

Speaking to the soul



Repairing relationships

[Jesus said:] “If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offence. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.” Matthew 18:15

Ever since the Garden of Eden, people have fallen out with one another. This is an inevitable part of living in a world of

sin. Here, Jesus gives wonderfully straightforward advice about what to do when it happens: if you are wronged, you need to deal with it as speedily and as privately as possible, with the aim to achieve a restored relationship. It amazes me that this simple and clear advice is so often ignored.

When we are wronged, it is very tempting to tell other people about it immediately – but that just magnifies the problem. We feel hurt, so we want other people to sympathise with us and come on our side. It is always better to go to the person who has wronged us in the hope that the relationship can be restored. So often, offence is caused by a misunderstanding which is easily set to one side with a simple conversation. But the longer we leave it, the greater the chance of the offence growing and causing more hurt.

When speaking to the person who has offended us, we hope they will hear where we are coming from and seek to restore the relationship. Of course, that won't always happen. Sometimes they fully intended to cause us hurt and are completely unrepentant. In that case, we do need to involve someone else, but the aim is to bring about restoration. None of this is easy, but I love the way this verse shows Jesus' profound understanding of everyday life and his desire to lead us in the path of healing and harmony in all our relationships.

QUESTION

In what way have you tried to follow Jesus' advice in repairing relationships?

PRAYER

Lord God, I thank you that you understand the tangles that I get into in my relationships. Help me to be a peacemaker today. Amen

Photograph - near Slemish, County Antrim

