

Week Seven: *The Relational Way*
Matthew 5:21-48; 1 Corinthians 10:23-33

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. What would you say is the American understanding of individual “rights”?
2. How does the American belief in rights compare or contrast with the biblical perspective on individual rights? Are they the same? Is there a lot of overlap? Are they completely opposed to each other?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-33. Does Paul say that Christians have “rights”?
4. Paul grants that we have rights, but he puts a pretty strict guideline on how we decide to implement our rights. What does he say should guide our decision-making?
5. Paul brings up a controversial issue from his day: the eating of food sacrificed to pagan idols. What might be a modern-day issue where Christians are tempted to focus on their own rights rather than working for the good of others?
6. Where do you personally struggle to sacrifice your rights for the good of someone else in your life?
7. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to show you areas of struggle you might have over rights in the relationships in your life.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. What if someone you cared about intentionally inflicted harm on you? For their sake and for yours, what kinds of boundaries or processes for restoration would you try to implement?
9. Now let’s read a shocking biblical case study where just such a thing happened! Open your Bible (or Bible app) to Luke 15:11-32. Read the story. Who are the main characters in this family drama?
10. Based on the father’s actions, did the younger son have the “right” to ask for his inheritance early? What effect did it have on the quality of his relationship with his dad?
11. Did the father have the right to refuse his son’s request? Did the father have the right to refuse to take his son back? What do you think motivated the father to give up these rights for the sake of his son?

12. Do you agree with the father's choices? Why or why not?

13. Does our heavenly Father have the right to hold your sins against you? Does our heavenly Father have the right to forgive you? How does his choice impact your relationship with him?

14. Finish your FIFTEEN with a prayer of gratitude for how God has forgiven you. Then ask him to help you to remember to forgive others as you have been forgiven.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. Jesus famously said to forgive people who keep hurting you “seventy-seven times.” What are the fears people have about taking this advice literally?

16. Yesterday, we looked at the story of the Lost Son, but let's look at it again today. Read Luke 15:11-32. Why might most people say the father is TOO forgiving here?

17. It's hard to imagine any responsible parenting book advocating that we treat rebellious children this way! What do you think would happen in your close relationships if you simply forgave people (friends/children/spouses) every time they hurt you?

18. But what actually happened to the relationship between the father and the son at the end of the story?

19. Has anyone ever responded to your mistakes with grace and forgiveness? How did that affect you? Your relationship with them?

20. Sometimes we're scared to follow Jesus' teaching ALL the way. We hold back, protect ourselves. Who is someone in your life right now that you've been holding back from? Even though they may not “deserve” it, what would it look like to offer them the same kind of unconditional forgiveness that God offers you?

21. End your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you see an opportunity to forgive someone from whom you have been withholding forgiveness.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

22. We tend to have different standards for different groups of people. What are some ways that you would treat a family member differently than a stranger?

23. Jesus offers us guidance for our relationships in the Sermon on the Mount. Read Matthew 5:21-48. Which of his suggestions make the most sense to you? Which ones seem unrealistic?
24. In this section, Jesus breaks people down into two categories: brothers/sisters and enemies. What is the supreme guidance for how we act toward brothers/sisters in faith when they sin against us? (See verses 21-26.)
25. But what about if someone isn't a brother/sister in Christ, but is an enemy to us personally or to our faith? How does Jesus expect us to treat them? (See verses 43-48.)
26. Jesus wants us to treat people with love and forgiveness, whether they're part of our circle or a hostile enemy. But what excuses do we tend to make for our retaliatory actions when someone sins against us or treats us badly?
27. What is one relationship in your life right now in which you could choose to start "receiving their slaps" and consistently respond with forgiving grace?
28. Finish your FIFTEEN by asking God to give you what you need to respond with grace.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

29. As you think about the groupings and social networks and "tribes" of this world, take a moment and make a list of the groups that you would presume don't like you. How do the people in those groups treat you?
30. Now take a moment and face this: how do you tend to treat the people in those groups?
31. Read Jesus' prescription in Matthew 5:21-48. If there is a negative cycle here, whose job is it to break the cycle with an act of non-retaliation and grace?
32. Since Jesus is putting the burden on his followers to go first, how could you actively choose to bless someone whom you dislike?
33. What are the things that might go wrong if you made this bold choice?
34. What are the things that might go right?

35. As you end your final FIFTEEN this week, ask God to help you commit to making the changes you have been working on a permanent part of your life.