

Anatomy of an Apology – The Experiment

Jesus always takes an experimental ‘try it and see’ approach to discipleship. Here’s your chance to actively engage in the work of forgiveness. This experiment invites you to make a meaningful apology. You may want to start small, rather than go big right away. Perhaps it is for the annoying thing you do that irritates your partner, co-worker or friend, like showing up late, talking over, or withholding praise. You’ve probably thought of it already! Be brief, direct and earnest. It will feel strange, so practice finding your own words here:

STEP 1: Express _____

Find your emotions regarding the one you’ve injured.

There’s nothing worse than a faked apology. Be genuine. First discover a place in you that has empathy for the one you’ve injured. “I feel terrible that I’ve hurt you.” Remember, “sorry” is short for sorrow, not “excuse me.”

What might you say?

STEP 2: Take _____

Claim responsibility for your actions.

Okay, sure it usually takes two to tango, but you only have control over your actions. Own up. No excuses. State precisely, without defense, what it is that you did to cause harm. Remember, your ownership does not excuse others.

What might you say?

STEP 3: Offer _____

Be willing to repay when possible.

Not everything can be replaced. There’s no price tag on broken trust, but it’s still important to let the other know that, “If there’s something I can do to make it up to you, I’m willing to do it.”

What might you say?

STEP 4: Plan _____

Describe the steps you’ll take to keep from repeating.

Nothing can spoil an apology faster than returning back to the offending behavior. Without overpromising, make a plan. How might you prevent this from happening again in the future?

What might you say?

STEP 5: Ask _____

Request to be released from guilt.

Your apology does not earn you forgiveness. Sometimes people need time or don’t have it in them to forgive you. But it isn’t about you anymore. Be prepared to wait or resolve to move forward without it.

What might you say?
