

## Week 7: Forgiveness & Reconciliation

### Proverbs 28:13

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

### James 5:16

Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

### 1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

### Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

### Matthew 18:15-17

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

### 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**Matthew 5:23-24**

So, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. **First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.**

**Hebrews 12:14**

**Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness** without which no one will see the Lord.

**Luke 17:3**

Pay attention to yourselves! **If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him,**

**Colossians 3:13**

Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, **forgiving each other;** as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

**Matthew 5:9**

**“Blessed are the peacemakers,** for they shall be called sons of God.

**Luke 6:27-42**

“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, **do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.** To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and to one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. **And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.**

**Matthew 6:14-15**

For if **you forgive others their trespasses,** your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but **if you do not forgive others their trespasses,** neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

**Ephesians 4:31**

**Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you,** along with all malice.

**Matthew 18:33**

And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’

**Romans 12:14-21**

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

**John 13:34-35**

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**Ephesians 4:26**

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

**Ephesians 4:1-3**

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

# DEFINITIONS: Forgiveness & Reconciliation

## Forgiveness Definition

- We are instructed a number of times in the Bible to forgive others. It was an explicit part of Jesus' model prayer in Matthew 6:7-15. Forgive is "to send away, dismiss, suffer to depart; to emit, send forth." In relation to an offense against us, it means that we dismiss it, or send it away. We do not hold onto that offense, harboring it in our hearts. Instead, we treat it as if it had not occurred.

## Reconciliation Definition

- The word "reconciliation" is less commonly used. And generally, at least in the Scripture, it deals with the relationship between God and humanity. Reconciliation means "an exchange; reconciliation, restoration to favor."
- Reconciliation assumes a broken relationship. Something has happened that has caused two parties to become estranged. The two might have been friends. It might be a business relationship. Or it might be as intimate as marriage. But there is now something between them.

## ***What's the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?***

- Reconciliation involves forgiveness. But it goes beyond forgiveness. When I forgive someone, there is no guarantee that we will have a restored relationship. It may well be that even after I have forgiven someone that we remain estranged. Reconciliation, however, restores the relationship.
- Forgiveness may be one-sided. But reconciliation requires both parties to be willing to participate in restoring the relationship. It is always possible, and expected, for me to forgive. But reconciliation will not be possible if the other party is not willing to participate.
- The evidence of genuine forgiveness is personal freedom from a vindictive or vengeful response, but not always an automatic restoration of relationship.
- Even when God forgives our sins, he does not promise to remove all consequences created by our actions. Yes, being forgiven, restored, and trusted is an amazing experience, but it's important for those who hurt others to understand that their attitude and actions will affect the process of rebuilding trust.
- Words alone are often not enough to restore trust. When someone has been significantly hurt and feels hesitant about restoration with his/her offender, it's both right and wise to look for changes in the offender before allowing reconciliation to begin.
- We must not allow superficial appearances of repentance to control our responses. Displays of tears or appearing to be sorry must not become substitutes for clear changes in attitude and behavior.

# Notes & Discussion Questions

## Videos on Forgiveness and Reconciliation

### Forgiveness and Trust – Keeli’s Story

1. What was Keeli’s initial response and action towards her husband?

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2. What was Keeli looking for from her friends?

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3. Who reached out to her husband?

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4. What changed her thinking and her actions?

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5. What did they realize after forgiveness?

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## **A Reconciled Marriage – Robyn’s & Donny’s Story**

1. What was happening in their marriage?

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2. What hope did Robyn cling to?

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3. What did she realize about Donny?

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4. What did Donny realize?

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5. How did God use infidelity in this marriage?

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## Mending Broken Relationships - David Nasser

1. What is the key to mending broken relationships?

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2. What does God want more than our silver and gold?

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3. How do we achieve success in mending relationships?

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4. What does God call those who are obedient and mend broken relationships?

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## **Biblical Reconciliation - Beth Guckenberger**

1. What is one of the enemy's favorite tactics?

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2. What is typical behavior on the part of those who are hurt?

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3. What is a Sulha? How is it biblical?

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4. What happens if we stay in a broken state?

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## Marital Reconciliation – Jason Holleman

1. What should we do before we seek to be reconciled with our spouse?

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2. What is the goal of marriage?

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3. What do couples normally do when in an adversarial relationship?

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4. Why is going to the courts contrary to God's guidance?

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5. What is the ultimate cause for broken relations?

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## Working Toward Forgiveness

Whether we refuse to apologize or forgive... the result is the same. We separate ourselves from the Lord and render our prayers and testimony ineffective. This is not to say that either process is easy. It's not, but The Father is waiting for us to come to Him for help and His Holy Spirit is interceding on our behalf... we need only humbly submit ourselves and our struggles before God.

### **Do I really need to forgive?**

You really have no choice. Either you forgive or you slowly poison your mind and heart. If you hold on to unresolved bitterness it will destroy you. You can't control other's actions and attitudes. But by God's grace and with His help you must learn to control your own. If you choose not to forgive, you only hurt yourself.

### **Steps:**

- 1) Acknowledge that you have been hurt.
- 2) Give yourself room to feel. (You may not be ready)
- 3) Take care of yourself. (Prayer is a must here)
- 4) Forgive from the heart. (Do it and mean it)
- 5) Forgiving is not forgetting... forgiving means those memories won't have the same power over you as before.

### **When we forgive, it must mirror God's forgiveness**

Forgiveness is a choice.

Forgiveness is releasing the person from a debt.

Forgiveness is a way of sharing Christ with the person who has sinned against you.



# Working Toward Reconciliation

**There are seven signs that indicate the offender is genuinely repentant:**

1. Accepts full responsibility for his or her actions. (Instead of: “Since you think I’ve done something wrong . . .” or “If I have done anything to offend you . . .”)
2. Welcomes accountability from others.
3. Does not willfully or casually continue in the hurtful behavior or anything associated with it.
4. Does not have a defensive attitude about being in the wrong.
5. Does not dismiss or downplay the hurtful behavior.
6. Does not resent doubts about their sincerity or the need to demonstrate sincerity—especially in cases involving repeated offenses.
7. Makes restitution where necessary.

**If you are hesitant to reconcile, work through these ten guidelines:**

1. Be honest about your motives. Make sure your desire is to do what pleases God and not to get revenge.

2. Be humble in your attitude. Do not let pride ruin everything. Renounce all vengeful attitudes toward your offender. We are not, for example, to demand that a person earn our forgiveness.

3. Be prayerful about the one who hurt you. Jesus taught his disciples to pray for those who mistreat them. It is amazing how our attitude toward another person can change when we pray for him/her.

4. Be willing to admit ways you might have contributed to the problem. Even if you did not start the dispute, your lack of understanding, careless words, impatience, or failure to respond in a loving manner may have aggravated the situation.

5. Be honest with the offender. If you need time to absorb the reality of what was said or done, express this honestly to the one who hurt you. Do not use time as a means of manipulation and punishment.

6. Be objective about your hesitancy. Perhaps you have good reasons for being hesitant to reconcile, but they must be objectively stated. Sometimes, for example, repeated confessions and offenses of the same nature make it understandably hard for trust to be rebuilt. This is an objective concern.

7. Be clear about the guidelines for restoration. Establish clear guidelines for restoration. Requirements like restitution can be clearly understood and include such factors as maintaining financial accountability, holding down a job, or seeking treatment for substance abuse.

8. Be alert to Satan's schemes. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice". Meditate on these words and put them into practice.

9. Be mindful of God's control. As the apostle Paul wrote, "We know that God works all things together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). When you are having a hard time forgiving someone (i.e. being restored), take time to note how God may be using that offense for good. Is this an unusual opportunity to glorify God? How can you serve others and help them grow in their faith? What sins and weaknesses of yours are being exposed? What character qualities are you being challenged to exercise? .

10. Be realistic about the process. Change often requires time and hard work. Periodic failure by an offender does not always indicate an unrepentant heart. Behavior patterns often run in deep channels. They can place a powerful grip on a person's life. A key indicator of change is the attitude of the offender. While you may proceed with some caution, be careful about demanding guarantees from a person who has truly expressed repentance. If they stumble, the process of loving confrontation, confession, and forgiveness may need to be repeated. Setbacks and disappointments are often part of the process. Don't give up too easily on the process of reconciliation. Be open to the goal of a fully restored relationship.



