

**Series: A More Excellent Way****Today's Message: Courageous Conversation<sup>1</sup> for Reconciliation; Matthew 5:21-26; Matthew 18:15-17**

The goal of this series of messages entitled, "A More Excellent Way," was to promote and enhance the relationships we have with other people, especially in the context of marriage, family, friends and our church family. I hope to address various Christian living issues over time, and as needed.

We began this series with a message on the principles of communication. In the introduction to that message the statement was made that most of us lack the basic Biblical understanding of God's prescription for working through conflicts in a more excellent way. We learned that good relationships do not *just happen*; they are built as each person commits to working through the inevitable problems that will crop up from time to time. But there must be a commitment to learn how God says we are to work through the problems with the intent of building a deeper, more meaningful relationship with each other. And by the way, as we learn to solve problems in our relationships in more excellent way, we come to know and love God more. We learn His ways in more significant ways.

Today we conclude this series by addressing an **action-subject** that most people avoid because everyone assumes (and justifiably so) that to obey God's word in this matter is going to be painful and difficult. The truth of the matter is that, yes, it will be both painful and difficult. But then again, the satisfaction awarded to you by God when we choose to obey Him by doing the hard things. So, what is the subject matter that is so hard to address? Reconciliation.

We struggle with reconciliation primarily because of fear of confrontation. We assume that the other person will react in a negative way if we take the initiative to bring up a problem. Another area of struggle with the **action-subject** of reconciliation is honesty. Sometimes we deny that there is an offense just because "it is easier that way". The problem with taking a **no-approach** position in dealing with problems in our relationships is that the problems are still there, and they will only be compounded if not dealt with. Not to mention, those relationships, which remain unreconciled can only fizzle out. So, due to a lack of honesty and a raging fear of confrontation problems go unresolved, reconciliation is not enjoyed, and God is not honored.

Today we are going to talk about reconciliation from the two perspectives Jesus presented in Matthew 5 and 18. Of course, the Bible has much to say about reconciliation. We do not have time to exhaust the subject, but we will learn enough to get us started. And, finally, the Bible doesn't guarantee that reconciliation will always happen even if we try hard enough. But at least we know the Lord Jesus wants us to try. As Romans 12:18 says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." With that in mind I will give you a practical guide for you to initiate your own Courageous Conversation for Reconciliation.

**I) Matthew 5:23-24: Reconciling when you are the offender.**

- A) (5:23) Remembering/ recalling a problem. (The Holy Spirit prompts the recall **FOR OUR** obedience.)
  - 1) Remember it is your brother (or sister). Brother means, "one from the same womb."
    - (a) This could be any person with whom you interact.
    - (b) And it is likely a fellow Christian. "Of the same spiritual womb." Ephesians 4 reminds us of our incredibly special bond in Christ! **See Eph. 4:3-6;13,15.**
  - 2) A most inconvenient timely reminder:

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Hogan is the author of a most helpful resource I discovered 20 years ago called "Courageous Conversation." Since then, there have been many other ministries that have used the same title. But I find Mr. Hogan's resource to be the most helpful. You can find a full layout of this resource at [www.hongmark.com](http://www.hongmark.com). Find "Christian Resources" then look under "Miscellaneous" and at the top you will find it.

- (a) While worshipping! “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember...”
- B) (5:24) Reconciliation is more than intellectual ascent, it is an **action-subject**.
  - 1) **Notice the Timing:** The inopportune time is the very time the Lord Jesus commands you to act!
    - (a) Jesus said, “Leave your gift at the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”
  - 2) What do we learn from that? It is truly very simple!
    - (a) Being reconciled to a brother holds priority over your personal efforts to worship God!
      - (i) There is no guarantee that you *will be* reconciled. But your desire + effort matters.
    - (b) Being reconciled to others holds priority over your personal efforts to worship God.
      - (i) Examples:
        - (a) We’ve all heard of families who have had a rough morning before or on their way to church. With big “hellos” and “hallelujahs” they gather with the church. Yet, their little parish, their little church, is filled with anger and unreconciled issues. What should they do? Hopefully the Spirit will prompt them to remember!
        - (b) The communion plates are being passed around. You’re so thankful that God has reconciled you to Himself through the loving sacrifice of your Lord Jesus. But, gnawing at your heart is the knowledge that someone has something against you. What should you do?
          - 1. 1 Corinthians 11:23-34 reminds us to examine ourselves before we partake.
          - 2. The fact is that we were offended with God. Yet He sent His Son to reconcile us to Himself. He left the glories of heaven and came seeking and finding us!
            - a. Obeying the Lord on this **action-subject** will require you to **step out of your comfort zone!**

## II) Matthew 18:15-17: Reconciling when you are the offended person. “...brother sins against you...”

- A) Does this mean that each and everytime we are wronged, sinned against, or offended that we are to “go” show our brother (or sister) their fault?
  - 1) Absolutely not! First throw the “blanket of love” over the problem. If the blanket of love can cover it, and you are not nursing bitterness, anger and resentment, etc. then move on!
    - (a) 1 Peter 4:8, “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.”
  - 2) But sometimes it is necessary to “go” show *his* fault. Why? Why? What is the goal?
    - (a) James 5:20, “Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover a multitude of sins.”
- B) The action steps Jesus prescribes: **The Goal is reconciliation/ restoration** of the brother!
  - 1) Go privately. If resolution/ reconciliation **begins** keep it between the two of you! If not...
  - 2) Take one or two witnesses. Bring the matter out into the open. If a pathway to reconciliation/ restoration is agreed upon, then good. Keep the matter close at hand. If not...
  - 3) Take the matter before the church and let the church decide what to do.

## III) Courageous Conversation: Especially helpful when someone you hurt is having a hard time opening up.

- A) Most of the following questions require the person asking the questions to listen.
  - 1) What is the most pressing issue? (What about my actions, words have bothered you?)
  - 2) Is there anything else? (Listen. Don’t interrupt and don’t defend yourself.)
  - 3) How is this affecting you?
  - 4) What will the future be like if nothing changes?
  - 5) What do you see as my responsibility for this/ these issues? (Try to limit to 3 issues.)
  - 6) What do you see as your responsibility for this issue? (But don’t blame, don’t blame them!)
  - 7) What does the preferable future look like to you?
  - 8) What is the most powerful thing we can agree to ask God for?
  - 9) What do you see as the one thing we cannot fail to do?
  - 10) What steps must we take to make this happen?