

Relationships can become broken in many different ways. Do any of these scenarios sound familiar to you?

You can't remember what the argument was about, but you do remember that you both said some pretty awful things. Things you wish you'd never said. Things you wish you could take back. Things you didn't really mean. But now it's too late. You called to apologize, but she hung up on you. You tried talking to her at church, but she glared at you and walked away. The note you wrote wasn't answered. You started out mad, then you felt sad and guilty, but now you're angry again. Didn't *she* say some horrible things too? Shouldn't *she* be asking for *your* forgiveness? Why should you be the one groveling?

You walked out of your office just in time to hear a friend repeat something to a coworker that you had told him in confidence. You trusted him, and now you feel betrayed. You vow never to make the same mistake again.

Your friend moved away. You worked hard at staying in touch. But lately she hasn't

returned your calls or emails. Missing her is hard enough, but now you're frustrated and hurt too. If she doesn't care about your relationship, why should you? Maybe you've been fooling yourself all along, and you weren't as close as you thought. At least now you know.

Arguments, betrayal, inattention—some of the reasons that relationships shatter.

Anger, confusion, hurt, frustration—some of what we feel when they do.

Why does it have to be this way?

Why Relationships Break

It's natural to get caught up in the specifics of why a particular relationship fell apart without taking time to recognize the broader context in which all relationships occur. But it can be helpful before you start analyzing the breakdown of a specific relationship, to take some time to consider the following realities.

1. *Relationships break because we live in a broken world.* Metal rusts. Machines

malfunction. Electronics short out. Relationships break down. It all began when Adam and Eve broke their relationship with God.

God created Adam and Eve and settled them in Eden, a garden paradise. Everything was perfect and whole—their minds, their bodies, their home, their relationship with God, and their relationship with each other. God gave them just one rule: they could eat from any tree except one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. One day Adam and Eve chose to break that rule, and in that moment of rebellion, their perfect world disappeared. Their rebellion brought sin into the world, and with sin came death, pain, confusion, frustration, shame, brokenness—everything we experience when relationships fail.

But God didn't stop loving us, and he didn't leave us in that broken condition. He broke the one relationship that never should have been broken, the

one relationship that never needed to be broken—his relationship with Jesus, his son—so that our relationship with him could be restored. Have you ever thought about it that way? God turned his back on Jesus as he was hanging on the cross soaking up our sin. The perfect, seamless relationship they had always enjoyed was torn apart as Jesus paid with his life for our betrayal and rebellion. But that wasn't all that was torn apart—in God's temple the curtain that separated the people from God's presence was torn in two. The ripped curtain was God's sign to his people that once again they could enjoy an intimate relationship with him. And it is only through that repaired relationship with God through Jesus that we can hope to repair our relationships with others.

2. *Relationships rupture because we have an enemy.* We have the same enemy today that Adam and Eve had—the devil, who “prowls around like a roaring lion