

Relationship Lessons

We expect holidays to be perfect as they include time off work, fun, food, and being with people we love. But even during holidays, people are people, and unpleasant things happen. Love is a powerful force, and not always a comfortable one. When it is combined with the ups and downs of emotions, and the unpredictability of people, stressful situations occur.

Nothing is quite as stressful as having a blockage in a relationship with someone very close to our hearts, about whom we care deeply. When an incident disturbs this relationship, we can think of nothing else. But I've found that God teaches me a lot through such pain – a lot about myself, about love, and about trusting Him.

So, although I am no counselor or psychologist, let me share a couple of lessons I've learned during family holidays.

When conflicts arise, at times I'd swear I am totally blameless, only to see, through time and conversation, that I've thought and acted selfishly. It usually comes down to this: when I fail to turn my needs over to God, I am inevitably protective and selfish, although I may be blind to it at the time.

God is always with me, ready to meet even my most personal needs. When I commit those needs to Him, I am freed to be more flexible, loving, and giving in my relationships. I don't need to demand my way, even when some need is crying within me. When love calls me to give way to another's wishes, I can do so in peace, resting my needs with Him.

However, sometimes painful occurrences in relationships truly aren't my fault. I have been wronged. I am a victim. In trying to deal with the debilitating pain, I long for a restored relationship. I just want the other person to apologize, thus opening the way to restoration. If this one would just realize and admit error, everything could get back to normal.

But I've learned that the way to healing is not through receiving an apology, but through giving free forgiveness, even when it is not requested. Forgiveness breaks down the walls, relieving the painful tensions and bringing healing. *And we always have the option of extending forgiveness.* God gives us this freedom if we ask Him, and no wrong can take it away.

Forgiveness restores the joy, warmth, and rest to our hearts. The ability to extend forgiveness is yet another gift of His love working within us. We just need to turn to Him, admit our need, and trust Him.

His presence works to restore and renew our relationships, no matter what the problem, no matter who is at fault.

As those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. (Colossians 3:12-14, NASB)

Hymn: [The Joy of Forgiveness](#)

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