Channel of Love

God's Word for Today

"Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:7-12).

↕ **Read and meditate on "God's Word for Today" above and spend a moment in prayer as you begin today's lesson.**

Jim came into Oscar's office one day and said, "Dr. Thompson, my dad is a nominal Christian; but when he learned that I was going into the ministry, he became furious. He told me that he did not mind my being a Christian, but he did not want me to become a 'religious nut.'"

Jim's father drove a truck for a large truck line, owned his own rig, and wanted his son to follow in his footsteps. Instead, Jim had come to the seminary. As a result, Jim's relationship with his parents was ruptured.

"We had been very close until this happened," Jim explained. "Since then I have just ignored them, as they have ignored me. It has hurt me, but I am going to serve Jesus. My family can do whatever they please."

Oscar asked, "Jim, do you really think you can be right with God and have ruptured relationships with your parents? You need to meet their needs. You need to love them."

Jim answered, "Well, that's right; but I don't know what to do."

So Oscar suggested that he start to pray for them and make the ruptured relationships right.

Jim began to pray for his dad and mom. That same day he came to class brokenhearted and said, "Friends, just please pray for me." Then Jim prayed, "Father, I do not even know if my daddy knows you. But Father, I have been wrong in my attitude toward my parents. Forgive me of my attitude and help me meet my parents' needs."

Jim wrote a letter to his parents, asking them to forgive him because of his bitterness and the broken relationship. He told them that he loved them.

The next day, before the letter had time to reach his parents, Jim received a telephone call from his dad. Jim's dad had never before had a route to Dallas, but he said, "Son, I have a route to Dallas this week, and I want to see you."

"Oh, Dad, that's great!"

That Saturday afternoon a big rig pulled up in front of Jim's dorm. When Jim opened the dorm door, his tall father stood with tears trickling down his cheeks. "Jim, I am wrong with God," he said. "Can you help me?"

When Jim got right with God, he also wanted to get right with his parents. Once God had prepared Jim, he brought Jim's dad to Dallas so that Jim's life could be a channel of love to point his dad to Jesus Christ.

① Do you have a family relationship that needs to be reconciled like Jim and his dad?

- Yes
- No

If so, now may be the time to get right with others. Have you allowed pride to affect any of your personal relationships? If so, humble yourself and take the initiative to be reconciled to those you have offended by your pride. Write out a prayer for healing.

What do you need to do to be reconciled with the person?

- Write a letter
- Make a phone call
- Visit the person
- Make restitution
- Other: _____

After praying, go and obey the Lord. Let God set you free from bitterness, un-forgiveness, or guilt over a broken relationship.

↕ **Praying for My Circles Today**

Pray about any broken relationships in your life. Repent of any bitterness and un-forgiveness on your part. Ask the Lord to enable you to take the actions necessary to be reconciled with others.

DISCIPLESHIP HELPS Circle 2: Immediate Family

Your immediate family includes those who live under your roof. If you are away from home and are not married, your survey for circle 2 will include your mother and father. If you are married, your immediate family will be your spouse and children. The rest of your family will go in circle 3, relatives.

List the people in your immediate family. Include the following.

- Husband or wife _____
- Mother and father _____
- Stepparents _____
- Children _____
- Stepchildren _____
- Others in your household _____

SURVEY FORM

Name _____ Address _____

City, state, ZIP _____ Home phone _____

Work phone _____ Cell phone _____

Relationship

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Single | <input type="radio"/> Widowed |
| <input type="radio"/> Married | <input type="radio"/> Separated |
| <input type="radio"/> Divorced | |

Prayer requests/needs/circumstances _____

Birthday _____

Anniversary _____

Occupation/place of employment _____

Hobbies/interests _____

Times of joy or stress to remember and date _____

Strategy _____

Date gospel presented _____

Response _____

Your Horizontal Relationships with Others

Check any relationship in your life that needs reconciliation. If you wish, write a name or initials below as a reminder of a relationship that needs to be made right.

- Have I mistreated anyone by my actions or words?
- Have I stolen from a person, an organization, a business, my employer, or anyone else?
- Do I hold a grudge or bitterness in my heart toward anyone?
- Have I gossiped about or slandered someone?
- Have I borrowed anything I have failed to return?
- Has God led me to do something to meet someone's needs, and I have failed to obey?
- Have I done anything illegal I need to confess?
- Have I lied to anyone or falsified information?
- Have I hurt someone because of an immoral act and covered it up?
- Am I in a wrong or immoral relationship?
- Have I been guilty of not expressing gratitude to a person or group when I should have?
- Am I taking someone for granted and need to show my gratitude in words and deeds?
- Have I allowed jealousy, envy, or resentment to have a negative effect on the way I have related to a person or group?
- Have I allowed pride to keep me from relating to a person who needed a friend?
- Have I sinned against God and another person or group by committing any of the following sins?
 - Anger
 - Anxiety
 - Arguing
 - Arrogance
 - Bitterness
 - Blasphemy
 - Boasting
 - Coarse talking
 - Conceit
 - Complaining
 - Competition
 - Controlling spirit
 - Covetousness
 - Cursing
 - Critical spirit
 - Deception

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discord | <input type="checkbox"/> Prejudice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disorder | <input type="checkbox"/> Pride |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divisiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Quarreling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Envy | <input type="checkbox"/> Resentment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Factions | <input type="checkbox"/> Revenge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faultfinding | <input type="checkbox"/> Rudeness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear | <input type="checkbox"/> Slander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fits of rage | <input type="checkbox"/> Stereotyping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gossip | <input type="checkbox"/> Strife |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greed | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-seeking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grumbling | <input type="checkbox"/> Judgmental spirit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hatred | <input type="checkbox"/> Intolerance of differences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hypocrisy | <input type="checkbox"/> Lawsuits among believers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impatience | <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping a record of wrongs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impurity | <input type="checkbox"/> Provoking one another |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Independence | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-centeredness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Injustice | <input type="checkbox"/> Selfish ambition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insensitivity | <input type="checkbox"/> Struggle for control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jealousy | <input type="checkbox"/> Spirit of superiority |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of love | <input type="checkbox"/> Un-forgiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lies | <input type="checkbox"/> Unbelief |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Malice | <input type="checkbox"/> Delighting in a brother's downfall |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oppression | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Persecution | |
-

If the Holy Spirit has brought to your mind any relationships that are broken, decide now to make those relationships right. List any persons or groups whom you have offended by your sin and need to be forgiven and reconciled.

Perhaps others have sinned against you. Have you forgiven them as Jesus has commanded? If you hold a grudge, bitterness, ill will, or hatred toward a person, you probably have not forgiven.

List any persons or groups who have offended you or sinned against you whom you have not yet forgiven. If you have a question about whether you have forgiven, add the person's name to your list anyway.

If you have listed persons or groups on the previous lines, you need to reconcile the broken relationship. Use these suggestions to respond to those on your lists.

IF YOU ARE THE OFFENDER

1. Pray and ask God for help in thorough repentance.
2. Go make things right in obedience to God.
3. Go to the most difficult person first.
4. Confess your sin to God and to those directly affected by the sin.
5. Don't apologize. Ask for forgiveness.
6. Go in person (best choice), call by phone (second choice), or write a letter (last resort).
7. Don't reflect negatively on the other person or his actions or attitudes. Deal only with your part of the offense.
8. Make restitution (pay for the offense) when appropriate.
9. Don't expect to receive a positive response every time. Continue to pray for and seek reconciliation with an unforgiving person. Jesus' command is "Be reconciled."

IF YOU ARE THE ONE OFFENDED

1. Forgive the offender. Forgiveness is a command, not an option (see Matt. 6:15; Col. 3:13).
2. You cannot forgive and love in your own strength. The Holy Spirit of Christ in you can enable you to forgive and love. Ask Him to enable you to forgive.
3. Forgiveness is a choice of your will, not a feeling. You must choose to forgive.
4. Begin to pray for God to work in the person's life for his or her good. Continue praying until you can do so with a sincere desire to see God bless the person.
5. Make an investment in the person who wronged you by returning good for evil. Ask God to guide you in this response and in its timing. Ask God what you can do to meet a need or to show love.

TEACHINGS ON FORGIVENESS

1. Forgiveness is fully releasing another from the debt of the offense.
2. The person who forgives is the one who has to pay the price of forgiveness, just as Jesus paid the price for you.
3. You are never more like Jesus than when you forgive and show grace and mercy. Being offended provides you with the invitation to reveal Christ to the offender by your forgiveness.
4. Forgiveness does not mean the offense was not wrong.
5. Forgiveness is not permission for the offender to do it again. It does not require you to place yourself in harm's way again.
6. Forgiveness does not mean you will fully forget. However, you choose not to hold the offense against the person any longer.
7. How much do you forgive? Jesus said, "70 times seven" (Matt. 18:22). In other words, forgive an unlimited number of times.
8. Jesus said, "If [your brother] sins against you seven times in a day, and comes back to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him" (Luke 17:4). In other words, even if the offender really doesn't repent and change his ways, you should still forgive.
9. Even if the person doesn't believe he is wrong, forgive. Jesus set the model for us on the cross when He prayed for those who were killing Him (see Luke 23:34).