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**First
Be
Reconciled**

1202-B

Series: Starting Over

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Here's another imaginary story. It's the story of a guy named Jim. Jim was a really nice guy. He was clean cut, moral, and charitable. He was active in the community and active in his church. He seemed, at times, to be growing spiritually; but there was one area of Jim's life that seemed to be out of balance. He did not like to pray. He did not like to pray publicly (that might have been understandable had he not been such an extrovert otherwise), but neither did he like to pray privately. In fact, he seemed almost edgy whenever the subject of prayer came up. One other thing was characteristic of Jim. He seemed to be easily offended. If someone said the wrong thing or did the wrong thing, Jim would either pout or retaliate in a manner totally out of character with his personality. It seemed as though he could progress just so far in his spiritual pilgrimage, then there would always be some kind of setback, usually in the form of a disagreement with another Christian or an unusually volatile reaction to some seemingly harmless situation.

Jim and his pastor were having lunch one day, when a subject came up that caught him off guard, and without thinking, he responded with an unnaturally hostile response. Embarrassed, he apologized to the pastor, and then with a shrug of his shoulders he commented, "I guess it's just my personality, but I can't seem to gain the victory in a couple of areas in my life. One is my defensive spirit. I'm so easily offended. The other is my prayer life. I avoid both the subject and the experience of prayer. In fact, I find myself making fun of people who know how to pray! I know I'm a Christian," Jim went on, "but I can't seem to get past a certain point in my spiritual walk."

Jim's pastor was no ordinary pastor. If he were, he might have just tried to console Jim and tell him that was "just natural" and in due time he'd grow out of it. Jim's pastor had walked with the Lord a long time, and he was well aware of both the symptoms and the cause of the spiritual syndrome Jim was describing. He looked Jim straight in the eye and quietly asked, "Jim, is there

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someone in your life that you have never made things right with? Is there someone whose name comes up whenever you try to pray seriously, someone you've wronged, or someone who thinks you've wronged them, and has never forgiven you? And you've never gone to them and sought their forgiveness?" There were over 100 people in that restaurant, but to Jim it seemed as though they all got silent at once, the way they do in that TV commercial when a certain broker's name is mentioned.

At first Jim was angry at the suggestion. But soon perspiration broke out on his forehead, and though he had trouble forming his words, it was obvious that he was about to say something. Wisely, the pastor said nothing. He just waited.

"How did you know?" Jim responded, at first almost accusingly, as though someone had been reading his spiritual mail, "How did you know?"

"I didn't," the wise pastor responded, "but you have all the symptoms of a spiritual ailment called 'unresolved conflictitis'. The queasiness about praying, the edginess with people, the trace of anger that surfaces when you think you've been wronged. I've been there, Jim," the pastor went on, "I understand, and I've walked through it with many a man. The symptoms are almost always the same."

Finally, you could see Jim's spirit relax. The tenseness in his face gave way to grief, as tears began to roll down his cheeks, and he began to share with this very sensitive pastor an incident that had taken place not too long after he had become a Christian.

It seems Jim had been working for a Christian employer, a man in the church, in fact, and had been doing a nominal job, but his heart really wasn't in his work. One day, an incident occurred in which Jim was reprimanded for not completing a task that was assigned to him, and as a young believer, he had not grasped the principle of proper response to authority. Feeling he was wronged, he quit the job without proper notice, and proceeded to air his griefs about his ex-employer to anyone and everyone who would listen. In time, Jim got another job. His boss replaced him at the plant, and it all seemed to be over.

He had confessed to God his wrong attitude and had even tried to smile and say hello to his ex-boss whenever their paths crossed. Jim felt that the bitterness was gone; he held no grudges any longer, and God had forgiven him, so it really shouldn't

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matter any more.

The trouble was, whenever Jim tried to pray, his mind seemed to always gravitate for some reason or other to his ex-boss. It happened so often, it got to the point where, unconsciously, he didn't want to pray at all. He had noticed, but never made the connection, that about that same time in his life he began being edgy around Christians, especially in the marketplace or on the job, and he was always finding fault with how they worked, or how they did business. Even in the church, it was as though he had an unspoken debt to pay, which included being the judge and jury for everyone on the staff, and everyone else who crossed him.

Up until now, Jim had never put the two together. Now he realized what was wrong. There was a barrier between Jim and a Christian brother, and he had never made an effort to remove it. As the pastor went on, he also realized that he had another matter he had to clear up, and it involved his wife's parents. An incident early in their marriage resulted in some things being said that hurt them deeply, even though they provoked him to do so. For years now, there was an unseen wall between them. Jim was unusually vocal in his witness to them, and they were unusually cool in their response. He had tried to pray for them, but for some reason or other, he couldn't. Now he was beginning to see why.

The next two days were not easy for Jim. But with the pastor's help and a great deal of prayer, which for Jim, was unusual in itself, God enabled him to build some bridges where walls had existed for years. And as those walls came tumbling down, so did the bitterness and the dryness in Jim's spiritual life. The result was a brand new person with a brand new perspective of the Lordship of Christ.

In this study, we're going to look at the principle that turned this young man's life around, and we're going to look at some of the Scriptures his pastor shared with him that afternoon in that crowded restaurant.

The title for our lesson is this: First Be Reconciled to Thy Brother.

It is part four of our mini-series entitled: How would you like to start over?

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In outline form, it would look something like this:

I- Reconciliation: The Problem

II- Reconciliation: The Principle

III- Reconciliation: The Pattern

IV- Reconciliation: The Process

A- Who?

B- When?

C- Why?

D- How?

E- Then what?

THE PROBLEM

We have been looking at the great root issues that face the Christian in his pilgrimage to spiritual maturity and have been asking ourselves to examine these issues to see where we stand. Some of them are not easy to look at...in fact, most of them aren't. But praise God, we're not here to make life easy; we're here to make life fruitful. That sometimes involves weeding the garden, so the fruit can grow unhindered.

Two lessons ago we looked at the issue of false guilt, and we examined the difference between the law of sowing and reaping, and the law of divine mercy. One is a process that takes place on earth; it is the natural result of our sins and of the sins of the world in which we live. The other is a process that takes place in heaven. It is the response of the divine nature to repentance. The venom Satan has tried to inject into the mainstream of the Christian's life that serves to confuse the two, produces a product called false guilt. If false guilt has been troubling you, we simply asked you the question, "How would you like to start over?"

In our last study, we looked at another painful but necessary issue: the issue of bitterness...the deadly disease that responds to life's less pleasant circumstances by attributing wrong motives to the character of a sovereign God. The result is devastating, as we saw, but the cure is delightful. And we asked those who have been struggling to be freed from a bitter spirit the same question, "How would you like to start over?"

In this lesson, we examine the third key stumbling block to effective spiritual maturity, and as you heard in our little story at the beginning, it has to do with the *issue of reconciliation*, the

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matter of unresolved conflicts and the resulting loss of power in the life of the believer.

We'll begin today's study by locating the problem. It's found in Matthew, chapter five, verses 23 and 24. Please turn there for a moment, and let's see just what is transpiring.

The verses immediately preceding it are those familiar verses that begin:

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’

But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.”

(Matthew 5:21,22a NKJV)

Now this verse is important, because the next verse (verse 23), begins: “Therefore”. And as more than one well-known expositor has commented, “whenever you see a ‘therefore’, always ask what the ‘therefore’ is there for.” It always ties together a cause and an effect, or links two succeeding progressive thoughts together. In a moment, we'll see what the therefore is there for.

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

Leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

(Matthew 5:23,24 NKJV)

The problem, as you can see, involves a believer who is trying to pray, but ineffectiveness is one way to describe his efforts. The “therefore” is there for a reason, indeed. It indicates that this problem is related to the issue of interpersonal conflicts, and that the person involved is in danger of spiritual judgment, because he or she has nursed an angry spirit. So the believer in question is having problems with interpersonal relationships and is finding prayer almost impossible. Sounds like our friend, Jim, doesn't it?

Well, the person described here is trying anyway. When we find him, he is bringing his gift to the altar. The word “altar” here is the same word used in Romans 12 and in Hebrews 13, and literally means “the place where man meets with God”.

So here we have a man or woman trying to pray, but there is a barrier. The barrier is an unresolved conflict. The Holy Spirit has used this time of prayer to call to his attention that someone has

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something against him.

There (in the prayer closet) “there remember” (it comes into your mind) “that your brother has something against you.” He’s trying to pray, and suddenly he remembers, “Bob Smith; my old boss: that wound between us has never healed”.

Now obviously, he can do one of several things:

1- He can ask God to forgive him for what he did to Bob. (And he needs to do that; but that’s not enough!)

2- He can recall the things Bob did to him that seemed to provoke him, justify his behavior and dismiss the whole thing.

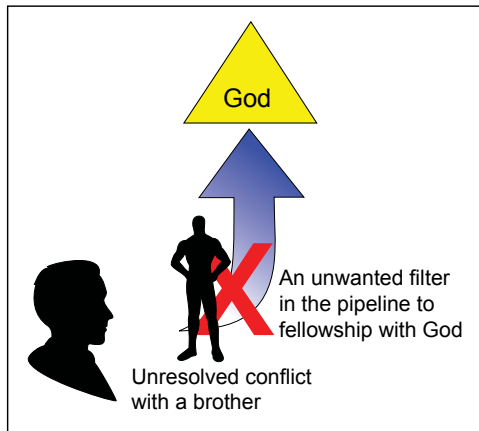
3- He can try to cover over the issue by working up a dramatic prayer experience or embarking on a fervent bout of intercession (even for Bob).

4- He can tell the Lord he’s going to do something about making things right with Bob as soon as the time is right, and then go on with his prayer time.

Question: Which of those solutions seems to be the best?

Answer: None of the above.

What God is saying is that this man’s vertical relationship with the Father has a roadblock in it. It is caused by the breakdown of a horizontal relationship here on earth, with one of His creation. On paper, it might look something like this:



What Jesus says to do is this: *Don't even take the time to finish your prayer. Leave your gift. Get up immediately. Do not*

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pass go. Go immediately, if not sooner, to the brother in question and be (here's our word) reconciled! Then, Jesus says, it will make sense to come and offer your gift.

Let's capsulize the problem. You want to pray, but you can't. The problem is there is a barrier between you and someone else, deserved or not, that's not the issue; and until that horizontal barrier is removed, your vertical relationship with God is affected and you are lacking in spiritual power. Jesus says, "Hurry, immediately go and do something about it; then, come back and resume your time at the altar with God".

So the problem is one of unresolved conflicts.

That guy you cheated on a business deal or that you didn't cheat, but who thinks you did, is offended at you and thus at your God.

That neighbor who thinks you snubbed her at the block Christmas party and told your best friend about it is offended at you and is saying, "If that's what a Christian is like, I'm not interested."

That employee of yours who thinks you're not interested in his problems because you wouldn't make time to listen to him, told all his friends that he doesn't want to work for a Christian anymore. He has been offended by you, and confused about your God.

The in-laws, the out-laws, the children, the parents, the sisters, the brothers, the pastor of that church you left in a huff, the clerk in that store you railed at because of a bad deal, are all candidates.

Not all of them, of course, are angry with you, or even offended. But some are; and this passage concerns the ones you *know* are offended. It says, "There you remember that someone has something against you." You remember. It all comes back to you—that angry accusation, that cutting remark, that unfinished business deal, that unnecessary insinuation, that moral violation that destroyed another's character—you remember. You know about it. Those are the ones Jesus is dealing with in this passage.

THE PRINCIPLE

So we have the problem defined. Now let's look at the principle...the principle of reconciliation. We are told that the key

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to the problem is to be reconciled to that brother or sister who is offended. So we must ask, “What is reconciliation? How does one become reconciled to another?”

The dictionary has a somewhat simple set of definitions for the word reconciliation, but they are straight to the point. It says this:

Reconciliation: to re-establish friendship between; to settle or resolve a dispute; to bring to acquiescence; to make compatible or consistent.

In other words, two people are reconciled when an existing barrier is removed, thus settling a dispute or an offense that existed between them, re-establishing the basis for compatibility and thus for a friendship.

In simple terms, it is the building of a bridge where a wall once stood. It is two parties coming to terms so that no enmity exists between them.

Scripturally, the word simply blossoms and takes on richer shades of meaning, but the basic thought doesn't change. In the New Testament, there are several words translated “reconcile, reconciled, and reconciliation”, most of them coming from the same root word, but with slight variations in the manner in which they accomplish the task.

If you happened to have been browsing through Bullinger's Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament this week, this is what you would have found. First the word is ka-tal-las'-so, a word meaning simply the mutual coming to terms of two parties. It is used of two people in the marriage relationship in I Corinthians 7. In the Amplified New Testament, that passage reads like this:

But to the married people I give charge—not I but the Lord—that the wife is not to separate from her husband

But if she does [separate from and divorce him], let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband. And [I charge] the husband [also] that he should not put away or divorce his wife
(I Corinthians 7:10,11 AMP)

Now we won't stop long enough to elaborate on that passage, but we will take note of the issue at stake. It is the issue of “reconciliation”. Two people who belong together have separated. The one who was responsible for leaving the other is herein

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commanded not to remarry, because the first order of business for them is reconciliation. In that verse, it means the mutual coming together...the returning to a state of oneness as before the offense occurred. The same word is used in Romans 5:10 where it speaks of the mutual coming together of those who were lost, as the result of the death of God's son. But there are even more vivid words used to describe that transaction in other passages, as we shall see!

The second New Testament word for reconciliation is found in Ephesians 2:16 and also in Colossians 1:20,21. The word is "apokatalasso". The prefix "apo" indicating cessation or completion. Thus the word literally means the complete, absolute putting away of enmity once and for all so that nothing remains to hinder continued peace.

Ephesians 2:16 for instance says this:

And [He designed] to reconcile to God both [Jew and Gentile, united] in a single body by means of His cross, thereby killing the mutual enmity and bringing the feud to an end.

(AMP)

Paul says the *act* of reconciliation is all over! What God, the innocent party, had to do, has been done! The cross finished the task of reconciliation once and for all. No other sacrifice will ever be necessary. It all happened at Calvary; it is finished. Jesus will never need to die again. And Jew and Gentile need never be separated from God or from one another again. God's part is finished!

The third word is even more descriptive. It describes the *process* of reconciliation now that the *act* of reconciliation has been accomplished. That word is ka-tal-a-ge' (καταλλαγή). It means a change on the part of one party only (induced by some action on the part of another). In other words, one of the two parties who were estranged pays the entire cost in such a way that knowledge of what He has done is adequate to produce reconciliation in the heart of the other.

It is this word that is used in Romans 5:10 (Amplified Bible) where we read:

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, it is much more [certain], now that we are reconciled [finished work] that we shall be saved (daily delivered from sin's dominion) through His

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[resurrection life].

(Romans 5:10 AMP)

Paul is saying, “How were you reconciled to God?” God did it all, you simply agreed to His terms. Does it not then make sense that the task of daily deliverance from sin’s power will be accomplished the same way? We decide; but “it is God who works in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure”¹. We were reconciled, but not because of anything we did. “It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy.”² (Now that’s important when we get down to the business at hand of being reconciled to our brother.

The fourth word used has only a slight variation of meaning, but it is significant enough to make all the difference. That word, “diassomai” (de-al-las’-o-my) is the one used in our passage in Matthew 5:24. It means “to change one’s own feelings towards another so that he in turn changes his; to be thus reconciled to each other as a result of the initiation of one”.

Whereas “καταλλαγε” (ka-tal’-la-gay”) meant one party paid the entire price to bring about reconciliation, and is applicable to God’s work on our behalf, *this* word, “διαλασσομαι” (de-al-las’-o-my) is used to indicate a transformation in the attitude of one party that is so meaningful, it causes the other party to turn towards them in an act of reconciliation. This is the word used in our Matthew passage. We are told to go to someone who is offended in such a way that the very manner of our going will evoke in them a response that leads to reconciliation.

Here is the key to the entire issue, and here is the reason so many efforts at reconciliation fail. The one who is seeking reconciliation is going with the wrong attitude.

THE PATTERN OF RECONCILIATION

This brings us to part three of our study. And this, I believe, is the most important part of all. Let’s quickly review the issue to this point.

1- The believer who tries to pray and realizes that someone has something against him, justified or not, is to get up and

immediately go to that person and seek to be reconciled. Then he is to return and communicate with God.

1 Philippians 2:13

2 Titus 3:5

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2- The principle of reconciliation is one of the bringing back together of two persons or peoples who have been estranged by reason of a conflict.

3- While there are at least four kinds of reconciliation mentioned in Scripture, the word used in Matthew 5:24 indicates that it is to be a reconciliation brought about largely by the attitude of the one who is seeking it, an attitude so supernatural it evokes a supernatural response in the one offended.

So-far-so-good. Now the question is: “What is that supernatural attitude? Do we have a pattern to follow?”

To answer that question, we must recognize that this whole concept of reconciliation must be understood primarily in the light of the Cross. So before you can go to someone to be reconciled, you must examine the process Jesus used to reconcile us to the Father.

In Colossians 1 Paul makes this statement:

For it pleased the Father that in Him [Jesus] all the fullness should dwell,

And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

(Colossians 1:19,20 NKJV)

There’s the means of reconciliation—Sacrifice! It cost God the death of His Son. Now let’s look at II Corinthians 5:17-21 for the method of reconciliation, where it says this:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

(II Corinthians 5:17-21 NKJV)

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You and I are Ambassadors for Christ. We became such because God did it all and reconciled once and for all the world to Himself (apokatallaso) and has offered to us something so incredible that we are literally drawn to accept His offer of reconciliation (katallage). The very manner in which he did that serves as a pattern for us as we go (diallassomai) to be reconciled with those who are in some way alienated from us.

We then are to go to those we have offended in the same manner Jesus went to the cross to reconcile the world to Himself. That's it in a nutshell. To discover that pattern we will look at those verses we just read, as well as Philippians 2:5-8. Because while II Corinthians 5 describes *God's method of reconciliation*, Philippians 2 describes *God's manner of reconciliation*. Look at them quickly: First the method:

1- Jesus came uncondemningly (vs. 19), "not imputing their trespasses unto them". We were undeserving. We were in the wrong, Jesus was in the right, yet He did not keep account of the wrongs we had done. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died."

2- He accepted full responsibility (vs. 21),

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

So Jesus' method of reconciliation was

1- to go uncondemningly (II Corinthians 5:19)

2- to go accepting full responsibility as though the offense were His (I Corinthians 5:21). Did you get that?

In Philippians 2:5-9 we see God's manner of reconciliation. For if the cross is the *means* of reconciliation, then the *manner* of reconciliation is the manner in which Christ died; that's our *pattern*. What was it?

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

But made Himself of no reputation, and taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him

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the name which is above every name,

(Philippians 2:5-9 NKJV)

Now look at the manner in which Jesus accomplished the ministry of reconciliation. (It is our pattern!)

- 1- He set aside His reputation (Philippians 2:7)
- 2- He assumed the role of a servant (vs. 7)
- 3- He humbled Himself (vs. 8)
- 4- He set no limits to the cost (vs. 8)
- 5- He left the results to the Father (vs. 9)

Do you see the pattern of reconciliation? We have established that if we stop to pray and the Spirit recalls to our minds someone who has something against us, we are to drop everything and go to that person and seek a reconciliation. We are to seek it in such a way with such an attitude that he is virtually compelled to respond. That attitude is demonstrated in the manner in which Jesus reconciled us to the Father. Here, then, is the pattern; please listen carefully:

1- We are to go uncondemningly. It is not important who was right or who was wrong.

2- We are to go, rather, accepting full responsibility for the void that exists between us.

3- We are to be totally unmindful of our own reputation. It doesn't matter how it makes us look.

4- We are to rather seek to serve the one offended, going in the manner one would go who was a slave and was seeking to be reinstated by his master.

5- We therefore are to humble ourselves, having in us the mind of Christ, who though He were God thought it not robbery to be equal with God and made Himself nothing. We know who we are: children of the King. But we lay that aside, and donning the robes of a slave, we go.

6- It doesn't matter what it costs us. It will be nothing compared to what it cost Him to reconcile us to the Father.

7- Once we have gone *in that manner* the results belong to God. We may be rebuffed on the surface, or we may be welcomed with open arms.

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We cannot control the response of the one offended, but we can control our attitude as we go. So the process is this:

Every one of us will find our ability to have freedom in our relationship with the Father continually hindered *to whatever degree there are conflicts with others still unresolved in our lives.*

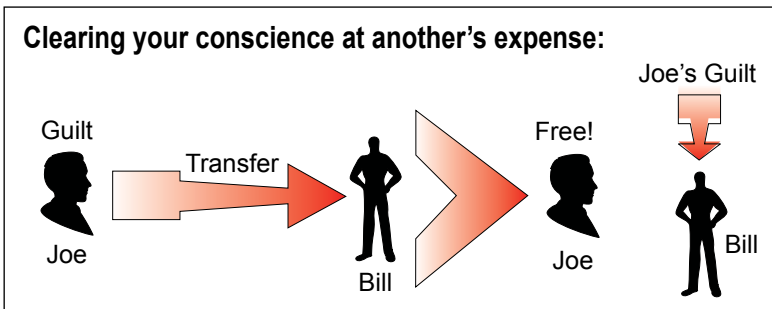
Therefore, when we pray, as God calls to mind those who are offended because of us, we are to seek reconciliation. Now we have the means, the method, and the manner. All we need now is the process. Therefore, we ask the usual questions; who? when? why? how? and then what? Let's quickly summarize, looking for answers:

a- We ask who? We are to go to *every person* God calls to our attention, provided that we think that person might have something against us. If WE have something against *them*, unless it qualifies for the full gamut of Matthew 18 and eventual church discipline, we give that to God and leave it with Him. The issue here is *anyone* who has *anything* that *they* are holding against *us*. In the case of Jim, in our opening illustration, it was his ex-boss and his in-laws. Some of you may already know that God is dealing with you about someone in particular.

b- We ask when? You go immediately. Not when you finish praying, immediately. Not next month, immediately.

You make haste, Beloved, is what the word means; you move as you would move if someone somewhere were dying, and you had the cure...for they are, and you do!

c- We ask why? To be reconciled with them, that's why! Not to clear your conscience...I said *not* to clear your conscience. Look at the difference:

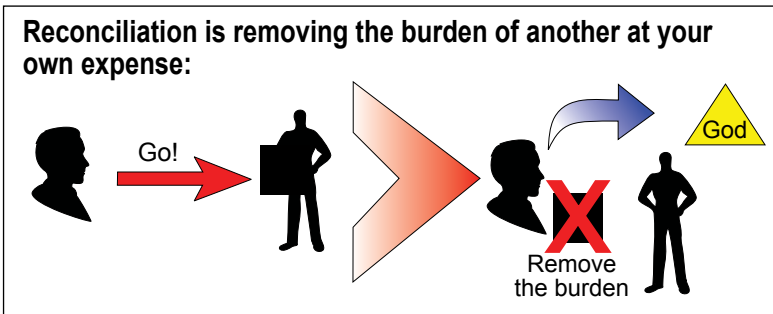


One seeking to clear his conscience goes to another to seek

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forgiveness in order to *ease his own personal burden*. That was not Jesus' attitude nor should it be ours. If you need to clear your conscience, and the going will not effect a reconciliation, or perhaps the other person is even unaware of the offense, give it to God, Beloved. Don't transfer the burden to someone else, clearing *your* conscience at *their* expense.

I can never forget the incident of an individual who went to his pastor and asked his pastor's forgiveness in order to clear his own conscience. He said "Pastor, I never have trusted you; and I'm sorry, please forgive me." Now the pastor never knew that, and the pastor didn't need to know that. Now every time the pastor sees this fellow he wonders "Why didn't he trust me? Does he trust me now?" What was accomplished? He dumped his burden on the minister. He cleared his conscience at another's expense. On the other hand, reconciliation is like this:



You go to *remove* a burden that another is carrying, and take it away from him *at your expense*. If God clears *your* conscience in the process, that is grace. But your objective is reconciliation. Nowhere does Jesus say go to your brother and clear your conscience, and then come and offer your gift.

d- We ask how? You go! That's what Jesus said to do. If you can't go in person, then you phone; if you can't phone, then you write; if the person is dead or unreachable you give it God and forget it. But the order is to *go*. So the first thing you attempt to do is to find that person and seek to be reconciled.

e- Finally, we ask, then what? Then go and offer your gift. Don't dwell on either the problem or the response, whether it was good or bad. Immediately go to the Father and worship.

You went because there was a barrier between you and

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someone else that was hindering your fellowship with God. Now the barrier is gone...go worship. Go back to the altar immediately.

One last thing...the matter of restitution. If you have taken something from someone and you are seeking their forgiveness, you have no right to do so until you not only seek reconciliation, but make restitution, and thus effect a restoration. The next few verses in Matthew, along with several of the parables, illustrate that. Here's a practical example:

Let's say for simplicity's sake that you stole \$10 from your employer a year ago. Here are three ways you can handle the matter.

1- You can just seek reconciliation. You can say, "Bob, I stole \$10 from you. Please forgive me." What you are implying is this: "I have a guilty conscience, Bob, please help me clear it." In effect you are saying, "I've got your ten dollars, now give me your blessing."

2- You not only seek reconciliation, you can offer restitution, too. You can say, "Bob, I stole \$10 from you a year ago. Please forgive me. Here's your ten dollars back." Now that's better, but the inference is that you are working off your debt, and here's his payment. Or

3- You can go one step further. You can seek reconciliation by making restitution in such a way that you are effecting restoration. You may say "Bob, a year ago I took \$10 from you. I have sinned against God and I have sinned against you. I would like to pay you back your ten dollars now with interest. Here's eleven dollars. Will you forgive me?" (and wait for a response).

You see, now the inference is that God has convinced me that my attitude was grievously wrong. I had no right to do what I did. I wish to humble myself before you, repay you as best I can and seek your forgiveness, not demanding it, not even expecting it, simply requesting it.

Do you see the difference? You have laid aside your reputation, humbled yourself, assumed the role of a servant and done it God's way, regardless of the consequences. That is the will of God. Therefore, whatever happens from that point on is God's responsibility. You go back to the altar and offer your gift which, incidentally, according to Romans 12, is to offer your whole being as a living sacrifice. That, Paul says, is the reasonable thing to do.

First Be Reconciled

I do not know if God is speaking to you through this lesson or not. I only know that there are, no doubt, some who will acknowledge that your prayer lives and your interpersonal relationships are not right, and it may well be because someone has something against you.

Jesus has given us a clear set of guidelines. He always does. When God brings their names to your remembrance, do the following:

1- Get up immediately and go to that person.

2- Go uncondemningly (assuming it's *your* fault).

3- Go humbly, in the mind-set of a slave seeking to be reconciled to his master.

4- Lay aside your own reputation. You have none. It's God's reputation that's at stake. The fact that you may be humiliated is incidental. It will be nothing compared to Calvary.

5- Do not go seeking to clear *your* conscience; that's not the issue, the issue is reconciliation, a bringing back together two hearts at the expense of the supernatural attitude of the one who is seeking to be forgiven.

6- Then go back immediately and worship God. The results are not yours. The responsibility to go is yours. The responsibility for the results are God's. Go back immediately and worship Him.

Once you have been reconciled God's way, there is a whole new world of spiritual blessings waiting to be claimed. There is a whole new world of peace waiting to be experienced. There is a whole new world of ministering just waiting to take place. So, how would you like to start over? God says, "Here's what I want you to do—*first be reconciled to your brother!*"

First Be Reconciled

For Further Study and Application

A design for reconciliation from Matthew 5:24.

1- Agree to go away and spend at least an hour alone with God in prayer.

2- At the outset, ask God to bring to your mind the names of any and every person who has an offense against you that needs to be reconciled.

3- Write them down.

4- Get up immediately and try to contact the person involved, either in person, by phone, or by letter.

5- As you go, ask God to cleanse you of a condemning spirit. Be willing to assume that you are the one at fault, regardless of what might have happened in the past or how wrong that person might be about you.

6- Be willing to lay aside your reputation and concern yourself with God's reputation.

7- Do not go in an atmosphere of spirituality, but clothed spiritually in the robes of a slave, seeking to regain the heart of his master.

8- Remember: the issue is not a clear conscience. The issue is reconciliation.

9- If restitution is in order, humble yourself and either pay or make arrangements to pay what you owe with interest.

10- When you have finished, go immediately back before God in prayer, and worship and praise Him, leaving all the results to Him. "To God be the Glory!"

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