

Embrace Grace - LG Study

Reconciliation: Beyond Forgiveness

Scripture Focus:

- **Matthew 5:24** - "Go and be reconciled to your brother"
- **Luke 6:27-28** - "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you"
- **Philippians 4:8** - "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure... think about such things"
- **Colossians 4:6** - "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."
- **Ephesians 4:32** - "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Introduction

Many of us will be familiar with the concept of forgiveness, but today we'll explore how reconciliation takes us a step further, moving from simply pardoning an offense to actively restoring relationships. Drawing from Scripture and practical wisdom, we'll examine how true reconciliation operates on three levels - in our thoughts, words, and actions.

We'll begin by reviewing the four promises of forgiveness and then delve into how these promises serve as a foundation for genuine reconciliation, then explore practical ways to move beyond simply saying "I forgive you" to rebuilding trust and friendship.

Four promises of forgiveness: *[reminder from Sunday]*

1. I will not dwell in this incident
2. I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you
3. I will not talk to others about this incident

4. I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship

[excerpt: The Peacemaker - Ken Sande]

"Forgiveness is both an event and a process. Making the four promises of forgiveness is an event that knocks down a wall that stands between you and a person who has wronged you. Then a process begins. After you demolish an obstruction, you usually have to clear away debris and do repair work. The Bible calls this "reconciliation," a process involving a change of attitude that leads to a change in the relationship. More specifically, **to be reconciled means to replace hostility and separation with peace and friendship.** This is what Jesus had in mind when he said, "Go and be reconciled to your brother" (**Matt. 5:24; cf. 1 Cor. 7:11; 2 Cor. 5:18-20**)."

Note that in **Matthew 5**, there's no explicit mention of forgiveness. But Jesus talks about reconciliation.

? Is it possible to "be reconciled" without confession & forgiveness?

[no]

If not, why would Jesus say "be reconciled" without referring to forgiveness?

[it is implied and expected because He's taught about it before - it's just understood]

The Three Levels of Reconciliation

Ken Sande suggests we should pursue reconciliation at three different levels: in thought, in word and in deed.

Thought: we should actively replace negative memories/thoughts with positive ones, often through prayer and deliberate focus on the person's good qualities. When difficult thoughts return, we should consistently redirect them toward more constructive reflections.

Word: we should speak well of the person who wronged us, highlighting their positive qualities and offering encouragement, especially if they're struggling with guilt. This is an outward expression of our thoughts, and a verbal affirmation which helps both parties move forward and strengthens the reconciliation process.

Deed: our actions must demonstrate forgiveness in tangible ways. Loving actions can do much more than change your feelings; they can also communicate in unmistakable terms the reality of your forgiveness and your commitment to reconciliation. How much more should those of us who have experienced reconciliation with God be quick to demonstrate our forgiveness with concrete actions.

"Don't waste time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbour; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him." **C. S. Lewis**

Let's explore each level of reconciliation. Share personal experiences where appropriate:

1. In Thought: [Philippians 4:8]

- How can we practically apply the "replacement principle" when negative thoughts keep returning?
- What strategies help you focus on positive qualities of someone who has hurt you?

2. In Word: [Colossians 4:6]



- Why is it important to speak well of someone who has wronged us?
- How can encouraging words help someone struggling with guilt after repentance?

3. In Deed: [Luke 6:27-28]



- Share examples of how actions can demonstrate forgiveness more powerfully than words
- Share then discuss the Edison story [below] - what strikes you about his approach to forgiveness?



Thomas Edison apparently understood this principle. When he and his staff were developing the incandescent light bulb, it took hundreds of hours to manufacture a single bulb. One day, after finishing a bulb, he handed it to a young errand boy and asked him to take it upstairs to the testing room. As the boy turned and started up the stairs, he stumbled and fell, and the bulb shattered on the steps. Instead of rebuking the boy, Edison reassured him and then turned to his staff and told them to start working on another bulb. When it was completed several days later, Edison demonstrated the reality of his forgiveness in the most powerful way possible. He walked over to the same boy, handed him the bulb, and said, "Please take this up to the testing room." Imagine how that boy must have felt. He knew that he didn't deserve to be trusted with this responsibility again. Yet, here it was, being offered to him as though nothing had ever happened. Nothing could have restored this boy to the team more clearly, more quickly, or more fully.

Personal Application



- Which of the three levels (thought, word, or deed) do you find most challenging in your own life?
- What's one specific step you can take this week to move toward reconciliation in a strained relationship?