

Tensions will always occur between people whether it be at work, at home, in public, or even at church.

What are the typical causes of tension or conflict between you and others?
Are there any consistent patterns or commonalities in the types of tensions you experience?

Discuss the following quote:

"The only consistent feature in all of your dissatisfying relationships is you."

<http://www.despair.com/viewall.html>

When conflicts occur, how do you typically handle them?
Are you more inclined to want to confront the conflict right away or are you more inclined to withdraw? Why?

Can you think of any biblical examples where relationship conflict was handled badly?

Can you think of any biblical examples where relationship conflict was handled well?

Can you share an experience where a broken relationship was restored in your life?
How did that restoration happen?

What are some biblical principles we can apply to resolving relational conflict in our lives?

On the following pages are some scriptures that give us wisdom regarding restoring our broken relationships. Reflect on the significance of each passage.

Matthew 7:1-5 (NIV)

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ³ "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴ How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

In what ways do we tend to judge others? Think through the past week and try to recall some times when perhaps you “judged” someone.

Why is it so easy to spot shortcomings in other people, but ignore our own at the very same time?

What does Jesus say we should do at these times?

Why is it so difficult to admit that we also have flaws, and instead of condemning, choose to support the other person?

If we truly understood that we will be judged by the very standard we judge others, how would that affect how we would judge others?

When we judge someone, we also tend to hand out a punishment to them in some way. These punishments may be blatant or very subtle. What are some examples of ways you have punished people you have judged in the past...or present?

Psalms 75:7 (NASB)

But God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another.

What does it mean to declare God is Judge?

Romans 14:10-13 (NIV)

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

¹¹ *It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'"*

¹² *So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

¹³ *Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.*

What are some reasons as to why God is the only one who can rightly judge?

Romans 12:19-20 (NIV)

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

What does the above verse imply about our role in judging and condemning others?

Share some examples of times when you assumed responsibility to judge and condemn someone, but in the long run you found it only hurt yourself instead.

Judging others is an incredible responsibility that carries a heavy burden. God tells us he is freeing us from this responsibility so that we never have to worry about judging or condemning another person at all – he will take care of that for us.

If we truly believe that we are not responsible to judge or condemn any other person, in what ways might that free us?

What does Romans 12:20 say our response should be, instead of condemnation?

What might be some practical results of feeding our enemy?

Why would we show love to others if they only continue to seek to harm us?

God is giving you permission this week to not judge or condemn anyone; you are freed from that heavy burden. If you are free from this responsibility how will it practically affect how you relate to people this coming week?

CHALLENGE: Try to go through this next week without judging or condemning anyone.

Consider:

Are there any people you need to treat differently?

Are there any people you need to ask for forgiveness for how you've judged them?

Are there any people from whom you have been withholding love? (avoiding, silent treatment, gossip, grumbling etc.)

Relationship is what we were created for; relationships therefore, need to be our highest priority. There are times when God will choose to judge "through us", but we will discuss that in a few weeks.

Matthew 5:9 (NIV)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.