

119 Mending Difficult Relationships

Q: "My marriage/friendship is falling apart; it seems like we argue all the time and I don't want to fight, but it keeps happening. My spouse/friend just told me if we don't get it together this month, the marriage/friendship is over. I've been praying and doing all I know how but my spouse/friend has a stony heart full of anger and bitterness, and in my own heart, I can't feel anymore. What can I do?"

Ezekiel 36:26-28 "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgements, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."

A: Praying, reading the Bible, and religiously doing all the right things to prove a point is not what Jesus wants. All He wants is your heart surrendered to Him so He can pour His life into yours. If you are busy finding fault, there is not much Jesus can do with you no matter how many hours of prayer you put in! Release the control buttons and give the remote to Jesus so He can do something about healing your painful frustration and bitterness. Jesus said He would replace your hearts with a heart of flesh; how does He do that?

John 4:14 "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Q: "But I've been watering my heart with the word of God for years and nothing has changed."

A: Quit sipping and swallow! Drink fully from the well. If you are full of vinegar you can't get much water in. Spit out the vinegar and drink in Jesus. His promises are always true, so if the word isn't working you haven't been working it right.

Q: "I've really tried hard, I don't mean to fight. Maybe there's no hope for me because I've really done the best I can."

Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

A: Jesus longs to heal you, but He wants you to obey Him and walk with Him. If I asked your loved one to say if he/she 'feels' loved by you, what would I hear? When there is quarreling and accusation, love is not felt by anyone. Jesus' love has no condemnation, but freely gives and accepts.

John 8:10-11 "When Jesus...saw none but the woman, he said unto her, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

Q: "How is our situation going to get better if we don't work on it? Isn't it important to point out areas we could improve?"

Matthew 18:32-35 "Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 'Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?' And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

John 3:17 "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

A: Jesus gives His love to us unconditionally, no matter what we do to Him, no matter if we give Him love in return or not. He weeps when we will not come to Him, but He never condemns us. So why do you condemn?

1 Corinthians 13:4-6 "Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

A: In most relationships that are going through a difficult time there is very little real kindness shown. Instead, each believes they are the only kind one – and seeks to defend their own self. Each one puffs up self hoping to find approval, suspicious of each action and word of the other, and though not ready to admit it, each rejoices in uncovering the errors of the other in order to validate their own wounded self.

James 1:19-20 "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

A: Don't be so quick to judge and condemn. Listen, and hear the heart of the other so that you will feel the pain they are going through and be able to understand with compassion. Take your eyes from yourself and put the other's feelings first.

Philippians 2:4 "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Q: "You don't understand, I'm the victim here! I'm trying my best to help us both!"

Matthew 16:24-25 "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

A: Jesus did not grudgingly give up His happiness and put up with us as 'His cross' to bear! But Jesus laid down His life so we could have His life in us! Likewise, taking up your cross does not mean bearing the cross of the 'less righteous' person you are forced to live with! Your cross is the death of your own selfishness. Moses had to make a choice if he was going to serve himself and stay in Egypt with all the riches and position that brought him glory, or if he would lay down his position, die to his pride, and identify with God's people so that he could save them. If you really want to make a difference for the salvation of any relationship, lay down your self-righteous position, die, and identify with the one you hope to save. Jesus wants us all to die to our self-focused selves and come alive in Him! Instead of speaking death, speak life into your relationship. Make the choice to stop nursing your own wounds. Stop focusing on your own needs, and allow the life of Jesus to flow through you. If you will make the choice – God will make the change and you will find new life in Jesus!

Prayer: **Dearest Father,** Forgive me for my attitude of accusation and unforgiveness. Thank you for giving me understanding and love for this one you have placed in my life. I choose to lay down all the bitterness and disappointment I have felt, to truly forgive and be thankful, because you have forgiven me so much. I drink deeply of the living water you pour into me now. I trust You, Lord, to fill my mouth with life-giving praises to pour out every time I open it. I choose to lay down my life and to give, as You have given to me. Thank You, Lord, **in Jesus name,** Amen.

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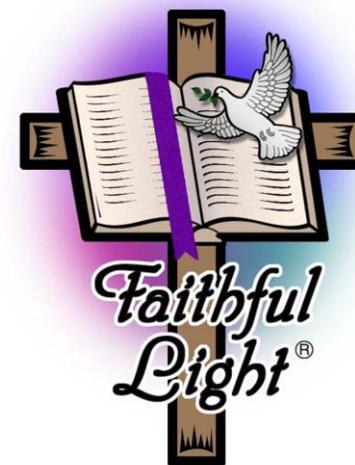
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For Life's Questions

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