

Forgiveness

- “Forgiveness is giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me.” (from Ruth Duncan)
- “Forgiveness is my personal act to release the one who sinned against me from my personal right to collect on the moral debt — to pay them back for their offense. Instead of giving them back the pain they gave me, I absorb the pain into myself with God’s help.” (from Dr. Gary Breshears)
- Forgiveness does not mean what happened was okay. It doesn’t mean you welcome dangerous people back into your life. Forgiveness means that you have made peace with the pain and are ready to let it all go.

FORGIVENESS is not the same thing as **RECONCILIATION**

- **forgiveness** is what I do; one can forgive, even if the other person does not apologize.
- **reconciliation** requires **real work by both** the offender and the offended; reconciliation describes the process of healing past hurts and restoring a broken relationship; it is possible to forgive someone, but not reconcile, or go back to a former level of relationship.
- Even though Jesus was perfect, He was not able to reconcile with everyone in His life experience (ie., the rich young ruler walked away from Him, **Mt. 19:16-30**; the Jewish religious leaders rejected Him)
- **Romans 12:18** — “As much as it is up to you, be at peace with all people.” (The implication is: it is not possible to “be at peace” with everyone, because not everyone will be agreeable.)
- See also **Matthew 18:15-17** (This process of “reconciliation” ends with the possibility that your relationship with some people cannot be restored.)

Reconciliation

Steps to Reconciliation with God or Another Person (When it is Possible)

- 1. AWARENESS & CONVICTION**
 - Becoming aware of the sin that I have committed against you.
 - As I begin to realize what I have done, I am remorseful or sorry.
- 2. CONFESSION**
 - Verbalize what I did wrong.
 - Don’t rush this step; if spoken too quickly and easily, it turns it on the offended one and makes them feel pressure to minimize the offense. It is good to “sit in my remorse” for awhile.
 - Sincerely say, “Thank you for telling me.”
 - The other person needs to know I understand and appreciate my sin and their pain.
- 3. APOLOGIZE**
 - Be Specific; “I am sorry for THIS that I did.”
 - Focus on my part of the problem, not theirs.
 - Don’t put a “BUT” at the end.
 - Don’t focus on the other person’s feelings: “I’m sorry you feel that way.” Or, “I’m sorry you were offended.” This makes the problem THEIR fault.
- 4. REPENT**
 - Demonstrate my apology is sincere by changing my behavior.
- 5. RESTITUTION**
 - Sometimes it is not enough to merely apologize. I must also “pay back” for the other person’s loss.
 - see Exodus 22:1-14; Leviticus 6:2-5; even Luke 19 and Zacchaeus.
- 6. RECONCILIATION**
 - This requires clearing up the relational damage done by my sin.
 - This will require TIME — depending on the level of the damage and pain — and on the willingness to humbly repent by both parties.
 - May require counseling with a professional — individually and relationally.
 - This is the ideal — the ultimate goal. It may not always be possible, but hopeful.