

[We are indebted to Pastors Rick Warren and John Baker for the many insights in this sermon.]

Repairing Relationships – The Relationship Choice

I evaluate all my relationships, offer forgiveness to those who have harmed me, and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others.

Matthew 5:7,9

7 Blessed are the **merciful**,
for they will be shown
mercy.

9 Blessed are the
peacemakers,
for they will be called
children of God.

The merciful – about forgiving those who have hurt us.

Peacemakers – about asking forgiveness and making amends with those we have hurt.

Three Reasons to Forgive

1. God has forgiven you.

*Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, **the Lord forgave you**, so you must forgive others. Colossians 3:13LB*

You will never have to forgive anybody else **more** than God has already forgiven you.

2. Resentment doesn't work.

To worry yourself to death with resentment would be foolish, senseless thing to do. (Job 5:2 GNT) You are only hurting yourself with your anger. (Job 18:4 GNT)

*Some people stay healthy
till the day they die ...
Others have no happiness
at all; they live and die
with bitter hearts. (Job
21:23-25 GNT)*

Hanging onto anger, bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness only hurts you.
You need to forgive for your own good.

3. I will need forgiveness in the future.

“When you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.”
Mark 11:25 NLT

You need to forgive other people because you're going to need God's forgiveness in the future and you don't want to burn the bridge you've got to walk across.

God's rule is that you forgive. He forgives us. We forgive others. That's the deal.

Three Steps to Forgiveness

1. I reveal my hurt.

You can't get over the hurt until you **admit** the pain.

Don't suppress it or repress it. Go ahead and admit it.

2.1 release the offender.

Don't wait for them to ask for forgiveness because they might never ask.
Remember, you are doing this **for your sake**, not for theirs.

“How often should I forgive someone who sins against me?” ... “Not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven!” (Matthew 18:21-22 NLT)

Forgiveness is **ongoing**. You release them every time they come to your mind.

You'll know you have released them when you can think about them and it doesn't hurt anymore ... when you can pray for God's blessing on their life. This may take years, depending on how deep the hurt is. **Forgiving them does not mean you allow them to keep hurting you. It doesn't mean that you go back into an abusive or dangerous situation.** But it does mean that you **release** those who have hurt you so you can be healed.

3. I replace my
hurt with God's
peace.

*Let the peace of Christ
rule in your hearts.
Colossians 3:15 NIV*

When you let go of a hurt, you make room for God's peace.

*Do not repay anyone evil for evil.
Be careful to **do what is right** in
the eyes of everybody. If it is
possible, as far as it depends on
you, **live at peace** with everyone.
Do not take revenge, my friends,
but leave room for God's wrath, for
it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I
will repay," says the Lord.
Romans 12:17-19 NIV*

This doesn't mean that you are a people pleaser. It means you must do what is honorable, right, honest and above criticism.

How to Make Amends

1. Make a list of the people I have harmed and what I did to them.

Do I owe a debt to anyone? Have I broken a promise to anyone? Am I guilty of over-controlling or being over-possessive of someone? Have I been verbally, physically, or emotionally abusive to anyone? Have I been unfaithful to anyone? Have I lied to someone?

2. Think how I
would like
someone to
make amends
to me.

*“Do to others as
you would like
them to do to
you.”*

Luke 6:31 NLT

Some help with how to ask forgiveness is on the back of your notes.

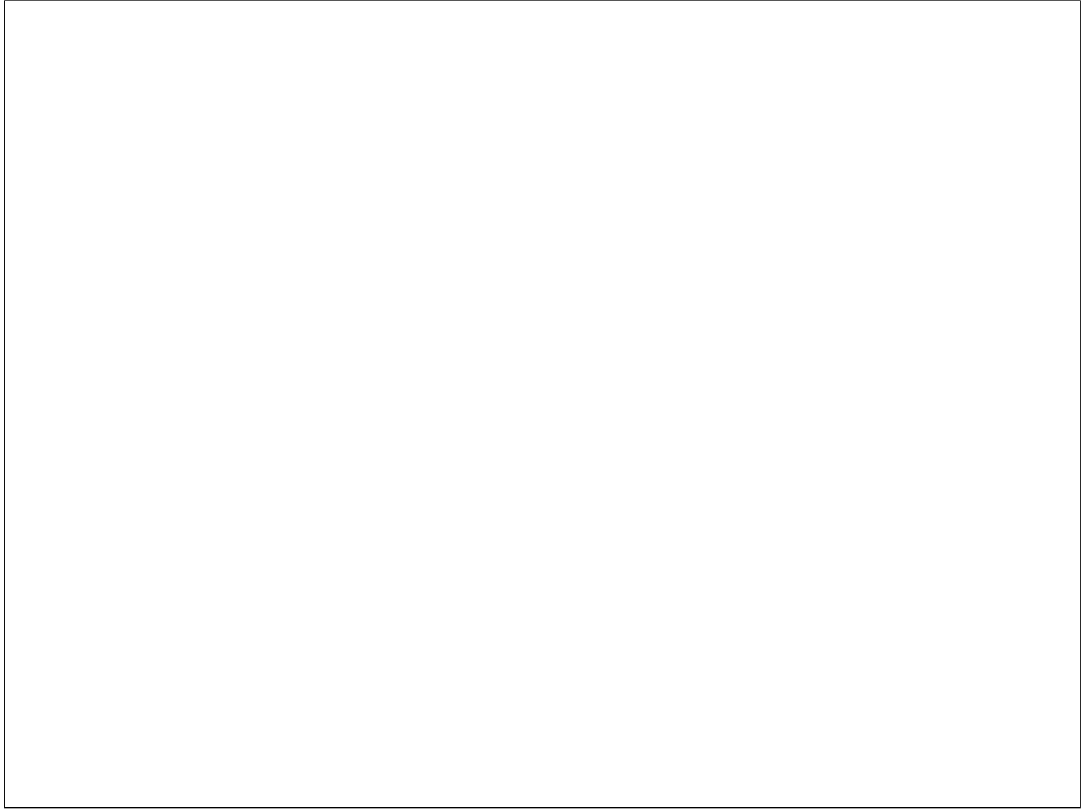
3. Refocus my life on doing God's will in my relationships, starting now.

Put your heart right ... Reach out to God ... Then face the world again, firm and courageous. Then all your troubles will fade from your memory, like floods that are past and remembered no more. Job 11:13, 15-16 TEV

You need to plug into Jesus Christ. Not only will he give you the strength to forgive others, he will also give you the wisdom, humility, and courage to face your past and make amends where you can.

1 Corinthian 11:27-29

27Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. 29For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.



How to ask forgiveness

Do it at the right time.

There is a right time and a right way to do
everything ... Ecclesiastes 8:6 TEV

Do it with the right attitude.

Speak the truth in love. Ephesians 4:15
NLT

Do it without expectations.

Focus only on your part and don't expect anything back from the person you're trying to make amends to.

Do it in an appropriate way.

Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can heal. Proverbs 12:18 TEV

Think about what you'll say and how you'll say it. Ask yourself if making amends will do more harm than good. Be sure to consider any possible collateral damage.

Make restitution wherever possible.

If you've taken something, return it. If you owe somebody money, pay it back. There may be some things that you cannot restore, but don't underestimate the power of a sincere apology.