

Let us begin looking at Step 8, as we look into the 12 Steps with God

Step 8 – Assessment – We made a list of all persons we had harmed and identified ways to make amends to them all.

Tonight, in Step 8, Lesson 1 - we will be challenging you to think about those whom you have wronged so that we can begin to restore damaged relationships. **Relationships are a critical part of the human experience that God created for us – with Him and others!**

When we sin, it naturally affects those around us. Sometimes that sin affects them because we blatantly sinned against them (e.g. we stole from them, hurt them, tempted them into sin with us, lied to them, etc.) and sometimes they are only affected by the sin in us (e.g. any addiction that draws our attention away from loved ones, lust that impairs our relationship with our spouses, coveting that results in priorities being out of order, etc.).

In this step we are purposefully and prayerfully considering those whom our sin has impacted with a goal of repairing a damaged relationship and rebuilding broken trust. This may be something perceived as small and almost insignificant, to something big and extremely detrimental. The difference in our minds matters little, our objective is to repair all damaged relationships.

The first relationship that demands restoration is that with our God. King David said...

Psalms 32:5, I acknowledged my sin to You, and I did not hide my guilt; I said, “I will confess my wrongdoings to the LORD”; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

And earlier in the same Psalm in verses 1 & 2, he says

Psalms 32:1-2, How blessed is he whose wrongdoing is forgiven, whose sin is covered! ² How blessed is a person whose guilt the LORD does not take into account, and in whose spirit, there is no deceit!

In Leviticus, God pledges to the children of Israel that there can be absolute reconciliation if they confess their sin and repent.

Leviticus 26:40-42, “But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, ⁴¹ so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴² then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.”

What has happened here is that God has already established a covenant with Israel and has given Israel the Law so they would know how to live in relationship with Him, but they will disobey and rebel. When that happens, God will draw away from them because God's promises are rooted in their relationship. Sin damages relationships. However, God promises that if they will return to Him in humility and make amends, then He will return to them in a restored relationship. We believe that the same principle applies for believers today.

One of the interesting things about this passage is that it introduces the truth that consequences for sins are generational. The sins of our parents have an effect on us. That doesn't mean that we can blame our sinful choices on them, because we have chosen sin for ourselves. However, we should be aware of the fact that our sin has an effect on our children. This should be a challenge for us to break the chain of sin so that our children will be in a better place because of our decision to live for God.

Also, you might have noticed how God promises His departure from His people only if they depart from Him. Notice that He never initiates the breakdown of the relationship, He only responds to it. Our broken fellowship with God is never His fault.

Again, we start to mend that relationship by confessing our sin as we read in 1 John.

1 John 1:9, *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Humility and amends are key in relationship restoration. This part of the process is vital and cannot be skipped or overlooked. We must be humble and admit our wrongdoing, openly acknowledging our faults to God whom we have wronged. This is the time for absolute honesty. You must not say what you do not mean, and you cannot fake this – God knows your heart.

Consider and Confess:

1. Have you ever tried to bargain with God? Bargaining with God is crazy enough, but worse than that, you knew in the back of your mind that you may not keep your end of the deal?
2. Have you ever reflected on or considered your sin, but you acted like God did not know about it?
3. What are some symptoms of your broken relationship with God? (e.g. depression, life is aimless or has no purpose, things are not working like they should, etc.)
4. Are you honestly interested in getting your relationship with God where it ought to be? Why?
5. Has your broken relationship with God become a pattern or habit where you break relationships with people close to you? Which relationships (be specific)?
6. Step 7 dealt with cleansing us from sin (Psalm 51:2 & 1 John 1:7-9). How have things been going since that lesson?

Looking Forward:

In the next lesson we will begin looking at restoring our relationships with loved ones, other than God. We recommend that you not move on to the next lesson until things are headed the right direction with God. We believe that honesty and humility with people will be much easier when you are being honest and humble with God. Furthermore, we believe that being in a right relationship with God will help you make even better amends with those people you have hurt along the way.