



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I am the light of
the world **26**

?

did you know...



photo: sxc mike-photo

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

Matthew 5:14



the facts of his story

1. What does Paul say we are like to others? (2 Corinthians 2:15-16)

2. Jesus says that "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) But in Matthew 5:14, Jesus turns this around and says that we are the light of the world. What is the light that others will see from us? To get an idea, read Matthew 5:3-16.

3. Because of their sin in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve lost their clothing of glory that God created them to wear (this light disappeared because the character of God inside them was broken). For those who are being restored by Jesus, what clothes does Paul say we should now put on in Colossians 3:12-14?

Al Masters lives at the other end of our state. He's married and had a little boy and a small business. He considered himself very blessed. And then just before Christmas some years ago, his little boy was killed by a 15-year-old kid driving a car without a license. Al Masters was filled with a deep desire for revenge. And even though that youngster--15 years old--could not be brought before the full power of the law because he was a juvenile, Al Masters wanted the very book thrown at him.

Then, on Christmas Eve, his wife got him to come to the church. He listened to the story of the Word coming to the shepherds. He recognized that he was one of the world's ungood. And he began to weep. When he went out of the church, the next day, on Christmas, he set out to find out more about the boy who killed his son. He found that he came from a broken home, that he lived with his mother, who was an alcoholic. He went and he met the boy. He gave the boy a job in his shop, and then later took him into his home. And that boy, now a young man, says that Al Masters is the most saintly person he'd ever known.

Bruce Thielemann, "Glory to God in the Lowest," Preaching Today, Tape No. 75.



thinking it through

1. We have looked at 3 pictures that describe our impact on the world -- a fragrance, light, and clothing. Which of these images is most powerful in describing how we reveal Jesus?

2. What would you most like to reveal about Jesus through your own life?



habits for reflecting the work of Jesus ~ building bridges for grace

sin breaks relationships

Sin breaks relationships. When Satan sinned, it broke his relationship with God and the whole of Heaven. When Adam and Eve sinned, it broke their relationship with God, and the relationship between each other. And this is how it has been throughout the whole of human history. Sin comes into our lives and it breaks our relationship with God, with our friends and family, and the relationships within our churches. Sin breaks things.

Jesus' model for restoring broken relationships

So how do we begin to rebuild the bridges to mend broken relationships? Jesus gives us the model to use:

1. **The wounded one takes the initiative to restore the broken relationship.** The Bible tells us, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) Jesus did not wait for us to repent before he died for us. He died for us in the hope that we would repent.
2. **Our unconditional love is the most powerful tool to melt hardened hearts.**

When we see this love of God for us, love which is eagerly held out to us before we have even thought about repenting—this is what melts our hearts and leads us to repentance. In the same way, when someone has hardened themselves towards us, offering them grace—a love that we may feel they don't deserve—is the most effective power to open their hearts to restore their broken relationship with us.

But doing this is so hard! This is because reaching out to those who hurt us goes against everything we are feeling inside. We think that if someone has hurt us, then they should come and

apologise. That's right and just! And anyway, we feel so hurt, we don't feel like restoring any sort of relationship with them. But as Paul reminds us, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law." (Romans 13:8)

four things to remember

Here are five things to remember when we face a breakdown in our relationships:

1. **Everyone is a child of God—God still loves those who hurt us, no matter what they have done to us.** Indeed, God probably feels the pain more than we do because he made them and has been caring for them since the day they were born.
2. **Satan is behind every breakdown in relationships—he is the real enemy, not the person who has hurt us.** This is hard to remember, but if we forget this we will only feel worse inside about the other person.
3. **The one who has hurt us, is probably in a worse situation than we are.** Sure, we are hurt, but how deep is the hurt in the one who hurt us? People who hurt others have often been hurt very hard themselves. It is quite possible that when we offer grace to the one who hurt us, this will be exactly the medication they need for their own hurts. We may be their only opportunity for healing.
4. **Make a commitment to act from biblical principles rather than how you feel.** Like the parting of the River Jordan before the children of Israel went into Canaan, God may wait to change our situation until after we begin to take the first step. Miracles begin when we act on faith—according to the promises that God has given us.
5. **We cannot give to others what we have not first received from God.** If we are empty of grace and love, we won't be able to pass

"We do not repent in order that God may love us, but He reveals to us His love in order that we may repent."

Christ's Object Lessons, 189

What could happen if we would show God's love to those who have hurt us?

anything on to others except our frustrations. Sometimes we get very tired trying hard to do the right thing towards others. We are often surprised that the harder we try, the more tired we become. This is because the power to overcome our feelings and the attacks of Satan on our broken relationships will only be experienced when we are on our knees. The more broken the relationship, the longer we may need to spend in God's presence, being filled by his power.

making the habit

What relationships do you know about that are

broken? Who do you know who is needy for grace that God could give them through you?

When it comes to restoring relationships, bold action is needed! But when we set out as agents of God's grace, we won't be working alone—for the God of grace will walk with us.

Try to learn the 5 things we need to keep in mind about broken relationships. Pray that God will guide events so that he can mend your broken relationships.



putting the pieces together

In the "facts of his story" we looked at three pictures that describe the Christian's influence in the world. 1) a wonderful fragrance, 2) light, and 3) clothes. All three represent the character of Jesus that we are to show to the world made visible by the way we treat each other.

In "thinking it through" we had a chance to think about how we represent Jesus to those around us.

In "habits for reflecting the work of Jesus" we looked at how to build bridges of grace, so that even those who have hurt us can be receive the grace of God, as God pours grace through us. This is not easy, but there is nothing like grace to restore broken relationships.



my time with God

1. Spend some time to ask the Holy Spirit if there is anything inside that is preventing you from being reconciled to someone who used to be a friend.
2. Read Matthew 18:21-35. What does God want to teach you through this story?
3. Jesus gives us some practical advice as to what to do when someone hurts us in Matthew 18:15-17. How do you think your life and the life of the church would change if we followed his advice? Why do you think we don't want to follow this counsel?
4. What sort of things happen inside you when you refuse to forgive?
5. Read Colossians 3. What characteristics of God do you most need to "put on"?
6. Read Matthew 5:3-11. Which of the characteristics mentioned most reveal to you the character of God? Which one would you most like to see revealed more clearly in your own life?



pass it on!

Can you explain why we should initiate building bridges for grace—even towards those who have hurt us very much?



extra help

1. *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, Ellen White.