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More questions?

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*Join us next week for another...
"Fit for Life!"*

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Fit



for Life



Relationally Fit
Pastor Zach McIntosh
March 7, 2010

Fit for Life!
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John 10:10

Relationships 101

- _____ (*Genesis 2:18*)
- _____

Matthew 5:21-26

Verse 21

- “You have heard” (aorist tense)
- “Do not murder” (**rasach**, intention and action)

Verse 22

- “who is angry” (present tense participle: “the angry one”)
- “Raca” ~ “empty head”

- Sanhedrin (Dead Sea Scrolls)

- “fool” ~ **moros**

- “hell” ~ **ge’enna**

Verses 23-26

- “the altar” (Josephus)

- “paid the last penny” ~ **kodrantēs**

Reconciliation Lessons

- _____ (verse 23)
- _____ (verse 25)
- _____ (verse 25, *Matthew 18:15*)
- _____ (*2 Corinthians 5:19-20*)

Adult • Bible • Class

ABC Series: "Fit for Life: Relationally Fitness"

This weekend in both worship and ABC, we are continuing our Lenten series called "Fit for Life"...and this series is devoted to discerning and discovering all the different areas in which God wants us to experience health and wholeness...

...because our God is a God who is concerned that we are healthy and whole in every area / every aspect of our lives...be that physically or spiritually or financially or emotionally

In fact, Jesus expressed his desire that we live as healthy people when he said...

John 10:10

¹⁰ "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

...and this right here is kind of an encapsulation of Jesus' desire for our lives...he has come to take our lives in which, a lot of times, we are just barely scraping by and give us a life which is better, grander, fuller, deeper, more transcendent than we have ever known or could ever imagine...that is Jesus' mission for us

So today, as we continue through our series, we come to the topic of **relational health** / how we relate to others and how they relate to us...

And to get us thinking about this, I want to begin with a couple fundamental and foundational assertions about relationships...I call it **Relationships 101** in your notes...

...and the first fundamental and foundational assertion about relationships that I would make is very simply: **We were created as relational beings** (2x)

(When God is creating the heavens and the earth, he is quite pleased with his work...

...he keeps on declaring, "It is good! It is good! It is good! It is very good!"...

...but then, God makes the first man Adam...and at this point, Adam is all alone...he has no friends / companions / sweetheart...

...and God sees this and he says in...

Genesis 2:18

¹⁸ "It is *not good* for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

So far, God has said of his creation: "It's good! It's good! It's good! It's very good!"

...but then God sees Adam, all alone without any human companionship / any human relationship and he says, "Now wait a second, this *isn't good*"...

...and so God makes another human...he makes a girl named Eve and Adam is thrilled...because Adam is a relational being...Adam can't just be a loner

And this is not only true of the first man, it's true of all *humans*...

...we were created to be relational beings...that's why we have friends, family members, spouses, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, coworkers, and acquaintances... that's why we have contact lists in our cell phones and addresses in our email accounts...there is something very deep inside of us that wants to connect with each other because that's the way we're hard wired...

But here's the problem: We were created to be relational beings, and yet, has anybody in here ever had a problem with one of their relationships? Ever gotten into a fight? Ever given somebody the cold shoulder? Ever destroyed a friendship?

...yeah, for as much as we were created to be relational beings, our relationships often go awry / astray

And this is the second fundamental and foundational assertion that I would make about relationships: **We all suffer from relational sickness** (2x)

...relationships get wrecked...friendships get fissured...it happens to all of us...

ILL: Has anyone ever heard of Ann Landers or Dear Abby?

...yeah, these columns aren't as well known as they used to be, but for decades, these two ladies were the queens of advice-giving in newspapers nationwide... what some of you might not know is that Ann and Abby were sisters...

...and they started out very close...they both attended the same college, both got married in a single wedding ceremony...but when they began competing with each other in the advice column business, a hostility developed between the two of them...

...and they never made up...Ann Landers died without resolving the feud and the latest that I have heard is that Abby is in a nursing home with Alzheimer's, still angry as ever at her deceased sister

Two ladies who gave relational advice to millions couldn't even keep their own relationships healthy...

...and this is all of us / human condition: we all suffer from relational sickness
But this is not Jesus' desire for our lives / hope for our hearts...his desire for our lives
and hope for our hearts is that we experience relational health...

And this leads us to our text for today...

...because in Matthew 5, Jesus is going to give us a kind of relational fitness
checkup...he's going to pry around in our hearts a little bit and get us to ponder:
"How am I doing with my relationships?"

...and I gotta warn you as we dive into today's text, this is tough stuff...as I was
studying in preparation for this study, Jesus' words here really convicted me

...and so here's the warning: be ready to have your world rocked a little bit by
what Jesus teaches because it's not easy stuff...

And so...

Matthew 5:21

²¹"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone
who murders will be subject to judgment.'"

...pause right there...

Have you ever noticed that when you hear or say something over and over and over
again it becomes rote and you don't really notice it or process it anymore?

(ILL: This is an old story...

...a newly ordained pastor is leading a worship service...in fact, this is his first
service ever...and so, as you can imagine, he's a little nervous...and so he
studies everything carefully just to make sure he has everything just perfectly...

...and everything is going great...until he gets to the "Peace of the Lord"...and
some of you know how this goes...the pastor will say, "The peace of the Lord be
with you always"...and the congregation will respond, what? "And also with you!"

Well right as this pastor gets to the peace of the Lord, his mic starts snapping and
cracking and popping until it just totally cuts out...

...and the pastor, hearing all this through the sound system, is mortified...after
all, this is his first time leading worship...and so he turns his mic off, turns it back
on...doesn't work...wiggles the wire a little bit...nothing: his mic is just dead...

...and so finally, in exasperation, the pastor says to his congregation about his mic: "There's something wrong with this thing!"

...and because it's time for the peace of the Lord, the congregation responds, "And also with you"

(You know, this really is one of the dangers of having heard something one too many times...we begin to cruise on autopilot without really thinking about what we're saying...

And so, when Jesus says, "*You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'*"...this isn't just something that these people would have heard once...this is something they would have heard over and over and over again...

(In fact, it's interesting...

...the Greek verb for "heard" is in what is known as the **ao**rist tense...and in Greek, the aorist tense is also known as the boring tense...

...it denotes something that's not very ear catching / appealing...it describes you've heard about a million times before

And so, when Jesus begins by saying, "You have heard" in the aorist tense, the crowds must have been thinking, "Whatever it is, I'm sure we've heard it...I'm sure it's nothing new...I'm sure we could recite it...I'm sure we won't really need to think about it / ponder it / or process it...because I'm sure we've heard it a million times before"

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'"

...and sure enough, this is something everybody gathered in the crowd that day has heard before...it's an old stand by...it's the fifth commandment...nothing new here / interesting hear / enthralling here...don't murder! Like I don't know that!

But perhaps it's worth it, before we, like the crowds, say, "I've heard this before...it's the fifth commandment...I don't really need to do much thinking on this commandment" – perhaps it's worth it to just do a little bit of digging into this commandment...

...and so, let's just dig around in this commandment for just a second...because this is actually a very deep commandment...

Because when God gives this commandment, he gives it against **murder** specifically, and not necessarily all **killing** in general...

...in fact, this commandment uses the Hebrew word *rasach* – a word that refers to pre-meditated murder or manslaughter...

...it does not refer to a death in war or capital punishment...in these instances, other Hebrew words are used...and so, this commandment is very specific

And this is important: because God is specifically referring to an act that takes somebody's life for reasons of hatred / vengeance / angst / broken relationship...

...i.e., this prohibition against murder involves two parts: there is the act – the taking of someone's life – and *the intention of the heart behind the act* – the hatred / vengeance / angst / relational brokenness, whatever...

And so, God isn't just concerned with an action, he's also concerned with your heart...he's also concerned with the kind of stuff that you're hiding in your heart that would lead you to ruthlessly and callously take the life of another human being

And so, this commandment is a relational commandment...

...it's a commandment that tries to guard us against relational brokenness so dire, that it would lead us to do the unthinkable – it would lead us to murder

And this is why Jesus continues...

Matthew 5:21-22

²¹"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' ²²But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Jesus says, "The fifth commandment is about murder...and traditionally, when people have discussed this commandment, they've focused on the actual action of taking another's life... the bloody knife or the smoking gun or the frayed noose...

...but I want to focus in on something that is often overlooked in discussions of the fifth commandment...I want to focus in not just on the act, but on the intention behind the act...the blind rage that would drive someone to do something as heinous as taking the life of another"...because the word *rasach* covers both...

...and so Jesus says, "If you are angry at your brother / angry at your sister /

angry at the world / bitter at the hand you've been dealt – you're committing *rasach*...because *rasach* covers not only what you do with your hands – whether you take a knife or a gun or a machete to someone and kill them – but how you feel in your heart...

In fact, the Greek syntax of this phrase “**who is angry**” is important to catch...it's a **present tense participle**...and a present tense participle denotes not just a person's incidental response to a given circumstance, but the very state of their being

...i.e., the kind of anger Jesus is talking about here is not just the kind of anger where some terrible injustice or tragedy happens and you get angry...that's righteous anger / that's the kind of anger that God has – anger in the face of sin

What Jesus is talking about here, however, isn't righteous anger, but unrighteous anger...he's talking about the kind of person who is incessantly and relentlessly angry...he's talking about the kind of person for whom anger is a way of life, even if a person has no reason to be angry...he's talking about the kind of person who lets resentment and bitterness fester and burn and grow inside until they eventually do or say something rash, shocking, and irreparably harmful...

In fact, this is exactly what Jesus says...

...he says that eventually, this kind of anger spills out in words... *Anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.*

(Now, a couple of quick notes about each of these insults that flow from anger...

...Jesus says, *Anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin.*

...and the word “**Raca**” is an Aramaic word meaning, “empty-head”...kind of like today we'll talk about “brain drain,” this is what calling someone “Raca” basically means...it means they have the IQ of a rock...

And Jesus says, “If you insult someone in this way in your anger, you are *answerable to the Sanhedrin.*”

(Now, for Jesus to render this kind of judgment on someone's anger – making an angry person answerable to the Sanhedrin – is actually pretty striking...

...here's why I say that...

...in Jesus' day in this society, you want to know what the punishment was for anger? Absolutely nothing...kind of like even in our day...you can incarcerate someone for murder but you can't throw them in jail just because they raise their voice at someone else

(In fact, the only exception to this was with a group of people known as the Essenes...

...and some of you may have heard of the Essenes before...they were a splinter group – very conservative – who lived in the deserts of Qumran and they believed that God was going to return at any moment and destroy *everybody* – except, of course, them!

...and according to most people of this day, they were one of those fringe radical groups...the kind that live in compounds and look kind of cult-like...

The Essenes believed that it was appropriate to punish someone for anger...

In fact, here's a quote from the **Dead Sea Scrolls** in a folio written by Essenes:

“If anyone speaks angrily...he is to be punished by reduced rations for one year and separated from the pure meals of the general membership, eating by himself.” (1QS 7:2-3)

...and so, you get angry and you basically get castigated from your little Essene society for a year

But as I said, this was not the general consensus concerning the punishment for anger

...this was just the opinion of a little, radical, fringe, uber-conservative, out of touch group...it was backwater and unenlightened

But then, Jesus comes along and he says, “On this one, the Essenes are right...

...because anger really is that dangerous / toxic...and so, if you get angry, I'm going to make you answerable to the Sanhedrin"...which in that day, was the highest Jewish court in the land...

...and so Jesus is basically saying here: you get angry at someone, and you're going to wind up in the Supreme Court for your crime

Jesus sides with the fringe, radical Essenes on this one because Jesus is that concerned over angry hearts / that distraught over what anger can do to a person...

(And then, the second insult that Jesus talks about here: *Anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.*

...the Greek word for “**fool**” here is **moros**...we get our word “moron” from this...

...and Jesus says, “If you’re angry at someone and you call them this / you call them a moron, you’re in danger of the fire of hell...

...and the Greek word for “**hell**” is the word **ge’enna**

...and just so you know, the word *ge’enna* not only describes a real place in the hereafter – a real place that nonbelievers go to – the word *ge’enna* actually described a real place on this earth in Jesus’ day...

...because *ge’enna* was the name for Jerusalem’s town dump which, picturesquely enough, came complete with burning trash fires...that’s where

Jesus gets this picture of “the fires of hell” from – from Jerusalem’s town dump

And so Jesus is saying: “If you call your brother a fool / *moros*, it’s like your throwing your soul away into *ge’enna* / town dump...

...and you don’t want to do that...you don’t want to sell your soul into the eternal fires of hell just so you can have a stupid, petty, momentary, fleeting fit of rage...it’s just not worth it!”

(Jesus continues...

Matthew 5:23-26

²³“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. ²⁵“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

...and there are just a couple of quick things I want to note on these verses...

The first comes in (vs. 23-24): *If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*

...and so Jesus says, “Hey, if you’re at a worship service and something isn’t quite right with one of your relationships / somebody is angry at you / some kind of fissure between you and somebody else, get up out of your pew / leave the service early, go and get that taken care of, and then come back and worship”

And what I want you to especially notice here is the definite article in front of “altar”...

...Jesus talks not just about worshipping and offering a gift to God on *an* altar, but on **“the altar”**...Jesus so this is a specific place and a specific altar

...and the altar that Jesus is talking about is the altar at the temple of Jerusalem

And I’ll tell you what: this was quite an awe inspiring altar / overwhelming altar...

...the first century Jewish historian **Josephus** actually writes about this altar:

“The outward face of the temple...was likely to surprise either men’s minds or their eyes; for it was covered all over with plates of gold of great weight, and, at the first rising of the sun, reflected back a very fiery splendor, and made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn their eyes away, just as they would have done at the sun’s own rays...Before this temple stood the altar, fifteen cubits high, and equal both in length and breadth; each of which dimensions was fifty cubits.” (Josephus, *Wars*, 5.5.6)

...and just to give you a sense of this altar’s size...one cubit equals roughly 19 inches...and so, when Josephus talks about the altar being 15 cubits high, that means that it was about 24 feet high.....and when he talks about it being 50 cubits long, that means that it was about 80 feet wide

...Can you imagine? This was a massive altar! This was an awe-inspiring altar!

(ILL: It’s kind of like this...

...I live right around the 281 and Bitters area, and so the HEB that Melody and I shop at is the Brookhollow HEB...in fact, I know that some of you shop there too because I see you there...

...and the Brookhollow HEB is an old HEB – it’s been around for decades and hasn’t been remodeled – and also a relatively small HEB...

...and I actually really like shopping at this HEB precisely for this reason: it’s really small so it’s also really easy to maneuver...after all, when you only got 10 aisles to navigate, it makes finding everything you need pretty easy

But then, just to north of the Brookhollow HEB and just down the road from Concordia, there is another HEB at 1604 and Blanco...and this just isn't an HEB, this an HEB Plus!

...and this a new HEB – I remember when they remodeled it from a regular HEB into and HEB Plus! – and it's also a monstrous HEB...

...I mean, it just has miles and miles of everything you could want or need (I remember I went one day and picked up a gallon of milk and a wireless router...

...and as I was walking out of the store I was thinking to myself, "How crazy is this? I just went to a grocery store and bought a router for my computer!"

But this is HEB Plus!...shopping there – because it is so massive – is an awe-inspiring and an overwhelming experience...

And this was life at the temple in Jerusalem: It was an awe-inspiring and overwhelming experience simply because everything about the temple was so massive!

...usually, when you'd worship, you'd worship in your local synagogue...and these local synagogues were kind of like your HEB Brookhollow...nothing particularly big or grand or inspiring about them

...but then, every once in a while, you'd travel down the road to the temple in Jerusalem / the HEB Plus! of the ancient religious world...and when you saw the massive altar at the temple and heard the priests singing their songs and smelled the incense burning in worship to God, it really was an overwhelming experience

And this was certain: because the temple was so awe-inspiring and overwhelming, when you went to worship there, you stayed to worship there...you didn't come in late to a service and you didn't leave early...you stayed through the whole thing...because this was a transcendent / holy moment

But then Jesus comes along and says: *If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*

And so Jesus is saying: "Hey, if you're worshipping – no matter how grand / how awe-inspiring the worship service may be, even if it's at *the* altar at the temple in Jerusalem – if you remember that a relationship with another person is broken, leave the service early, go be reconciled to that person..."

...because that's how important your relational health is...it's so important that it even merits leaving early from worship"

And so, as you can see, Jesus puts a huge premium on reconciliation and relational health and not letting your relationships remain fissured...

(Then, the second thing I would note on Jesus' teaching concerning relational health here are the consequences for not healing relational fissures...

...Jesus says, "If you don't leave your gift at the altar and try to reconcile a broken relationship, then the person you're at odds with *may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.* (i.e., this broken relationship could ruin your whole life) ²⁶*I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.*"

...and the Greek here for this word "**penny**" is **kodrantēs**...and a *kodrantēs* represented 1/64 of what an average day laborer (who wouldn't make a whole lot...a day laborer would be making minimum wage) would make in a day...

And so, just to put this in perspective...

...minimum wage these days is \$7.25 per hour...and so, if you work an 8 hour day, you make \$58...now divide that by 64 and you get 91 cents...

...and so, for less than a dollar, someone who is mad at you, Jesus is saying, will keep you in prison...

(Have you ever noticed how embittered, broken relationships have a funny way of making people real petty?

(ILL: I was talking to someone the other day who recently had a death in their family...

...unfortunately, as this person was telling me, their family was not exactly a picture of relational health, and so there's been a lot of fighting over who gets what out of the deceased's estate...

...and this person was telling me that family members were so bitter and so distrusting of one another, that there was this one guy who went and dug up the plants out of the yard of the person who had just passed away because he didn't trust any of the other family members and he thought that they would try to take those plants that he's always wanted

...and this was the day before the funeral...and there's this guy with a spade digging in the yard because he's so mistrusting of everybody else...

But this is what broken relationships can do...

...they can make you dig up plants...they can make you throw someone in jail over 90 cents...they can make you so petty!

And this is why Jesus is so adamant about relational health...and about being reconciled to others when our relationships with them are broken...

...because broken relationships can destroy us!

(And so, what I want to do, in the few minutes that we have remaining in this study, is just try to tease out for you four reconciliation lessons from Jesus' words here in Matthew 5 as we seek to stay relationally healthy with each other...

...and I'd just encourage you to write these down and then, if you're in the middle of an embittered relationship, take these lessons with you and use them to be reconciled to another person...

And so, four **lessons on reconciliation** and lesson #1 is this: **Reconciliation is more than who's right or wrong.** (2x)

(You know, far too many times – when I've been counseling someone who is in a broken relationship – my conversation with them goes like this...

...I'll ask them, "What's going on? What happened to make this relationship go south?"...and they'll respond, "I don't know...I didn't do anything wrong...so and so just got mad at me and now they don't want to talk to me anymore"

...to which I'll respond, "Well, don't you think you ought to talk to them? Don't you think you ought to try to sort this out?"...to which they'll say, "Why? I haven't done anything wrong! They're wrong for getting mad at me! *If they got a problem with me then they can come and talk to me!*"

Dear friends, this is not the way true, Christian reconciliation works...

...you don't just go and reconcile with someone when you've done something wrong and you've gotten caught and so you're kind of forced to say you're sorry...no, you try to reconcile with someone, Jesus says, even if a relationship is fissured between you and another person for no good reason at all / even if someone is upset with you for no good reason at all...

Look at what Jesus says in (vs. 23): *If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you...*

...notice what Jesus says here: he doesn't talk about an objective wrong that needs to be reconciled, but a subjective feeling that needs to be reconciled...and so, if someone feels ill toward you – whether that feeling be justified or unjustified – you ought to go and try to be reconciled with them...

...reconciliation is not about who's right and who's wrong the person who's wrong and the person who's wrong better go and grovel at the feet of the person's who's right and beg their forgiveness...no, reconciliation is a desire to see a relationship restored regardless of who's right and who's wrong simply because you love another person and you don't want your relationship with them fractured

In fact, the greatest reconciliation ever to take place was between God and man...

...and here's the question: When it came to that reconciliation, who came to who? Did God say, "Well, I don't know what their problem is...they're the ones who sinned against me, not me against them...if they want to be reconciled to me, then they can come to me...otherwise, forget them!" Did God say that? No! God sent his Son...he initiated reconciliation even though we were the ones totally in the wrong and he was the one totally in the right

And so, that's lesson #1 on reconciliation: Reconciliation is so much bigger than just who's right and who's wrong...because if you spend all your time trying to figure out and sort out who's right and who's wrong, you'll never be reconciled...

(Then, lesson #2 on reconciliation is this: **Reconciliation is for today.** (2x)

...you shouldn't dilly dally when it comes to reconciling with other people...

...look at (vs. 25): *Settle matters* (what's the word?) *quickly* with your adversary

You know, I can't tell you how many people I've talked to who suffer under the weight of crushing regret because they got into a fight with someone once upon a time and they knew they needed to reconcile with that person, but the pain was so great, that they kept on putting off the phone call / email / visit / conversation...

...they figured, "Oh, I'll just wait till later to talk to that person...I'll take care of it another day..."...but then a tragedy strikes or that person dies and the whole relationship is left suspended / un-reconciled in mid-air

...and they say things like, "I wish I would have talked to that person sooner / forgiven them earlier / told them I love them"

Guys, don't suffer with that kind of regret and pain and heartache...

...if your relationship is strained with someone, make a phone call today / send an email today / have a conversation today...

...don't wait until tomorrow to reconcile...After all, why would you? Why would you want to ever put off healing a relationship when it can be restored today?

So that's lesson 2 on reconciliation: Reconciliation is for today.

And then, lesson 3 on reconciliation: **In reconciliation, three's a crowd.** (2x)

(Here's what I mean by this...

...so often, if we're out of relationship with someone, our first inclination is to go to everyone else but that person / it's to bring in third party after third party after third party...we go to our friends and talk about how terrible that other person is...we go to our family members and talk about how we would never do what that other person had done to us...i.e., we effectively gossip about all the terrible things someone else has done to us...

But third parties rarely do us good – at least in the nascent stages of reconciliation

...in fact, sometimes they do us harm...

(vs. 25): *Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the (who?) judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.*

...and so notice: as soon as a third party enters the picture, there is trouble...it's like you're on the witness stand with Judge Judy and you're hoping that she – as a third party – will rule in your favor, but things do not turn out the way you hoped

That's why Jesus says...

Matthew 18:15

¹⁵"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, *just between the two of you.*"

...no third party needed, Jesus says...

And so, if you're out of relationship with someone, you don't necessarily need to talk to your relative, best friend, counselor, shrink, sage, business partner, or colleague, you need to talk to the person you're out of relationship with!

...steer clear of third parties as much as possible...that's lesson 3

And then finally, lesson 4 is this: **Reconciliation is sometimes rejected.** (2x)

...and I'll tell you what, this is a hard, hard lesson...

But this is just true: sometimes, you try to reconcile with someone and they tell you, basically, to buzz off...

(ILL: I was talking with someone who had gotten into a fight with a good friend...

...and she has really been hurt by this relational fissure...so much so, in fact, that she made a gesture toward reconciliation...she invited her to go eat with her...and her friend never even responded to her invitation

...and she was fighting back tears as she was telling me the story and I was fighting back tears as I was listening to the story...because I was thinking to myself: "Oh how sad is this! She wants to reconcile, but there is so much bitterness on the other side, she doesn't get so much as a response"

But this is the truth: Just because you want reconcile, doesn't mean another person will

...but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't try!

In fact, I think Paul just expresses this truth beautifully when he writes...

2 Corinthians 5:19-20

¹⁹God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.

...and so here's the question: When God sent Christ to die, how many people did he send Christ to die for? How many people did he want to be reconciled to? Everyone! That's why Paul says that "God was reconciling *the world* to himself"

...God's passionate priority is that no person is left un-reconciled to God in sin

But then, notice how Paul continues...

And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: *Be reconciled to God.*

And so here's the picture: On the one hand God has reconciled the whole world to himself through Jesus...there is no one who God doesn't offer reconciliation to...

...but then, on the other hand, Paul implores his readers: "Be reconciled to God"
...now why would Paul plead this if God has already offered reconciliation to everyone? Because some people refuse reconciliation! Some people do not trust in Christ! And so Paul continues to plead: Be reconciled to God...be reconciled to God!...because Paul knows that God is desperate to have every last person receive his reconciliation...

(ILL: It's kind of like this...

...when I was growing up, we didn't have a lot of money, and so my father was very careful with how he managed our finances...and, I'll tell you what, he was a real stickler when it come to balancing our checkbook / when it came to reconciling our bank statement with our check register...

...and I can remember this one time, it was the end of the month, and my father had gotten our bank statement...and the bank statement and the checkbook were off by 3 cents...and my father checked and double checked and triple checked everything and he couldn't find a mistake in the checkbook...he couldn't figure out what was going on...

...and so, rather than just subtracting 3 cents from our final check register balance, he called the bank...and you know what? It turns out the bank was the one who had made the mistake! And we got our 3 cents back!

You know, when it comes to God's reconciliation in Christ, you need to know this: Christ is concerned with every last penny / person

...and he won't stop calling / inviting / imploring you to be reconciled to him because he wants to reconcile our faith with the great price that his Son paid for our salvation...and so he says: "Be reconciled...be reconciled...be reconciled"

So believe that, receive that, don't reject it...

...because God is coming after you with his reconciliation...and not only after you, but after the whole world...so help reconcile God's checkbook...and be reconciled to him...