

Let us finish looking at Step 8, Part 2, 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 2 – we will be looking at restoring relationships with loved ones, other than God. We need to remember that sin fractures relationships – our relationship with God and others.

It is important that we restore the relationship with God, first and foremost, but when you are ready...there are numerous relationships that need your attention and restoration. In our previous lesson we spent more time talking about the need for repairing the broken relationship with God. But once that relationship is on track, we must turn our attention to the people we have hurt by our sin.

In the midst of His great sermon on the mount, Jesus said,

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.”

These verses are in a group of verses that portray a lesson on living without strife and anger. Here, the sinner initiates the reconciliation in humility with a sense of urgency. Later in His teaching, Jesus talked about what to do if someone sins against you, but here He addresses what to do if you have sinned against someone else. It is very clear that Jesus intends for his people to live in good relationship to all, which means that we may need to forgive and ask forgiveness on a regular basis.

I appreciate what the great commentator Albert Barnes records concerning this passage: “*The Pharisees were intent only on the external act in worship. They looked not at all to the internal state of the mind. If a man conformed to the external rites of religion, however much envy, and malice, and secret hatred he might have, they thought he was doing well. Our Savior taught a different doctrine, it was of more consequence to have the heart right than to perform the outward act. If, therefore, says he, a man has gone so far as to bring his gift to the very altar, and should remember that anyone had anything against him, it was his duty there to leave his offering and go and be reconciled. While a difference of this nature existed, his offering could not be acceptable. He was not to wait till the offended brother should come to him; he was to go and seek him out and be reconciled.*” – Barnes Notes on the Bible.

Romans 12 :18, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all people.”

This begins with “if possible” because having healthy relationships does not entirely depend upon us, it also depends on the attitudes and responses of others...but we need to initiate reconciliation, doing everything possible to live at peace with others.

Like the previous lesson, we believe that humbleness and confession are important to this step.

James 5:16, “... confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

Sin leads to isolation and confession forces us to look outside ourselves to resolve that sin. This verse falls in the midst of a discussion on healing from physical ailments. It seems obvious that broken relationships contribute to poorer health. But healing may come when we fix our relationships through the process of confession and prayer. Mutual honesty, openness, and sharing of needs will enable believers to uphold each other in spiritual struggles.

1 Peter 5:5b, “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’.”

Again, the importance of humility is emphasized by the fact that God stands against the proud but gives gracious support to those who are humble. In restoring our relationships by confession, we must be humble toward those whom we have wronged. Because we have sinned against them, they have the moral and relational high ground. Acknowledge the fact that you have wronged them and seek genuine forgiveness.

Consider and Confess:

1. Humbleness and confession are where we are to start, but are you stumbling over pride, never really getting to the humility and confession that God commands?
2. Even if our life is marred by other’s sin against us, our thoughts, actions, and words can be sinful and hurt/offend God and others. This sin - our sin, breaks our fellowship with God and others and still requires our attention. Are you ready to seek reconciliation for your sin?
3. Is your version of pride a spiritual pride, where you are “gifted” and/or spiritually superior to those you may have hurt or offended, such that you are not responsible for any hurt?
4. Against whom have you sinned? (Make a thorough list. Add names as necessary. A journal may be helpful here.)
5. How have you sinned against these people? (Be specific. Also, be biblical. Our emotions of guilt can mislead us into thinking we have sinned against someone when we have only felt bad about them. However, be ready to follow-up on your sin when God points it out.)
6. Take time to prioritize your relationships. Which ones need restoring first?
7. Forgiveness from those we have hurt is not guaranteed. If you confess your sins in humbleness and no forgiveness comes, how will you respond?

Looking Forward:

In our next step we will be discussing exactly how to go about making amends. Now that we have covered how we inventory those whom we have offended along life’s way, we are ready to act. In step 9, we will be giving you a biblical method for amends, starting with a definition and then an explanation. This process of inventorying and making amends should put us in a position of peace and security in our relationship with God, and therefore, our relationships with others.