

# Getting Past Your Past | A Few Adjustments | Study Guide - *Matthew 5:23-24*

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Relationships are present in every facet of our daily lives and God wants us to fully engage in these personal connections and grow from them. Quality of life and spiritual growth are a direct reflection of our relationships, and thus are an indicator of our spiritual maturity. As such, it is important to take stock of the health of these relationships and make adjustments as needed.

**Ephesians 4:2 (NLT)** Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

*The Gospel Changes Our Relationships.* The Bible provides many examples of relationships that were changed for the better when following Jesus. The people we associate with invariably influence our priorities and our path. Therefore, it is important to be surrounded by people who also follow Christ and set boundaries in the relationships that tend to steer us in the wrong direction.

**2 Timothy 2:22 (NLT)** Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.

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## When Nice Isn't Good

*Nice Guys and Gals aren't very Nice.* More often than not, the "nice guy" routine is a cover for guilt, shame or pride. This manifests in many different ways (unspoken expectations, passive-aggressive comments, dishonesty, etc.), none of which contribute to healthy relationships.

*Who Did God Make Me To Be?* God created each of us with a very specific design in mind. He chose where we were born and to whom. He chose our physical features and our mental and emotional characteristics. If God invested so much in our physical traits, how much more did He invest in us spiritually? When we question that identity, we reject God's grand design.

**Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)** For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things **He planned for us** long ago.

*I Am Responsible For...*

*My Actions & Choices:* We can choose to be led by the spirit or by our own human needs and desires.

*My Own Life:* We are responsible to make sure that our physical life is well tended to (nutrition, health, environment); we should care for our lives knowing that they are an extension of God.

*My Relationships:* We must decide which relationships we allow to influence the direction of our lives.

*God's Purpose:* We must be aware of God's purpose in our lives and surrender to the path He has chosen for us.

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## When "I'm Sorry" Isn't An Apology

*Why Are We Sorry?* Apologies can be impactful and help mend a damaged relationship, or they can be an insincere cover for some fear or insecurity. A sincere and needed apology is not a sign of weakness, but a show of character, strength, and maturity.

**Matthew 5:24 (NLT)** ...Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

## How Apologies Work.

**Feel It!** Your actions, inactions, or inconsideration hurt someone. Use empathy to consider how you would feel if the situation was reversed.

**Own It!** No If's, But's, or Maybe's. Be specific and intentional in owning your role in the situation. "When I...", "I should not have...", "I was wrong..."; if you don't know how to finish one of these phrases, you are not yet ready to apologize. However, you should make an effort to understand your ownership in the situation so that you can eventually finish the phrase.

The other person's causes or contributions are not a factor in apologizing for your part.

**Ask Forgiveness!** No If's, But's, or Maybe's. Will you forgive me? (Not, I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings.)

**Accept The Consequences!** The consequence might not be your "best case scenario". Trust may need to be rebuilt, or the relationship may need a new boundary (on your part or on theirs).

Change your behavior by Christ's power. To do this well, we need to be honest with our **Learn From It!** selves about ourselves.

## When Peace Means To Fight

*Relationships Are A Matter Of Life And Death.* Jesus tells us time and again about the importance of relationships. Further, He equates the killing of a relationship to that of committing murder. Where a relational conflict occurs, the problem IS the relationship, not the people involved. Jesus is very direct in His desire for us to work for peace.

**Matthew 5:9 (NLT)** God blesses those who **work for peace**, for they will be called the children of God.

*Jesus Taught Us To Lay Down Our Lives For Peace.* This does not mean that a life of peace (as Jesus intended) will be passive or in avoidance of conflict. Jesus' proclamation of the truth fundamentally attacked Satan and sin. His crucifixion was not a peaceful event either, but His message was sealed with His sacrifice. Laying down our lives for peace means living the way God intended, even when it is tough. We should pray for forgiveness rather than for judgment.

**Ephesians 2:14 (NLT)** For Christ Himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in His own body on the cross, He broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.

*Life IS Relationships.* Responsibility, Integrity, and Courage clear the pathway for better relationships. Better relationships will ensure that our past stays behind us and will allow for spiritual growth.

## Talk About It...

- *When you think about making a few adjustments to a relationship, which relationship comes to mind?*
- *Think of a time where your words or actions were harmful to a relationship. Was it difficult to own your responsibility? Why?*
- *How are relationships impacted when the hurt is never acknowledged or addressed?*
- *Why do you think Jesus likened the death of a relationship to that of committing murder?*
- *How can harmful relationships be addressed (domestic violence, substance abuse, etc.)?*
- *Recall a time where you were able to move beyond some wrongdoing in a relationship. What helped in moving forward? How can we use prayer to help mend troubled relationships?*