

## **The Ultimate Goal in Resolving Conflict – Reconciliation (Part 2)**

### **Introduction:**

1. Reconciliation is the final goal when it comes to resolving conflict. To be reconciled means to replace hostility and separation with peace and friendship.
2. The keys to reconciliation are confession and forgiveness.
3. Because Christians are the most **forgiven** people in the world, we should be the most **forgiving** people in the world. Yet, it is often very difficult to forgive others genuinely and completely. We find ourselves practicing a **form** of forgiveness that is neither biblical nor healing.
4. As believers, we cannot overlook the direct relationship between God's forgiveness and our forgiveness. Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13
5. God has given us a very high standard to live up to when we have the opportunity to forgive someone. Praise the Lord, He also gives us the power and the guidance we need to imitate Him by forgiving others as He has forgiven us.

### **What Biblical forgiveness is NOT**

1. Forgiveness is not a feeling
2. Forgiveness is not forgetting.
3. Forgiveness is not excusing.

### **Forgiveness is a decision.**

### **How to Overcome Unforgiveness**

- The promises of forgiveness are sometimes difficult to make and even harder to keep. Fortunately, God promises to help us forgive others.
  - He gives us this help, through the Bible and the indwelling Holy Spirit. When we need a little extra help He provides counsel and encouragement through pastors and fellow Christians.
  - Let's look at a few practical ways to draw on these resources when you are seeking to overcome unforgiveness:
1. Confirm repentance.
    - It is difficult to forgive a person who has failed to repent and confess clearly and specifically.
    - When you find yourself in this situation, it may be wise to explain to the person who has wronged you why you are having a difficult time forgiving.
  2. Renounce sinful attitudes and expectations.
    - Either consciously or unconsciously, many of us withhold forgiveness because we believe the offender must earn or deserve our forgiveness, or because we want to punish the offender and make him suffer, or it could be we won't forgive until he guarantees us that an offense will never occur again.

- These attitudes and expectations are utterly inconsistent with the command to forgive as God forgave us.
  - There is no way that we can earn or deserve God's forgiveness, which is why He gives it to repentant sinners as a free gift. Romans 6:23; 1 John 1:9
  - When we have repented of our sin, God does not withhold forgiveness to punish us. We must grant forgiveness just as freely. Psalm 103:9-12
  - Furthermore, just as God demands no guarantee from us regarding our future conduct, we have no right to make such a demand of others. Luke 17:3-4
  - Forgiveness is based on repentance, not on guarantees. We mustn't allow fears of the future to delay forgiveness.
3. Assess your contributions to the problem.
    - In many cases, your sins may have contributed to a conflict.
    - It is easy to get the idea that their sins more than cancel yours, which can leave you with a self-righteous attitude that can retard forgiveness.
    - The best way to overcome this is to pray. Psalm 139:23-24
    - Remembering your faults usually makes it easier to forgive others for theirs.
  4. Remember God's forgiveness.
    - The quickest way to overcome an unforgiving attitude is to focus your attention on how much God has forgiven you. Matthew 18:21-35
    - Very often we take God's forgiveness for granted while stubbornly refusing to forgive others. If effect, we behave as though others' sins against us are more serious than our sins against God.
    - Jesus taught that that is very wrong and sinful, and it demeans the forgiveness that Jesus purchased for us at Calvary.
    - Take a long, hard look at how God has forgiven you. The more you understand and appreciate the wonders of God's forgiveness, the more motivation you will have to forgive others.
  5. Draw on God's strength. Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 3:16, 19-20
    - You must remember that true forgiveness depends on God's grace. If you try to forgive others on your own, you are in for a long and frustrating battle. But if you continually ask for and rely on God's strength, you can forgive the most painful offenses.
    - God gives us His grace through Scripture and through the Holy Spirit.

### **The Ultimate Goal – Reconciliation**

1. The four promises of forgiveness tear down the wall that stands between you and a person who has wronged you. Forgiveness does not end there, however.
2. After you demolish an obstruction, you usually have to clear away some debris and do some repair work.
3. You must move towards what the Bible calls "*reconciliation*." This is a process involving a change of attitude that leads to a change in the relationship. To be reconciled means "to replace hostility and separation with peace and friendship."

- This is what God has done for us in our relationship with Him.  
2 Corinthians 5:18-20
  - This is what God has in mind for us in dealing with one another.
4. Being reconciled does not mean that the person who offended you must now become your closest friend.
    - As God helps you and the other person to work through your differences, you may discover a growing respect and appreciation for each other.
  5. Reconciliation requires that you give a repentant person an opportunity to demonstrate repentance and to regain your trust.
  6. Remember, unless a deliberate effort is made to restore and strengthen a relationship, it will generally deteriorate. This is especially true when you are recovering from intense and prolonged conflict.
  7. You should take definite steps to demonstrate forgiveness, so that the other person does not doubt your sincerity and withdraw from you.