

# Transcript

## 286-Greg Stephens-Hindenburt mix

00:00:01 - James Early

Hey there, and welcome again to the Bible Speaks to you podcast. I'm so grateful you've tuned in to listen today. In this episode, we're going to talk about healing broken and difficult relationships. And we're going to look at some examples in the Bible of relationships that were restored and see what we can learn about these people in the Bible who went through these experiences. My guest today is Greg Stephens, who helps people navigate complex situations and impossible relationships by helping them get a fresh perspective on what's really going on and building new bridges in these relationships. Hey, Greg. Welcome to the Bible Speaks to you.

00:00:45 - Greg Stephens

Thanks so much, James. Glad to be here. And I'm honored to be a guest. Really appreciate you offering.

00:00:51 - James Early

Well, so glad this worked out. I want to tell you guys a little bit about Greg. Greg has committed his life to helping people clean up and improve their relationships and build new bridges to help the relationships go forward. He's been doing this for more than 25 years. He's a business owner, he's an executive coach, he's a speaker, an author. In fact, his new book is just out called Build New the Art of Restoring Impossible Relationships. And he also has a podcast called A Shot of Inspiration. And I'll have links to all that stuff in the show notes. Hey, Greg, is there anything else that my listeners ought to know about you?

00:01:37 - Greg Stephens

Well, another one that I throw in there sometimes is that I'm a professional mediator and I love to get people together in situations they never thought possible, kind of based on. That's why I wrote the book.

00:01:53 - James Early

And you are in Austin, Texas, right?

00:01:56 - Greg Stephens

Yes, sir, I am.

00:01:58 - James Early

Yeah. And as it turns out, we both were born in Amarillo, Texas.

00:02:04 - Greg Stephens

Found that little nugget when we were talking the first time. And it's funny, James, I haven't been out to Amarillo in 25 years probably. And I was out there this December and got to kind of walk around. It was a shock to see where I was born because I remember I was such a. You know, we left, I think, when I was about two or three years old.

00:02:33 - James Early

So, yeah, it's. It's changed a lot.

00:02:35 - Greg Stephens

Yeah.

00:02:36 - James Early

In the last 25 years. So.

00:02:38 - Greg Stephens

Yeah, definitely.

00:02:39 - James Early

How long have you been in Austin?

00:02:41 - Greg Stephens

I've been in Austin since 1987. I did take a short stint where I went to Fort Worth for about two years, but came back. And second time I came back was in 2009. And so I just consider. I kept visiting while I was in Fort Worth. And so I've pretty much been in. I call myself an Austinite. Now, even though I didn't grow up here, I've been here longer than I've been anywhere else.

00:03:09 - James Early

That's cool. Before we get going here on talking about relationships, I just love to know what God is doing in your life these days.

00:03:19 - Greg Stephens

Well, that's a great question. For years, I think I told you a little about this. I lost my faith many years ago and really didn't believe there was a God. Sat down with a gentleman named Will Davis, who's a minister, and he said, Greg, he said, I think you have a lot of things mixed up with your religion and your father. My father was a minister. He said, God's not hiding from me. He said, seek him and I guarantee you he'll show up. Give him two weeks. I believe he's there. He's not hiding. And he said, would you give it two weeks to look for it? And he said, I also believe that your faith will show up as yours. It won't

be what your dad taught you. It's going to be very personal. And it happened in two weeks. Well, actually, before I got out of the parking lot, I saw something. Before I got my car, I saw another thing before I got to the street, I saw three things before I got up to the street that kind of was like, what was that? And within two weeks, I had my faith. But I also challenged God at that point because I wanted to do things my way. And I did it for a long time. And I was miserable. I believe I was taken care of, but I was miserable. And I also found what it meant by being a new creature, because I realized it's kind of like, you don't put alcohol into a gas tank, you put gasoline in a gas tank. Because that's how it operates. When you're a new creature, the old diet you had doesn't work. And what's happened for me just recently, after I finally started following Father, I believe the path he's had for me, it took some time, but I just see things showing up on a daily basis that I never thought could happen. I see miracles every day. They're little things that most people would overlook, but seeing them with a different lens, a different view of life. I've written my book. I have all kinds of opportunities. People are showing up in ways that I never thought of. Got an opportunity to be on your podcast. All of these things, three, four, five years ago, I wouldn't have been on something like this. This is something truly redemption has come into my life. It's been there. I Just turned my head from it.

00:05:48 - James Early

For so long, you know, Isn't that interesting? I totally agree with that. When you change the lens you're looking through from what you want in life to what God wants for you in life, you see things differently and you don't take things for granted. All those little blessings that come along, and you see things in a completely different light. That is so true.

00:06:10 - Greg Stephens

I also want to say real quick.

00:06:12 - James Early

Yeah.

00:06:12 - Greg Stephens

There's a misconception that, oh, when you're in that space, everything goes your way. Nothing could be further from the truth. But there's something different now. There's a peace that comes with the challenge that I never experienced before. If anyone were asked me what the difference in my life is, I'd say peace. I have a level of stability and peace that I never thought I was. I was talking to someone the other day, talking about. We get kind of. We're surprised sometimes when God shows up like he promised he would. He's always there. I thought, I look at my friend, I go, what would it be like if you had Christ standing next to you physically? You truly walked into a room and he was physically next to you. I believe that's what's really going on. He's right there. But since we can't see it, we don't experience it that way. But it would really relieve a lot of the fear and peace would come to you. Doesn't mean the circumstances aren't going to be difficult. But there's something different about it.

00:07:15 - James Early

You know, I love that imagery. And Jesus said, hey, if you're tired and weary, take my yoke upon you. A yoke. You think of two oxen pulling together in the yoke. Christ is right there with us, pulling with us. He's not necessarily giving us a piggyback ride. He's helping us do what we need to do. And there is a relationship, there is a presence there that you can't see with your eyeballs. You can't hear it with the physical ears. I think we hear and see these things spiritually when we're looking through that direct lens. Yeah. I appreciate you sharing that, Greg. You've been helping people for over 25 years have better relationships. How did you get started in this way of helping people? What got you interested in this? Was it something that you accidentally stepped into? Was it something from your personal life? Not everybody is helping people work out their relationships.

00:08:15 - Greg Stephens

Yeah, well, I never thought I'd be doing this work. This isn't something I grew up thinking I'd be doing. I took courses in human development, human behavior, human potential, psychology, sociology. I wanted to learn about human beings. And it's interesting. I dated a woman once who was friends with all of her ex boyfriends. I thought that was just crazy. I had so many people I would never want to talk to again. But she had this confidence and power that I didn't have. She knew how to speak her truth and do it very well and respectfully. She didn't cower away from difficult situations. And I loved that about her. And that didn't make me think about doing that. But then I started doing some work with a company called Crucial Learning. At the time, they were called Vital Smarts, and they wrote a book called Crucial Conversations. Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High. I took that class, and it changed everything because now I had the skills to do something. Every program I'd been in, people say, oh, you need to go clean up this relationship. You need to do this, you need to do that. But no one taught you how to do it. And that's like saying, you know, hey, fix the engine of the car. And no one ever gives you owner's manual on how to do it. So when I learned the skills to do it, I thought, you know, I know that I need to practice them. Because I wanted to stand in front of my audiences or my participants with an experience about what I'm teaching rather than a theory about it. And so I had this crazy idea. Carrie's situation popped back in my head, and I thought, she was friends with all her ex boyfriends. I should go clean up my relationship. So I made a list of all my incomplete relationships. When I say an incomplete relationship, if you saw someone walking down the hall and you didn't want to pass that person, and there's an alternate way you took the alternate way to avoid that person, that was a relationship I needed to clean up. I had a list of 36 people on my.

00:10:21 - James Early

Oh, my.

00:10:22 - Greg Stephens

And that's kind of how I talk about in the book. List of 36 people took me nearly two and a half years. And I cleaned all of those up because I wanted to stand in front of my groups with an experience rather than theory, like I said. And some people say, oh, so you're great friends with them. No. When I say complete a relationship, some relationships were actually rekindled. Others were complete at that

moment. Others I still see. When I say complete, it just means that I have nothing going on. And there's something about cleaning up the relationships in your life a byproduct of what happened is it took probably 20 years of weight off my shoulders. I had no idea how free I would feel. And there were so many difficult relationships that I had. And some of the conversations were one and done. One person I had to go back to seven different times. So there's no perfection in what we're talking about either. Some people think one conversation is going to handle it. Sometimes it might. Rarely do. I see that happen. It can. But typically it's a series of conversations to have that you got to start somewhere. What I typically find is people don't have the skills, so why would I ever want to go do something I don't know how to do?

00:11:50 - James Early

This is a podcast about the Bible. So I'd like to get into. What does the Bible tell us? Well, what is a good relationship to start with, but then also what are some tools in the Bible, some ideas, some inspiration from the Bible, the different Bible characters that can help us, you know, on this pathway to healing these difficult relationships?

00:12:13 - Greg Stephens

Well, yeah, I think that when you go back and saw who Christ was, it was all about relationships. His relationships with his disciples, his relationships with the people he healed and engaged with. I think everything we do is around relationship. When you look at the Bible, that's why God created us. And if we don't have that, we're missing out in our relationship. That's what I believe church is where two or three are gathered together in my name. There I'm with you. Also, that's the connection I believe God wanted. I think he built us to be in connection. That's where we get our true energy, our true understanding of what this life's about. Because wouldn't be boring if I was the only one here, Right?

00:13:02 - James Early

What I hear you saying is, Greg, that our relationships with each other, it really comes because of our relationship with God. We've got to work on our relationship with God as well, obviously.

00:13:14 - Greg Stephens

Yeah. And I think that's also we co create. I can't do anything without him. But I'm also his instrument when I. When I look to him and so he gives me a desire, I can go out and do that. I can speak up, I can share that peace. And most of the time when we think relationships, we're thinking maybe a friendship that's gone wrong or a spouse or significant other. But consider your work relationships. Where do you spend most of your time? It's at work. And we don't even think about relationships. Oh, that's not. That's work. Yeah. And that's just it. There's a relationship there as well. Do you tiptoe around it? Do you walk on eggshells? Or can you speak your truth respectfully and engage with people? I would say like Christ did. Christ was a straight shooter. He did it with love. And I think when you go back and you really look at the definition of love, love is patient, it's kind. All the different things he talked about, bring that to your workspace, bring that to your children, bring that to your neighbor, your spouse even. Those are the

things that I consider the Bible to be a book of hope, a book of guidance, of how to get the best results in your life when you really look at it.

00:14:35 - James Early

Yeah, I want to talk specifically about three different relationships that were restored in the Bible. There are many more. But let's talk about Jacob and Esau. I've just been teaching this in my Bible study class at the Danbury Prison this week. Jacob and Esau had an interesting falling out because Jacob sort of cheated Esau out of his birthright and then out of his blessing. And he ran off for 14, at least 14, 20 years, something like that. But at some point, God tells him to go back and he's going to have to face Esau. Can you comment on kind of what you think might be going on in Jacob's mind and what he was dealing with? What did Jacob have to do in his own mind before he could be ready to face Esau?

00:15:24 - Greg Stephens

Yeah, I want to say one other comment. Jacob did not deceive Esau. He deceived his father.

00:15:32 - James Early

Oh, this is true. You're right. You're right.

00:15:34 - Greg Stephens

But there was a byproduct of that. And here's his brother, big burly man, man's man. Everything that he want, the blessing was taken away. That was everything in their culture. And so he knew that. But it wasn't really. I believe it was a father son issue that was never discussed, but it was a brother issue as well, because it was stolen from him. And I truly believe that there was deep shame for Jacob because, yeah, I got this. I wanted this from my father, but I took it from my brother. And think about how that happens in our lives. We focus on one thing, and there's a byproduct sometimes of what we do. And it is with our brother, our sister, that we've cheated them out of something. And it has to be so hard to go own what you did. And that's one of the things I saw in that God wants restoration, and restoration has to go. You have to own your side. Of the street and be repentant about it and really own that. That's one of the things I found in cleaning up my relationships. That's how I always started out. I started out by saying, you know what? You might not have even known. This was an issue for me. That's on me. I never spoke up. That's on me. And what I found is when you own your side of the street, then the other person has the opportunity to own theirs. That's the only way restoration can happen. You have to lead by that. And that's why I think God was asking him to go to his brother and own what he did. It's interesting what the spirit could do because he was forgiven. He never imagined that that's why it was an impossible relationship.

00:17:28 - James Early

Well, something that I noticed in the story that I had forgotten when I was talking about this a couple of days ago at the prison with my Bible group there, when Jacob was getting ready to leave his father in law, Laban, he was starting to complain that Laban had deceived him and cheated him out of things. And

we discussed that he was complaining about the very things he had done, complaining about somebody else doing the very things he had done to his brother and his father. And so we were just talking about when did that light bulb go off and him say, oh, that's me. God called him to go back to Esau. I think God wants us to face up to, as you said, the things, well, we've got to own up to what we've done, how we can bring healing to the equation. And. Yeah, and it was a beautiful restoration.

00:18:27 - Greg Stephens

Oh, yeah. Well, my friend Chris Douglas, he told me he gave me this one. I don't know where he got it from, but. And I use it in most of my classes. It's in my book. If you spot it, you got it. If I see that person's a cheater over there, or they're this, you have it somewhere.

00:18:45 - James Early

The reason it bothers you is because you've been doing the same thing.

00:18:49 - Greg Stephens

Exactly. Somewhere. You might not do it right now, but somewhere in your life you've done that and you were able to spot it. We all have these things. And the more that it bothers you, probably the more blind you are to it.

00:19:03 - James Early

So that was actually a question I was going to ask at some point, and I'll throw it in here now, is what are some of the symptoms of having a relationship that needs to be restored? And that sounds like one of them right there is when something, some behavior or Attitude in someone else kind of bothers you a lot. It's probably because it's agitating that problem in you that you may not even be aware of, that you have. Is that what you're saying?

00:19:31 - Greg Stephens

Absolutely. It's where your complaints live. What I complain about or your toleration. When I'm tolerating something or I'm complaining about it, there's something that needs to be dealt with. Some people talk about energy fields. There's certain people, when I get around them, I'm just like this. Well, I have to look at what is that that has me doing. I don't want to say that I'm like that at all. But here's what I found. When I can search inside and find that and own no longer owns me.

00:20:08 - James Early

Interesting.

00:20:09 - Greg Stephens

I have been able to conquer it because I've taken the time to look at it. I think that's what God wants from us, is growth. And he's saying, I've given you this. I've given you this person, I've given you this

circumstance, I've given you this, whatever that is for your growth and learning. And at the end, what you find when you get there, there is love, there is peace, there is joy. Because that thing no longer holds anything over you. You truly leave your past in the past, but you drag it with you until you do.

00:20:45 - James Early

So here's my question on what you just said is when you sort of have this aha moment and realize, oh, I need to work on myself, how have you prayed about that? What have you found in your prayers or maybe in your Bible study that's been helpful? Once you've realized that you need to work on this, to face it and actually heal yourself, what have you found helpful in your prayers or your Bible study that might be helpful to somebody listening? That's dealing with the same thing?

00:21:18 - Greg Stephens

Well, what comes up for me is I was going through something really difficult earlier in the year, and this just comes up because there's kind of a battle inside. I want to go back to James 1, 2. Consider it pure joy. My brothers and sisters, when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Now, God's not putting this here. He's helping me grow. That's one of the things I've really started to look at, is it's there for my growth. Now, if I were to tell you, I want you to get in the gym and I just want you to lift these weights over and over and over, and you're going to be saying, I don't want to do that. But most people, oh, I want to look good at the beach this summer. That's what you're looking for. So the trial is the thing that gets you there. And you can't have growth without preparing you. I believe that if you want to do something great or you want to move through life and grow, you're asking for difficulties. That's how life shows up. You're going to have them either way. But as I engage with it, I can capitalize on that growth and understand and learn from it. But I think the biggest thing is releasing what we're attached to.

00:22:48 - James Early

Can you give me an example of what you mean by that?

00:22:51 - Greg Stephens

Yeah. We're attached to. For me, many times I want comfort. It feels good to be comfortable. I don't want to be challenged. But what I find is that's the short term, the long term. Think about someone who's never challenged. They don't accomplish much. And if you're here to accomplish, I'm not talking about things to get, but I'm talking about growth as a person. I look back, I'm happy now for the challenges. You typically don't say that in the moment. I'm sure Jacob, when he was having to talk to his brother, he wasn't happy about having to go talk to his brother. He had to grow through that. And when he did, I guarantee you it was such a sweeter reunion than he could have ever imagined. Because on that other side of it, it's so much better than you think it will be.

00:23:52 - James Early



And the night before he met Esau, he had a pretty sincere prayer to God. I don't have that right on the tip of my tongue, but there was a moment of he was turning to God for help because he. He knew he couldn't do this by himself. And I think that's something that's important in this whole process, is this is not just through human will or human techniques and tools and psychological exercises. We need God's help when we're looking for healing in whatever way, but especially in relationships, absolutely.

00:24:28 - Greg Stephens

I also believe it gives us a chance to humble ourselves and go to him. Yeah, I think we don't typically go to God when everything's going great.

00:24:39 - James Early

We should, though. We should be just full of gratitude and praise, and we all need to be practicing that more. But, boy, when things get rough, we go looking for God, don't we?

00:24:50 - Greg Stephens

We do, but that's also the whole human condition. That's the entire Bible. Go away. From God, come to him, go away from him, come to him. And there's always restoration. What you're doing, you're playing what God has shown you in the Bible with your relationship with him and relationship with others. He's just showing you a big picture of how it's happened all through history. What he's saying is, I'm here for you.

00:25:17 - James Early

That's a good point. Because reading these stories in the Bible about people having their relationships restored is very encouraging. Has been for me, when I've had that kind of a situation come up in my life. The next example I was going to ask you your thoughts about is Joseph and his brothers. All the sons of Jacob, his older brothers didn't treat him too well. He had been kind of a proud little upstart. There were all kinds of family issues going on there. But you think of all the years that it took for the restoration of, of their relationship as brothers and the way that happened through going to the famine and buying the grain and all those things. Any thoughts about what was really going on there with Joseph and his brothers? What caused his brothers to really repent and realize they had made a mistake?

00:26:18 - Greg Stephens

Well, I think the guilt of, when you look at it, they felt guilty throughout because when they saw their father in the pain that he had, they never wanted that. I think they had that father, son relationship, all of them at one level and to see who they love so much hurt, even though there was jealousy there, I think that that woke them up and there was, there was something there that stuck with them. It was a lie they had to carry with them, that they hid. I think when we hold those things back, that's one of the things I think it's so important to be able to speak everything we need to in a relationship because when we hide things, it eats away at us. And I think those things happen for that entire time. I love to look at the story of Joseph because I believe as he saw those things, he had no idea what he would need to go through to

be that kind of a leader that would be accepted like that in Egypt, to be the number two. He wasn't thinking of that. Now this is the hardest thing. Most of us have a career path. I'm going to try to get here. He was just trying to get out of prison. But early on as a young man, he probably had the hubris of top level CEO who's a narcissist with his brother, showing him, oh, I'm going to be above you. You think about this. Wait, this is our little brother telling, you know, you're all going to bow down to me.

00:27:51 - James Early  
Right.

00:27:52 - Greg Stephens  
And he probably felt really good about that. He had a lot to learn about human beings, to be in the place he was going to be to influence the people, to get through the famine and the decisions that were going to have to be made.

00:28:05 - James Early  
Yeah. Back to the challenges that we have to overcome to prepare us for what's in front of us, everything. So I was going to ask you, let's say before his 10 older brothers sold him as a slave to the traitors, if you had sat down with Joseph and his brothers and you had mediated something and tried to help them understand relationships, what would you have said to them? Now, I say this with some little bit of trepidation, because if you had solved that problem, then Joseph wouldn't have been where he needed to be in Egypt. But just let's kind of take that relationship that he had with his brothers just kind of separate from the whole story. How would you work with those. Those brothers, that tension in their relationship, to bring healing and restoration there?

00:29:02 - Greg Stephens  
Yeah. I start out with the core. I'd sit there, and I'd ask Joseph, and I'd ask his brothers in a whole group, I'd say, how do you define respect? And I'd have Joseph share how he defined. I have his brothers define it. And then I'd ask them, do you want to be treated with respect by how Joseph defines it? Or how about you define it? And they would all say, how I define it? And I'd say, look at Joseph. Say, do you feel like what you did showed your brother's respect? And ask the question. Let him start seeing it from their perspective. Again, not pushing anything, but saying, do you want to treat your brothers with respect now? Because he might not want to. Everyone gets a choice, but most of us don't have choice because we're in reaction. When you're reacting to something, you haven't really considered what's happened. And so we have a lot of reactionary people, and that's how I would start something with them as a group and talk about what you want your relationship to look like. And then do these behaviors support what you say you want?

00:30:12 - James Early  
Wow.

00:30:12 - Greg Stephens

Because we can say, oh, I want a good relationship. Well, does your behavior support that?

00:30:19 - James Early

You know, that's really helpful because that really gets into some of the challenges I think people face, is we want things the way we want them. If we're supposed to love our neighbor as ourselves and obey the golden rule, how would you like them to do to you. You've got to know what would be important to them as well.

00:30:38 - Greg Stephens

Also, James, I want to touch on that. There's a great book called [The Missing Commandment, Love Thyself\\*](#). And I believe many times in our world today, because of how we were raised, many times as children, we don't love ourselves. Yeah, we don't understand that concept. I believe that that's one of the big things we've overlooked. It's one of the best books I've read on something like that, and it's really touched a lot of people that I've mentioned it to. Again, it's called The Missing Commandment, Love Thyself. So if I'm going to love others like I love myself, I better love myself as well.

00:31:16 - James Early

Right, Right. Well. And then that means you need to work on your relationship with yourself. And you got to start with that love for yourself the same way you would with someone else. The next relationship I want to talk about is Jesus and Peter, because Peter just loved Jesus in every way he knew how. And he says he'll go to the death with Jesus and then he denies him three times. And after the resurrection, they meet on the shore of the Galilean Sea. And Jesus basically restores that relationship. Could you chat about that? Share your thoughts about what's going on there? And you talked earlier about Jesus teaching us to love, and that's what relationships are all about. That's what he was doing with Peter there in such a tender way. Yeah, I'd love your thoughts on that.

00:32:09 - Greg Stephens

I believe it was. I believe when Peter, you know, he wasn't aware of him denying him Christ three times, even though he had been warned about it. How many times are we warned about something and we just ignore it? And we don't realize in the moment what we're doing. And then what happens when we wake up to it. There's shame, there's heartache, there's disappointment. I didn't show the Christ who I had followed for three years. I told him I'd stand by him, and he told me I wouldn't. I told him he didn't know what he was talking about. I'd be there. And Christ was right. So I think there was a lot of things. Christ saw what he didn't way ahead of time. But I believe the restoration of that. I think there was deep shame in Peter in that moment. And I believe that Christ can take that shame and turn it into something so powerful that he takes it and he remolds it and it becomes the thing we're most ashamed of, can be your biggest crown jewel, because look who Peter became for Christ. He was a work in progress.

00:33:18 - James Early

That is so true.

00:33:19 - Greg Stephens

Yeah. Yeah.

00:33:20 - James Early

When they were out on the fishing boat and John says, oh, it's the Lord. And Peter jumps in the. He just swims. He's so anxious to see him. But then I always think, okay, they're sitting there, they've had this meal, and it gets uncomfortable because now Peter's probably. I'm reading between the lines, but Peter's thinking, oh, I love you, but, oh, I remember what I did, you know? And Jesus is just so tender and slave. Do you love me? He's negating those three times of denial with having him affirm his face. He didn't say, peter, you were unfaithful to me. He didn't criticize him. He was gently restoring him by having Peter declare his faith. You know, it's just like the model way to treat someone.

00:34:10 - Greg Stephens

And you notice he said, you'll deny me three times. And he asked him three times, feed my sheep, feed my lambs.

00:34:16 - James Early

Exactly. Yeah. It's like, go ahead. It was like a math equation. It was negative three plus three is zero. Okay, we're starting over now, Right?

00:34:27 - Greg Stephens

Right. And that's just it. Many times on our relationships we have to reset. But when we reset, we're way beyond where we were the first time. And I think almost all relationships at some level, require forgiveness.

00:34:42 - James Early

Yeah, we have to forgive the other person. I know I have to forgive myself for the things I know I did wrong. Sometimes, though, you have a relationship that's on the rocks or is difficult or impossible, and you'd love to see it restored, but maybe the other person isn't willing. Any thoughts on that, how to pray about that? Any insights that you might share on, you know, how to pray about that kind of a situation when the other person doesn't seem to be willing to pursue healing?

00:35:13 - Greg Stephens

Well, I think a couple of things you really have to look at is when you go into that conversation, you have to let go of what they're going to do. You can't expect them to do what you want them to do. That's controlling someone else. There's no free will there. And God gives us the choice. And so often we want

to control that. But I want to be my best as I show up in that conversation. What I have found is when you show up as your best skill wise, heart wise, you're centered when you do that. If you walk away, the person that you're trained to reconcile things with sees your best behavior. Now the only thing they're left with is their behavior. And that is the convicting piece. And what I found many times in the moment, that person may not want to have anything to do be with you, but as you walk away being your best, being open, saying, hey, I'm sorry for my part, if you can ever give me forgiveness, I'm here. I've seen many times where that person gets away and when they have the time, it might take days, weeks, months, maybe even years. But many times they will come back and say, you know what, I own my part. There's something that happens when we do that. The problem is, is typically when we go to do that, we're abusive somehow or we're attacking and it keeps that thing there. When we let that go, it's amazing what the spirit can do. But even the spirit gives that person the choice. And I want that person to have their choice in life just like I want mine. Yeah, it's hard, it's hard. But if you have kids, do you want your kids to just be you or do you want them to have experienced everything in life? Maybe it didn't go the way you wanted it to, but you know what if I can let that go, to be able to say, hey, I want you to have that experience, that's what I trust, that I'm here if you need me.

00:37:20 - James Early

I've seen a lot of parents, even with grown children, still be so. Well, the extreme is manipulative, but they have such a preconceived idea of how their kids or anybody should act and behave. And so what I hear you saying is to have a healthy relationship, you have to set those preconceptions aside. What would you say to someone who may not realize that's what they're doing? How can someone like that maybe pray to find the humility to realize, oh my gosh, I've been forcing my. In their mind, they're probably thinking, oh, I want what's best for you, or I want you to do it my way because I know I'm right. We don't realize how selfish and egotistical that can come across sometimes and manipulative. How can someone pray if that's what they're doing and they're not aware of it? How can any of us pray to know more, to have the humility to let go, to set aside our preconceptions, our preprogrammed ideals of what we think ought to happen? I mean, we probably all have to work at that. But any thoughts on that?

00:38:32 - Greg Stephens

Yeah, I'd say it comes down to being right or being curious.

00:38:37 - James Early

Oh, that's interesting. What do you mean?

00:38:40 - Greg Stephens

The moment you believe you're right about the situation or anything else is the moment you stop learning. Because I'm not searching for an answer. If I believe I'm right, I'm not willing to let that go. But what if that being right, maybe I'm not. Maybe there's something else. I'm not asking you to let that go. I'm asking you get curious about it. Bring your true curiosity to Christ. Actually have him show you

what you may not be seeing. Ask other people who aren't in your Like I said, you can't read the label from inside the jar. You're too close to it. Get someone else, get a spiritual advisor or a coach or a mentor or a friend that will tell you the truth about what they see. Because we can't, like I said, can't read the label from inside the jar. You're too close to it. That's why I believe I'm right. And the moment we can give up being right, then we can actually start to have relationship. You get to be right or you get to get it right? I want to be right or do I want to get it right? I want to get it right.

00:39:55 - James Early

That's right. Yeah.

00:39:56 - Greg Stephens

That whole insatiable need to be right is blinding for us. And to be able to go to God and say, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know what's best for them.

00:40:08 - James Early

Yeah, it's a question of having the humility to say, okay, God, here I am, show me what I need to know. This is a whole other discussion. But sometimes you know you're right. But even still, even when you are maybe absolutely right on something, is it you thinking you're right or are you looking at what God is doing? That's right. And I think it's the focus of whether you're coming from your perspective or God's perspective. It is right to be loving. That's the commandment to love your neighbors, yourself and love God. But if you're doing it through your own little human will and human efforts, you might be going through the motions of loving, but it's really a very selfish, self-centered, self-focused approach as opposed to realizing that it's in connection with God.

00:41:00 - Greg Stephens

Yeah, well, I'd put it a little differently. I just say, do you trust God or do you say you trust God?

00:41:08 - James Early

I like that.

00:41:09 - Greg Stephens

Because if you truly trust him. You give it to him, Whatever shows up. And the reason this hits home for me, I worked with someone who. Their son had become a drug addict, and that was the worst thing in the world. Couldn't accept any of that. Well, when they finally let go, that person was able to not get over their addiction, but come through it. And now they're an incredible counselor for people who are on drugs now, that could have never happened had they not. And that was kind of their purpose. But had no idea that they would get through that. And the parent was so. Looks back now and go, wow, God took that and even made something beautiful out of it, because there's such purpose in my son's life now.

00:42:02 - James Early

But you're saying that the parents had to let go of their will and their preconceptions and their opinion.

00:42:10 - Greg Stephens

And do you trust God, or do you say you trust God again? Jesus standing there with you in that moment when you're talking to your kid and you think, what aren't you doing here?

00:42:23 - James Early

So what if you feel like your relationship with God is on the rock? Either because you feel like, well, you've made a bunch of mistakes and you just don't want to face up to that, or you feel like God has abandoned you? What would you say to someone who is working on and realizes they need to mend that relationship with God?

00:42:48 - Greg Stephens

There's a couple different things in that. When. Sometimes when we feel like God's abandoned us, things aren't working out the way we think they should. And so we know better than God. So again, we're putting ourselves above him. The other thing is, I'd say that's a whole idea that what I'm doing for God, I've done all these things for you. God didn't ask us for that. He knew we were imperfect. We can't do enough for that. I love Christianity because it's what he did for us. And when we're trying to do these things, he kind of laughs. It's like, I'm here for you. What are you. What are you trying to do all that for? Why don't you just sit back and let me accept you look at what shows up in your life as you get out and engage with. But both ways are us putting ourselves above God?

00:43:40 - James Early

Yeah, we don't realize we're doing that, though.

00:43:43 - Greg Stephens

We don't. And so it means surrender. It means accepting the way things are, how they are right now. And where do I show up? That's what Christ said each day. Where does God Want me today. I mean, I believe Christ was human as we were, and he woke up in the morning and said, where am I supposed to be today? I learned this from my mentor, Bill Solomon. It was a great insight for me. I don't know what's going to happen today, but if I show up, he'll show me.

00:44:12 - James Early

I love that. We do need that every day, even if there are no relationships that need to be mended.

00:44:17 - Greg Stephens

But we got to show up. We got to show up. We got to do something.

00:44:20 - James Early

We do. We show up.

00:44:22 - Greg Stephens

You can't just sit there and say, oh, come to me. Yeah, put action. That's one of the things that talked about, when you're going through the trials, you have to put action into it. Action is the thing that shows that you have faith. Otherwise, faith without works is dead. That's the difference. I'm not working for your acceptance, but my faith says it's there, so I'm going to show up anyway. That's like, for instance, last year, I had an incredible. I've had back surgery seven years ago. Last year, I had another back surgery. Most incredible pain I've ever been in. And it was interesting because I didn't understand why this was happening at a key point in my life. And at that point, I just said, I give it to you, God. You said you'd handle it. And when I just let that go and I praised him in it, I praised him and I was like, it seems inauthentic. I don't feel good. I don't want to praise God. I kept doing it, and all of a sudden, you know, it took time to do all that, but all of that was honored, and it wasn't honored in the same time that I thought it should.

00:45:30 - James Early

We're going to be wrapping up here in just a few minutes. I want to just circle back to this idea of our relationship with ourselves. You know, you talked earlier about the importance of loving ourselves. I think a lot of people struggle with that. I hear that from all over the place. Any thoughts on that? How do we love ourselves? What does that even mean? Some people think, oh, that's so selfish to love yourself. What does that really mean? And how do we do it? And when we love ourselves in the right way, how does that heal our relationship with ourselves? I mean, that sounds like a funny.

00:46:09 - Greg Stephens

Phrase, but, yeah, I struggle with this, James, so much myself. I'm really hard on myself. I know I've had a friend, a little over a year ago pulled me aside and said, Greg, I need you to hear who you are. And he said, you treat yourself so much worse than you would treat anyone else. And there are people out there that aren't like that. But if you're one of those, think about how you would treat someone. Would you treat your child the way you treat yourself? That internal talk track when you're going, oh, you, you idiot. Why'd you do this? Would you ever say those words out loud to your kids? But instead we've got that going on no one else can see. And some of us use it as, okay, this is going to push me harder. That doesn't build you up, it tears you down. What I'd suggest is many times it makes us callous, internal, and I'm preaching the choir here. I need this just as much as anyone else because my wife can tell you I'm hard on myself. And that's something I'm in the process of learning. That's why I think I know it so well right now. And that's why that book came up, [The Missing Commandment, Love Thyself\\*](#). I'm listening to it for the third time now. I need this in me.

00:47:30 - James Early



So what have you found so far that's helpful in learning to love yourself?

00:47:35 - Greg Stephens

Everything that God is doing, it's not against you. And it's not to hurt you, it's to help you. It's the whole universe is coming in to support when you see that. When I look through that lens, I just realized that this is a hard time that's building me up for something bigger because I couldn't handle that had I not gotten in and built that. But when I start to look at it through that lens, I can say, wow, I'm blessed in this trial right now, I'm blessed in this. Rather than, it's just really shifting that lens. But we typically want to see the world only from this. But when I look at it from a different place, there could be real healing, there can be understanding, but you have to be willing to look at it from a different space.

00:48:22 - James Early

Yeah, getting a bigger, a bigger perspective, a more long term perspective to see how. Well, I love that verse in Romans, all things work together for good. We don't see it at the time sometimes, but to those who are called according to God's purpose, I think when we make ourselves available to God, he works in our lives. Sometimes we don't realize how that's happening in the moment. But one thing that's helped me on this whole thing of loving myself is if I was somebody else, would I love that person, I said, yeah, he's a pretty, you know, he's got some things to learn, but I would love that person. Now, there may be times in my life, years ago or like, eh, but who I am now, I can see a little more objectively the qualities that I bring to the table. And I thought, you know what? If I saw that in somebody else, I would just treasure that. And so look in the mirror, James, and say, okay. It's hard to say I treasure those qualities in myself because I know that God has developed those in me. And if I'm not recognized that, it's like I'm sitting in God's face almost.

00:49:36 - Greg Stephens

Oh, it is. God wants to be in relationship with you.

00:49:41 - James Early

Right.

00:49:42 - Greg Stephens

So when you look in that mirror, look yourself in the eye and know that you're of value.

00:49:48 - James Early

Yeah.

00:49:50 - Greg Stephens

And we tend to push it off if you're not really loving yourself. Could I really be that? Because I know me. I'm inauthentic at times. I'm fake. I want the things that aren't good for me. Yeah. Accept you like

you are because I made you. I knew who you were from the very beginning. That's one of the things that's amazing because when you really look at God in time, your birth and where you are right now are the same moment. He saw this way ahead of time.

00:50:25 - James Early

I think the more we can get that bigger perspective, it frees us to be who we really are as a child of God. Greg, I want to honor you for all you've done over the years to help people in all kinds of situations, to build bridges and restore those impossible relationships. And I just think that's such a value that you have brought to the table, and I just want to honor you for that.

00:50:53 - Greg Stephens

Thank you, James. Thank you for your prayers of ministry. I'd love to. When I come up to Connecticut, I might want to visit because I've never done that before. Heard about them. And. Yeah, I love that you're doing that for people. I love that you're putting this podcast out there as well. So thank you for letting me be on, be a part of this.

00:51:12 - James Early

Yeah, absolutely. It's an honor to have you here. Is there anything you'd like to say to summarize everything we've said, or maybe there's something I didn't ask you, a point you'd like to make that we didn't cover or anything you'd like to kind of close with?

00:51:28 - Greg Stephens

Yeah. I would say one thing. We're not promised tomorrow. And one of the Things I learned a long time ago. Don't leave things left unsaid. You might think I've got time for that, but I've talked to so many people that they thought they had time and they didn't. I tell a story in my classes and people come up. Some people say I was fortunate enough to have that conversation with my mom or dad or this person and other people saying I missed my opportunity. And I believe there's healing no matter where you are. But if you have things to say to someone, encourage you say them with no expectation of getting anything back. Part of completing certain things for yourself is being able to say the things you've never said or that you've withheld or whatever. You can't expect something back but you don't know about tomorrow, so do what you can today.

00:52:30 - James Early

Well, that is really, really good advice. Jesus said, take care of today. You don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. That's a major paraphrase. You had sent me a lot of your social media links and emails and all that stuff. Is there one best way for people to connect you?

00:52:49 - Greg Stephens

Yeah, just email me. It may take me a couple days, but if I don't respond within three days, email me back. Something happened because I typically try to clean out my email every day. My email is [greg@alignmentresources.com](mailto:greg@alignmentresources.com) that's alignment A L I G N M E N T and then a dash and then resources dot com. You can check out our website [alignment-resources.com](http://alignment-resources.com) to see some of the things we do. I encourage you to, whatever you do, improve yourself, communicate, be able to speak your truth respectfully to the ones you love and even the acquaintances, people at work. You haven't plateaued. There's always a place to improve.

00:53:40 - James Early

Oh, that's awesome. Well, I'll have those links in the show notes. Greg, I always ask my guests three final questions. The first one is, if you could talk to any Bible character other than Jesus, who would it be and what would you ask them?

00:53:57 - Greg Stephens

I'd ask Joseph what it was like, what he thought in prison when you brought that up. I've always wondered when he was looked over after the baker and he was promised that these people. I feel like I've been there so many times, I just like to reminisce with him, what that was like. Sit there for another couple of years after you were promised something.

00:54:22 - James Early

Okay, so the second question is a little bit related. Is there any Bible character you especially identify with?

00:54:31 - Greg Stephens

Yeah. Again, it would go back to Joseph. There have been times that I felt like I went through a lot of different things. Nothing extreme again, but I was being prepared and built up. That's what I connect with Joseph, is that it didn't come all at once. He had to be refined and built up.

00:54:53 - James Early

I love that. Third question is this podcast, the Bible Speaks to you is about getting back to the original Christianity, the original message that Jesus had that he taught us. How would you describe that original gospel message that Jesus preached? How does he want us to live our lives?

00:55:16 - Greg Stephens

I believe he wants us to, in essence, seek him first. He'll give you the answers. I think it's interesting. I believe the Bible is a guide and it's very powerful because it's specific. And one of the things I found many times I'll say something to someone, they hear something different. I believe spirit will speak to you in this to tell you what Christ is saying to you. But he's the compass because he's love. He gave himself in that space. And so that's what I would. The biggest thing is to seek him, to seek that

relationship. And he'll give you everything else. It's hard to see that, especially in our society today. We want it here, we want it now. And that's one of the biggest things. He hadn't figured it out. God plays the long game. It's not the next quarter, it's not anything like that. But when we can stay there, there's. There's some level of peace to it. And I believe that the original message is, I want relationship. Just go with me, Go with me on this journey. I put you here. And you know, we always talk about, oh, you know, it's not a destination, it's the journey. But we miss it so many times because we keep looking for the next thing.

00:56:46 - James Early

I love that thought. Just enjoy each moment of the journey. Walking with Christ. Yeah, that's beautiful. Hey, Greg, thank you so much for being with me this morning. I know my listeners are going to really appreciate what you have to say, and I'll have all the links for your book and your podcast and all that so they can check that out. But thanks again so much for being here. I appreciate you sharing your heart with us today.

00:57:13 - Greg Stephens

Thanks, James, for having me on. And bye, everyone. I wish you the best and I'll pray for everyone here. Thank you.

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*\*Amazon affiliate link*