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## HORIZONTAL RELATIONSHIPS

Have you ever been in a relationship that was both cherished and severely broken at the same time? Such can leave you frustrated and in deep anxiety almost beyond your ability to cope. You wish that “If only the other person were as determined to fix it, we could possibly work it out. But I can’t work it out alone.”

Unfortunately there are times when there is only one person trying to work out a relational problem and in such situations the breach will seldom be healed. But when two Christians have such a dispute, surely, the two should be able to work it out by applying spiritual maturity and biblical principles. Yet, sometimes the relationship remains broken and even continues to worsen.

How can Christians regain healed HORIZONTAL relationships after things have gotten so bad? At times like these the relationship may need professional help. Perhaps a wise Christian professional counselor that you both trust may help. Yet above all else, God is our counselor. The Bible terms both Jesus Christ (I Jn. 2:1) and the Holy Spirit (Jh. 14:26) as our *paraclete*, sometimes translated as Comforter, helper, or advocate. It means “one that stands beside you,” as a helper or also in the legal sense as an advocate for supporting you in your cause or need.

There are times when Christians will be unable to mend broken relationships unless they both seek to first mend their VERTICAL relationships with God. If there is a broken relationship between Christians, someone likely also had a breach in their vertical relationship with God. This is not to place blame. It is only to confess that things do not go wrong without a cause. “As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless (problem) shall not come” (Prov. 26:2). Bitterness will defile us spiritually even if the other person is at fault and we were the innocent and unjustly injured party (Heb. 12:15, Mt. 24:12).

The injuries we receive from our friends often hurt much more than those from our enemies (Ps. 41:9). Let us all be reminded that there are times that we need added holiness in our vertical relationship before we can hope to receive healing in our horizontal ones. God brings us to the humble position where we can confess our faults and offenses honestly and deeply repent from our having injured others so that healing and forgiveness may take place (Ja. 5:12; Lk. 17:3-4).

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