



Dear Friends,

Over the years at Alpha I have found a common misunderstanding among Christians concerning the practical application of reconciliation. Frequently Christians lump forgiveness, reconciliation, and trust together get confused and don't accomplish anything constructive. Frequently I hear the phrase concerning forgiveness as; "Oh, you just forgive and forget". This leads to spiritual problems, social breakdowns (revenge or divorce), and often stress related physical illness.

I frequently say to people, "you can forgive someone and never be reconciled to them". To forgive takes one person in obedience to God. However, to reconcile takes two or more people working to solve a mutual disagreement. Then trust must be earned by the one who broke trust, and that takes time.

I have written numerous times about forgiveness and now I want to delve onto reconciliation. This is important because Matthew 5:23-24 clearly states, as you approach God with your offering and remember someone who is upset with you, leave your offering and go fix things with the person hurt by you. Here we find Christ in His Sermon on the Mount teaching reconciliation before worship! The other person is the offended, not you. This can be referred to as "Making Amends" for the wrong we have done.

Romans 12:17 tells us; "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (and women.) If there is no peace, you may need to try more than once. Matthew 18:15-17 gives an example of the extent we should go to be reconciled with our adversary (especially if it's a relative). If your brother sins (against you), go and tell him the offence in private; try to resolve the problem one on one. But if that doesn't work, take a one or two mature people with you and try again. If this second attempt fails try once more. This third step makes the issue public, it can be unpleasant but hidden issues never heal or go away. If the person who has wronged you will not hear this last effort, then the issue cannot be resolved and Jesus says exclude this person from further activity in your life. Tough love is frequently messy but continued unresolved conflict is even worse and new problems surface.

As we watch our country struggle it is important to follow Jesus in this important issue of reconciliation!

Thank you for your prayers and support! God bless you!

Alpha Counseling, October, 2023

*Richard*