

Lesson 5: forgiveness

God's forgiveness

1. The nature of God is to forgive sins (Neh 9:16-17; Ps 86:5; Is 43:22-25).

16 “But they and our fathers ^eacted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments. 17 They refused to obey ^fand were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt.³ But you are a God ready to forgive, ^ggracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them. Nehemiah 9:16,17

“Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob; but ^syou have been weary of me, O Israel! 23 ^tYou have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings, or honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, ^sor wearied you with frankincense. 24 You have not bought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities. 25 “I, I am he ^uwho blots out ^vyour transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Isaiah 43:22-25

“For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.” (Ps 86:5, ESV)

- Every sin can be forgiven by God (Ex 34:6-7; Ps 32:1-2, 5; 103:3, 10-12).

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ^d“The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and ^egracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast ^flove and faithfulness, 7 ^gkeeping steadfast love for thousands, ^hforgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but ⁱwho will by no means clear the guilty, ^jvisiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.” Exodus 34:6,7

Blessed is the one whose ^ktransgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord ^lcounts no iniquity, and in whose spirit ^mthere is no deceit.

I ^qacknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I ^rwill confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin Psalm 32:1,2,5

who ^aforgives all your iniquity, who ^bheals all your diseases, Psalm 103:3

He does not deal with us ^maccording to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. 11 For ⁿas high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his ^osteadfast love toward ^pthose who fear him; 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he ^qremove our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:10-12

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- He forgives “iniquity” (a lack of integrity, honesty, or justice).
 - He forgives “transgression” (crossing over the boundary from right to wrong).
 - He forgives “sin” (missing the mark of God’s perfection; self-centered lawlessness).

“who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,” (Ps 103:3, ESV)

- He was ready to forgive you while you were still His enemy (Rom 5:10) and before you were ready to ask for or receive forgiveness (Ps 86:5; Rom 5:8).

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received ^sreconciliation. **Romans 5:10**

For you, O Lord, are good and ^pforgiving, ^qabounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. **Psalm 86:5**

but ^lGod shows his love for us in that ^mwhile we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **Romans 5:8**

- He forgives you out of His mercy and grace and not because you deserve His forgiveness (Rom 5:6-8; Eph 2:4-7; Col 2:13-14).

But ³God, being ^rrich in mercy, ^sbecause of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even ^twhen we were dead in our trespasses, ^umade us alive together with Christ—^vby grace you have been saved— **6** and raised us up with him and ^wseated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7** so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable ^xriches of his grace in ^ykindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **Ephesians 2:4-7**

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God ^bmade alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, **14** by ^ccanceling ^dthe record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. **Colossians 2:13, 14**

“But God, being *rich in mercy*, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Eph 2:4–7, ESV)

2. God forgives you completely (Ps 103:10-12; Jer 50:20; Rom 5:16-21; 8:1, 33-34; 1 John 1:9).

The completeness of His forgiveness is revealed by the following statements.

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- When God forgives you, you are changed.
 - At your spiritual birth, God establishes a new relationship with you as your Father and removes the judgment of condemnation from you.
 - As your Father, He cleanses you from all unrighteousness as you confess your sins to Him (1 John 1:9).
 - When God forgives you, He no longer deals with you according to your sin (Ps 103:10). Instead, He covers your sin (Ps 32:1) and blots it out (Ps 51:9; Is 43:25, 44:22).

“He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.” (Ps 103:10, ESV)

- When God forgives you, He no longer will charge the guilt of your sin to your account (Ps 32:2; Rom 3:24-25, 4:8, 8:1; 2 Cor 5:19).
- When God forgives you, He removes your sin from you and from His presence (Ps 103:12; Is 38:17; Mic 7:19) and promises not to remember it against you any longer (Heb 10:14-18).

“He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” (Mic 7:19, ESV)

- 3. God’s forgiveness cost you nothing (Eph 2:8-9), but it was very costly to God (Is 53:4-12; John 3:16; Acts 20:28; Rom 5:8; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 1:17-19).**
- 4. God never withholds forgiveness when sins are confessed in a sincere, biblical manner (1 John 1:9).**

Our response to God’s forgiveness

- 1. You are to forgive others just as God in Christ has forgiven you (Eph 4:32; Col 3:13).**

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” (Eph 4:32, ESV)

“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.” (Col 3:13, ESV)

You are to:

- Willingly grant forgiveness whenever another confesses sin to you;

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- Forgive any type of sin, no matter how severe or devastating it might seem to be;
 - Forgive on the basis of grace, not on the merit of the person to be forgiven;
 - Expect a renewed relationship with the one who is forgiven;
 - Recognize that it may be costly to you when you grant forgiveness; and
 - Forgive completely and do not remind the forgiven person of his sin in an accusing manner, even though it may not be appropriate to release the offender from all the consequences of his sin.

The only reason to remind anyone of his sins is for restoration or teaching purposes, and even then it must be done in a spirit of gentleness.

2. Forgiveness is an act of obedience to the Lord (Luke 17:3-10; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13) and must be granted from the heart (Matt 18:35).

Lk 17:3–10 (ESV) — 3 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, **4** and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” **5** The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” **6** And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you. **7** “Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? **8** Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? **9** Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? **10** So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’ ”

Mt 18:35 (ESV) — 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

3. Forgiveness gives the offender what he needs rather than what he deserves (Ps 103:10; Luke 23:39-43; Rom 5:8)

4. Forgiveness is the love of Jesus Christ in action and is a promise to:

- Not keep a record of wrongs suffered (1 Cor 13:5);

1 Co 13:5 (ESV) — 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

- Not gossip about a person’s sins to others (Eph 4:29);
- Not dwell on the offense yourself (Phil 4:8); and

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- Restore fellowship with the forgiven person or the offender, as far as is biblically possible (Rom 12:18; 2 Cor 2:6-8).

Ro 12:18 (ESV) — 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

2 Co 2:6–8 (ESV) — 6 For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, **7** so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. **8** So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.

5. Loving God without loving people is impossible (1 John 4:20-21).

1 Jn 4:20–21 (ESV) — 20 If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. **21** And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

6. Forgiveness should include comforting those who have sinned and have repented, as well as reaffirming your love to them (2 Cor 2:6-8).

7. Forgiveness is to be granted when requested without limitation (Matt 18:21-22; Luke 17:3-4).

Mt 18:21–22 (ESV) — 21 Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” **22** Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Lk 17:3–4 (ESV) — 3 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, **4** and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

8. When you forgive another who has sinned against you, you are not to demand restitution; but, instead, you are to demonstrate mercy and love toward him with a goal of reconciling with him (based on Matt 18:21-35; Luke 6:27-38; 1 Cor 6:5-7; 2 Cor 2:5-7).

It is important to remember that even though you are not to demand restitution, restitution is part of the reconciliation process for the one who has sinned. This should be lovingly brought to his attention.

9. Especially when you pray, if you have something against someone, you must forgive him from your heart (Matt 18:35; Mark 11:25).

[not in notes] Misconceptions about forgiveness

1. You must forgive yourself

Man's wisdom often teaches that "forgiving self" is a prerequisite for experiencing peace and joy. Forgiving self is usually heard in statements such as, "I just can't forgive myself for what I have done," or "You must learn to forgive yourself to get rid of your guilt." Even a believer might erroneously say, "Now that God has forgiven me, I need to forgive myself."

Any teaching that emphasizes a need "to forgive yourself" is trusting and exalting "self" instead of relying solely on God's promises and provision for total and complete forgiveness. If you believe that it is necessary to "forgive yourself" in addition to receiving God's forgiveness for your sins, you indicate that God's plan of forgiveness for salvation and His plan of forgiveness for your continued daily cleansing (1 John 1:9) are not adequate. Remember the following:

- Receiving God's forgiveness is not a matter of "feeling forgiven;" rather, it is a matter of trusting God (Heb 11:6) and His promises (Rom 5:1-2; Col 1:21-23; 1 John 1:9).

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God ^mmust believe that he exists and ^mthat he rewards those who seek him. **Hebrews 11:6**

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, ^bwe¹ have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through him we have also ^cobtained access by faith² into this grace ^din which we stand, and ^ewe³ rejoice⁴ in hope of the glory of God. **Romans 5:1, 2**

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, ^adoing evil deeds, **22** he has now reconciled ^bin his body of flesh by his death, ^cin order to present you holy and blameless and ^dabove reproach before him, **23** ^eif indeed you continue in the faith, ^fstable and steadfast, not shifting from ^gthe hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed ^hin all creation⁷ under heaven, ⁱand of which I, Paul, became a minister. **Colossians 1:21-23**

If we confess our sins, he is ^vfaithful and just to forgive us our sins and ^rto cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **1 John 1:9**

- Since God says there is no condemnation for you in Christ Jesus, then it is true, regardless of your feelings (Rom 8:1).

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **Romans 8:1**

- When God says that He forgives you and cleanses you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9), there is absolutely nothing you can or need to do to complete His work.

The "need" to "forgive yourself" presupposes that you have a sense of guilt concerning past sin(s). Since guilt is the result of sin, you are to repent and confess your sin(s) to the Lord (1 John 1:9) and confess to others at the appropriate time (based on Prov 15:23, 25:11; James 5:16).

Therefore, ^yconfess your sins to one another and pray for one another, ^zthat you may be healed. ^aThe prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. **James 5:16**

To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and ^oa word in season, how good it is! **Proverbs 15:23**

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. **Proverbs 25:11**

Subsequent steps of repentance should include cooperation with God in renewing your mind.

Instead of thinking you need to “forgive yourself” in addition to receiving God’s forgiveness, you should forget what lies behind, reach forward to what lies ahead, and press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:13-14).

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: ⁿforgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal for ^othe prize of the upward ^pcall of God in Christ Jesus. **Phillipians 3:13, 14**

- “Forgiving self” has no biblical support.

Scripture has only two perspectives on forgiveness:

→ You can and need to be forgiven by God (Col 1:13-14; 1 John 1:9); and

He ^dhas delivered us from ^ethe domain of darkness and transferred us to ^fthe kingdom of ^ghis beloved Son, **14** ^hin whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. **Colossians 1:13,14**

→ You are wholeheartedly to forgive others, following the example of God’s forgiveness to you (Matt 18:32-33; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13, Matthew 6:14,15).

Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. **33** ⁱAnd should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ **Matthew 18:32,33**

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, ⁱforgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. **Ephesians 4:32**

bearing with one another and, ⁱif one has a complaint against another, ^gforgiving each other; ^gas the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. **Col. 3:13**

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, **15** ^sbut if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. **Matthew 6:14,15**

2. You won’t experience any of the consequences for your sin

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- When you receive God's forgiveness for salvation, you pass from death to life (John 5:24), thus having the ultimate judgment and consequence of your sin removed (Rom 6:23).

Truly, truly, I say to you, ^rwhoever hears my word and ^sbelieves him who sent me has eternal life. He ^tdoes not come into judgment, but ^uhas passed from death to life. **John 5:24**

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Romans 6:23**

- In your daily life as a child of God, you do not need to be judged and disciplined by the Lord when you judge yourself rightly and deal with sin immediately (1 Cor 11:31-32).

But if we judged⁹ ourselves truly, we would not be judged. **32** But when we are judged by the Lord, ^gwe are disciplined¹⁰ so that we may not be ^hcondemned along with the world. **1 Cor. 11:31,32**

- However, receiving God's forgiveness does not guarantee that all the consequences of your wrongdoing will be removed (Col 3:25).

For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. **Col. 3:25**

For example:

- Even though the Lord forgave David for his adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:13), the child that was born out of this adulterous relationship died (2 Sam 12:14-23).
- The repentant thief on the cross responded in faith to Jesus Christ but still died for the crimes he had committed (Luke 23:39-43).
- You can receive God's forgiveness for sins committed against another (1 John 1:9), but you still are responsible to reconcile with the person against whom you have sinned (Matt 5:23-24).

So if ^eyou are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. **Matthew 5:23,24**

3. When you forgive you must also forget

- Scripture says that God's forgiveness involves remembering sins against you no more (Is 43:25; Jer 31:34; Heb 10:17).

"I, I am he who blots out ^vyour transgressions for my own sake,

and I will not remember your sins. Isaiah 43:25

And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’
vfor they shall all know me, wfrom the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For xI will
forgive their iniquity, and yI will remember their sin no more.” Jeremiah 31:34

I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” Hebrews 10:17

- This means that He will not hold your sins against you since He has cleansed you with the precious blood of Jesus Christ (Rom 3:23-25; Eph 1:7; Heb 10:19-22; 1 John 1:7).

for f all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 g and are justified h by his grace as a gift,
i through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God j put forward as k a propitiation l by
his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in m his divine
forbearance he had passed over n former sins. Romans 3:23-25

In him we have r redemption s through his blood, t the forgiveness of our trespasses, u according to
the riches of his grace, Ephesians 1:7

Therefore, brothers, 3 since we have confidence to enter q the holy places by the blood of Jesus,
20 by r the new and living way that he opened for us through s the curtain, that is, through his
flesh, 21 and since we have t a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true
heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts u sprinkled clean v from an evil conscience and our
bodies w washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:19-22

But p if we walk in the light, q as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and r the
blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

- While God forgives, He cannot forget (erase His memory) since He is the Almighty God and final Judge who will bring every act and every careless word to judgment whether good or evil (Ecc 12:14; Matt 12:36-37; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Pet 1:17). Therefore, since God’s character and His Word give assurance that He does forgive completely, forgetting is not required in order to forgive.

For x God will bring every deed into judgment, with 4 every secret thing, whether good or evil.
Ecclesiastes 12:17

I tell you, s on the day of judgment t people will give account for u every careless word they speak,
37 for v by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”
Matthew 12:36,37

- Your responsibility is to forgive another as God has forgiven you (Eph 4:32), which involves not holding another’s sin against him (i.e., “not remembering”). Then, you are to commit the fault and the person to the Lord since He is the final and righteous Judge (Matt 16:27; 2 Tim 4:8; James 5:9).

For the Son of Man is going to come with ^bhis angels in the glory of his Father, and ^cthen he will repay each person according to what he has done. **Matthew 16:27**

Henceforth there is ^ylaid up for me ^zthe crown of righteousness, which the Lord, ^athe righteous judge, will award to me on ^bthat day, and not only to me but also to all ^cwho have loved his appearing. **1 Timothy 4:8**

Do not grumble against one another, brothers, ⁿso that you may not be judged; behold, ^othe Judge is standing ^pat the door. **James 5:9**

- Scripture uses the term “not to remember” as meaning “not to mention or bring to mind” or “not to keep an account.”

For example, David requested of the Lord “not to remember” (literally, “not to mention”) the previous sins of his youth (Ps 25:7).

Remember not ^zthe sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your ^asteadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord! **Psalm 25:7**

- Scripture uses “forget” in the sense of “escaping notice.”

For example, the Apostle Paul could remember (bring to mind) his earlier sins (1 Tim 1:12-15) yet confidently proclaimed “to forget” (“not take notice”) of those things that were behind in order to press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:13-14).

I thank him ^xwho has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, ^yappointing me to his service, **13** though formerly I was a blasphemer, ^zpersecutor, and insolent opponent. But ^aI received mercy ^bbecause I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, **14** and ^cthe grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the ^dfaith and love that are in Christ Jesus. **15** The saying is ^ctrustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus ^fcame into the world to save sinners, ^gof whom I am the foremost. **1 Timothy 12-15**

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: ⁿforgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal for ^othe prize of the upward ^pcall of God in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 3:13-14**

- Nowhere does Scripture require you to have a blank memory about your own sins or sins committed against you.

In fact, the memory of certain sins (even though these sins have been forgiven by God) is important for your training in righteousness, to help you not repeat them (for example, notice David’s remembrance of his sins in 2 Sam 12:13-23 and Ps 38). The only requirement is for you to forgive others as God in Christ has forgiven you (Eph 4:32),

even when you clearly remember sins committed against you, which now have no power over you.

David said to Nathan, ⁱ“I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, ^j“The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. **14** Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly ^kscorned the Lord, ²the child who is born to you shall die.” **15** Then Nathan went to his house.

1. David's Child Dies

And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. **16** David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David ^lfasted and went in ^mand lay all night on the ground. **17** And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. **18** On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, “Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm.” **19** But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David understood that the child was dead. And David said to his servants, “Is the child dead?” They said, “He is dead.” **20** Then David arose from the earth ⁿand washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord ^oand worshipped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate. **21** Then his servants said to him, “What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food.” **22** He said, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, ^pWho knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?” **23** But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, ^qbut he will not return to me.” **2 Samuel 12:13-23**

O Lord, ^mrebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath! **2** For your ⁿarrows have sunk into me, and your hand ^ohas come down on me. **3** There is ^pno soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my ^qbones because of my sin. **4** For my ^riniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. **5** My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness, **6** I am ^sutterly bowed down and ^tprostrate; all the day I ^ugo about mourning. **7** For my sides are filled with burning, and there is ^pno soundness in my flesh. **8** I am feeble and crushed; I ^vgroan because of the tumult of my heart. **9** O Lord, all my longing is before you; my ^wsighing is not hidden from you. **10** My heart throbs; my strength fails me, and ^xthe light of my eyes—it also has gone from me. **11** My ^yfriends and companions ^zstand aloof from my ^aplague, and my nearest kin ^bstand far off. **12** Those who seek my life ^clay their snares; those who seek my hurt ^dspeak of ruin and meditate ^etreachery all day long. **13** But I am like a deaf man; I do not hear, like ^fa mute man who does not open his mouth. **14** I have become like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth are no ^grebukes. **15** But for ^hyou, O Lord, do I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. **16** For I said, “Only ⁱlet them not rejoice over me, who ^jboast against me when my ^kfoot slips!” **17** For I am ^lready to fall, and my pain is ever before me. **18** I ^mconfess my iniquity; I am ⁿsorry for my sin. **19** But my foes are vigorous, they are mighty, and many are those who hate me ^owrongfully. **20** Those who ^prender me evil for good ^qaccuse me because I ^rfollow after good. **21** Do not forsake me, O Lord! O my God, be not ^sfar from me! **22** ^tMake haste to help me, O Lord, my ^usalvation! **Psalm 38**

Reconcile with others

Asking for forgiveness from others in a scriptural manner involves acknowledging that you have sinned against them and that you desire mercy and pardon (not to be given what you deserve). Asking for forgiveness is vital for reconciliation and may lead to a difference in the relationship. For complete restoration to occur, specific steps of biblical action must be taken (based on Matt 5:23-24, 18:21-35; Rom 12:18, 14:19; 2 Cor 5:17-19; Eph 4:32; Col 3:12-14; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9).

So if ^eyou are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. **Matthew 5:23-24**

The tale of the unforgiving servant **Matthew 18:21-35**

If possible, so far as it depends on you, ^llive peaceably with all. **Romans 12:18**

So then let us ^lpursue what makes for peace and for ^mmutual upbuilding. Romans 14:19

Therefore, if anyone is ⁱin Christ, he is ^ja new creation.² ^kThe old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **18** All this is from God, ^lwho through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us ^mthe ministry of reconciliation; **19** that is, in Christ God was reconciling³ the world to himself, ⁿnot counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us ^mthe message of reconciliation. 2 Cor 5:17-19

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

Put on then, as ^eGod's chosen ones, holy and beloved, ^fcompassionate hearts, ^gkindness, ^hhumility, meekness, and patience, **13** ^hbearing with one another and, ⁱif one has a complaint against another, ^gforgiving each other; ^gas the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. **14** And above all these put on ^jlove, which ^kbinds everything together in ^lperfect harmony. **Colossians 3:12-14**

Therefore, ^yconfess your sins to one another and pray for one another, ^zthat you may be healed. ^aThe prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. **James 5:16**

1. Repent from your sin(s)

- Biblical repentance results in a change from disobedience to biblically obedient behavior (Ps 51:12-13; Matt 3:8; Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20).

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. **13** Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will ^rreturn to you. **Psalm 51:12, 13**

Bear fruit ^xin keeping with repentance. **Matthew 3:8**

but declared first ^xto those in Damascus, ^ythen in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also ^zto the Gentiles, that they should ^arepent and ^bturn to God, performing deeds ^cin keeping with their repentance. **Acts 26:20**

- Biblical repentance acknowledges sin and takes personal responsibility for it (Ps 51:1-6; 1 John 1:8-10).

Have mercy on me, ¹ O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your ^xabundant mercy ^yblot out my transgressions. **2** ^zWash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and ^acleanse me from my sin! **3** ^bFor I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. **4** ^cAgainst you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil ^din your sight, ^eso that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. **5** Behold, ^fI was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. **6** Behold, you delight in truth in ^gthe inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. **Psalm 51:1-6**

1 Jn 1:8–10 (ESV) — 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

- Biblical repentance results from a sorrow for sins committed against God and others (Ps 38:1-18; 2 Cor 7:9-10).

See above Psalm 38:1018

As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but ^wbecause you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. **10** For ^xgodly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas ^yworldly grief produces death. **11** For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, ^zwhat zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. **2 Corinthians 7: 9-11**

2. Confess your sin(s)

- You are to confess sins to God in all aspects of thought, word, and action (**Ps 51:1-4; 1 John 1:9**). **See above verses**
- Confess your sins to those against whom you have sinned (**James 5:16**).

When confessing sin(s) you have committed against another:

→ Do not accuse him, judge him, or bring up his failures (Matt 7:1-5; Rom 2:1; 1 Cor 13:5).

“Judge not, that you be not judged. **2** ^sFor with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and ^twith the measure you use it will be measured to you. **3** Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but ^udo not notice the log that is in your own eye? **4** Or how can you say to

your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye?
5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. **Matthew 7:1-5**

Therefore you have ^fno excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For ^gin passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.
Romans 2:1

Love is patient and ^fkind; love ^gdoes not envy or boast; it ^his not arrogant **5** or rude. It ⁱdoes not insist on its own way; it ^jis not irritable or resentful;² **6** it ^kdoes not rejoice at wrongdoing, but ^lrejoices with the truth. **7** ^mLove bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, ^cendures all things. **1 Corinthians 13:5**

For example, you should say, “Please forgive me for slamming the door in your face.” Don’t say, “Please forgive me for slamming the door in your face when you called me stupid” (based on 1 Pet 3:8-9).

Finally, all of you, ^uhave unity of mind, sympathy, ^vbrotherly love, ^wa tender heart, and ^xa humble mind. **9** ^yDo not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, ^zbless, for ^ato this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. **1 Peter 3:8,9**

→ Do not give excuses.

For example, say, “Please forgive me for using bad language and unwholesome words.” Don’t say, “Please forgive me for my use of bad language, but today is just not a good day for me.” Remember that there is no justification or excuse for sinning against someone or causing anyone to stumble (based on Matt 18:7; Rom 14:13; 1 Cor 10:13).

Woe to the world for ^btemptations to sin!² ^cFor it is necessary that temptations come, ^dbut woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! **Matthew 18:7**

Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide ^bnever to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. **Romans 14:13**

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. ^wGod is faithful, and ^xhe will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. **1 Corinthians 10:13**

→ Do not stop at merely expressing your feelings by saying, “I’m sorry.”

“I’m sorry” simply means “I feel sorrow” and is not a statement of a desire to be reconciled. When seeking forgiveness, also identify your wrong as sin (Eph 4:15).

Rather, ^yspeaking the truth in love, we are to ^zgrow up in every way into him who is ^athe head, into Christ, **16** ^bfrom whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, ^cwhen each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself

up in love. **Ephesians 4:15**

For example, you might say, “I’m sorry; please forgive me for sinning against you when I yelled at you and called you names.”

3. Forgiveness (see above)

4. Make restitution

- Biblical restitution should be made whenever possible (based on Lev 6:2-5; Num 5:5-8; Prov 6:30-31).

If anyone sins and ^bcommits a breach of faith against the Lord by ^cdeceiving his neighbor in ^da matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or ^eif he has oppressed his neighbor **3** or ^fhas found something lost and lied about it, ^gswearing falsely—in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby— **4** if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore ^ewhat he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found **5** or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall ^hrestore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt **Leviticus 6:2-5**

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **6** “Speak to the people of Israel, ^mWhen a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by breaking faith with the Lord, and that person realizes his guilt, **7** ⁿhe shall confess his sin that he has committed.² ^oAnd he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong. **8** But if the man has no next of kin to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for wrong shall go to the Lord for the priest, in addition to ^pthe ram of atonement with which atonement is made for him. **Numbers 5:5-8**

People do not despise a thief if he steals to ^csatisfy his appetite when he is hungry, **31** but ^dif he is caught, he will pay ^esevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house. **Proverbs 6:30-31.**

In the case of adultery, forgiveness is available from the Lord (1 John 1:9) and may be granted by those sinned against (Luke 17:3; Eph 4:32). However, restitution is not possible (Prov 6:32-35).

Pay attention to yourselves! ^yIf your brother sins, ^zrebuke him, and if he repents, ^aforgive him, **4** and if he sins against you ^bseven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” **Luke 17:3,4**

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, ⁱforgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. **Ephesians 4:32**

He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. **33** He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away. **34** For ^fjealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when ^ghe takes revenge. **35** He will accept no compensation; he will refuse though you multiply gifts. **Proverbs 6:32-35**

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- Biblical restitution is to be made to those against whom you have sinned (Ex 22:1-17; Luke 19:8-9).

And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods ⁱI give to the poor. And if I have ^jdefrauded anyone of anything, I restore it ^kfourfold.” **9** And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since ^lhe also is a son of Abraham. **Luke 19:8,9**

- Since the goal of biblical restitution is to be at peace with another, you are not to attempt to “buy back” the relationship or “manipulate” the other person to respond in a way that you desire (Rom 12:9a, 18).

Let love be genuine. **Romans 12:9a**

If possible, so far as it depends on you, ^llive peaceably with all. **Romans 12:18**

5. Reconciling is extremely important

- Biblical reconciliation can only begin with being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ (Rom 5:10-11; 2 Cor 5:17-20; Col 1:21-22).

For if ^pwhile we were enemies ^qwe were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by ^rhis life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received ^sreconciliation. **Romans 5:10, 11**

Therefore, if anyone is ⁱin Christ, he is ^ja new creation. ² ^kThe old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **18** All this is from God, ^lwho through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us ^mthe ministry of reconciliation; **19** that is, in Christ God was reconciling ³the world to himself, ⁿnot counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us ^mthe message of reconciliation. **20** Therefore, ^owe are ambassadors for Christ, ^pGod making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. **2 Corinthians 5:17-20**

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, ^adoing evil deeds, **22** he has now reconciled ^bin his body of flesh by his death, ^cin order to present you holy and blameless and ^dabove reproach before him, **Colossians 1:21-22**

- The ministry and message of reconciliation between God and mankind is a responsibility and privilege that has been entrusted to you (**2 Cor 5:17-20**).
- Biblical reconciliation with others is so important that it must be done before your worship and service to the Lord. You are not able (fit) to worship or serve the Lord unless you have sought reconciliation with others who are estranged from you (Matt 5:23-24).

So if^e you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. **Matthew 5:23,24**

6. Hindrances to reconciliation

- Inadequate understanding or a lack of biblical forgiveness on the part of another may impede reconciliation.
 - The one you have offended may minimize the matter by saying, “Oh, that’s all right. It’s no problem.” You must let him see that it was serious to God and you because it was sin in your life (James 2:10, 4:17). You must assure him that you want to reconcile with him completely. You are to emphasize that you do not wish to ignore or minimize your failure and that you intend to change in this area and live God’s way (Matt 5:23-24; Rom 12:18).

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point^k has become guilty of all of it. **James 2:10**

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. **James 4:17**

So if^e you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **Matthew 5:23, 24**

- The one offended may not forgive you. In this case, remember you are only responsible for what God instructs you to do; the other person’s response is between him and God (Prov 16:7; Ezekiel 18:20; Rom 12:18). However, in seeking to be reconciled and at peace with another, assure him that you really do desire his forgiveness and that you intend to change. Tell him the specific steps you will take to make this change. This is especially important in a close relationship (i.e., spouse, family, boss, roommate, co-worker, etc.) so that you can be held accountable to change that will demonstrate Christlikeness in your future deeds.

When a man’s ways please the Lord, ^whe makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. **Proverbs 16:7**

The soul who sins shall die. ^dThe son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. ^eThe righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, ^fand the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. **Ezekiel 18:20**

Romans 12:18 see above

- Waiting for another to initiate and demonstrate forgiveness delays reconciliation.

Regardless of who is at fault, it is the responsibility of an obedient believer to begin the process of reconciliation (Matt 5:23-24, 18:15; Mark 11:25-26).

So if ^eyou are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. **Matthew 5:23,24**

If your brother sins against you, ⁿgo and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have ^ogained your brother. **Matthew 18:15**

25 And whenever ^ryou stand praying, ^sforgive, ^tif you have anything against anyone, so that ^uyour Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. **Matthew 11:25-26**

*“...there remember that your brother has something against you. ...be reconciled”
(Mt 5:23–24, ESV)*

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell” (Mt 18:15, ESV)

“And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone....” (Mk 11:25–26, ESV)

- Unscriptural demands for “sinlessness” or perfection restrict reconciliation.

Remember that you are to forgive on the strength of another’s verbal statement of repentance, not his “sinless,” perfect walk of repentance (Luke 17:4). If forgiveness by a professing believer is sought and granted yet the one seeking forgiveness persists in sinful behavior, it will be necessary to apply biblical discipline prayerfully and in a spirit of gentleness (Gal 6:1-5).

Brothers, ¹ ^oif anyone is caught in any transgression, ^pyou who are spiritual should restore him in ^qa spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. **2** ^rBear one another’s burdens, and ^sso fulfill ^tthe law of Christ. **3** For ^uif anyone thinks he is something, ^vwhen he is nothing, he deceives himself. **4** But let each one ^wtest his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. **5** For ^xeach will have to bear his own load. **Galatians 6:1-5**

- Reconciliation with a person who has sinned is not possible when that person will not respond with true repentance, confession, and restitution.

For example:

→ An employee steals from his company. Other co-workers witness this theft and report it to their manager, a true believer in Christ. When the manager confronts the person about the allegation of theft, the person admits the crime, says he will not do it again, and asks for forgiveness for violating the manager’s trust. The manager forgives him and counsels him not to do it again. (If the employee is a believer, the manager counsels him regarding put-offs and put-ons, renews

fellowship, and admonishes him not to steal again). The manager knows that he must file a report about this situation with his supervisors and does so.

- Those in authority review the situation and decide to place the employee on probation. The manager discusses his options concerning the employee with his supervisors. After this consultation, two things are decided for the job: (1) the employee is transferred to another department with job restrictions that are appropriate to the confessed theft, and (2) a payment schedule is worked out so that the employee can make restitution for his theft.
- A short time later, the employee again steals from his company and is caught once more. As earlier, the employee admits his theft to his manager, says he will not do it again, and asks his manager to forgive him once again for violating the manager's trust. The manager again forgives him and counsels him about the consequences of his actions (If the employee is a believer, the manager warns him of the consequences of continued wrongdoing). The manager again reports the situation to his supervisors and requests guidance concerning job termination, the filing of criminal charges, and possible restitution.
- Pride and the desire to enact revenge, be bitter, be wrathful, and make the person pay.

ILL: We all want to respond to what someone else has done, let's make certain it is what Christ has done rather than what another has done.

When we refuse to forgive and reconcile

- 1. Because you are commanded to forgive others (Eph 4:32), you sin when you refuse to forgive (James 4:17).**

James 4:17 (ESV) — 17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

- 2. You show ingratitude for God's merciful forgiveness toward you when you do not forgive others (Matt 18:21-35). Unforgiving servant**
- 3. God as your Father withholds His forgiveness of your everyday transgressions when you do not forgive others (Matt 6:14-15; Mark 11:25-26).**

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, **15** ^sbut if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 6:14, 15

And whenever ^ryou stand praying, ^sforgive, ^tif you have anything against anyone, so that ^uyour Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. **Mark 11:25, 26**

4. You taint both the purpose of the gospel and the substance of the church (Matt 5:9; Eph 4:1-6)

Mt 5:9 (ESV) — 9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Eph 4:1–6 (ESV) — 1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Remember that you have the privilege of forgiving others and you have the ability also.

Recommended resources

1. *Forgiveness* by John MacArthur
2. *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande
3. *Unpacking Forgiveness* by Chris Brauns
4. *Pursuing Peace* by Robert D. Jones