

Introduction to Biblical Counseling

Biblical Pattern for Reconciliation

Introduction

A. God's ultimate goal for all believers is that they would live together at all levels in oneness of spirit, attitude and thinking.

1. Jesus prayed to His Father asking that His people would reflect truth and reality in oneness.
 - a. John 17:21, "(I pray) that they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me, and I, in You; that they also may be one in Us that the world may believe that You sent Me."
2. The Apostle Paul emphasizes this same desire.
 - a. Phil. 1:27, "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."
 - b. Phil. 2:2, "fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind."

B. God also knows that sin, offenses, hurts in relationships in separation or distancing relationships

1. Solomon stated this reality in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way *that seems* right to a man, but its end *is* the way of death."
 - a. When he uses the word, "death" he can be referring to:
 - 1) Separation of the body from Spirit, physical death.
 - 2) Separation from God, spiritual death.
 - 3) Separation from mates in relational death or divorce (i.e., physical emotional affairs) wrong priorities, selfishness, pornography.

C. But God has established a way to rebuild human relations that reflect what we must do to restore our fellowship with God when we willfully sin.

D. Reconciliation (reconnecting) is viewed in the New Testament in two different ways.

1. We are (can be) reconciled (katullassō) to God because of His Son's death on the cross.
 - a. Romans 5:10-11, "For if when we were enemies (toward God) we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." (us to God, not God to us)
 - 1) The unregenerate human mind views God as an enemy and therefore we need to be reconciled (change our attitude) toward God, not Him toward us.
 - a) Col. 1:21,22 "And you, who once were alienated (separated) and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled. ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight."
 - 2) God invites us to be reconciled to Him (change our attitude towards God) and accept the provision He has made so that our sins can be forgiven and we become justified in His sight in Christ.
 - a) The word, *reconcile*, means "to change or exchange" (especially of money) thus of people, to change or exchange our attitudes from enmity toward God to friendship with God.
 - b) 2 Cor. 5: 18-20, "Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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."
2. We are commanded to be reconciled to someone we have offended (husbands, wives, adult children, parents, siblings, fellow Christians).
 - a. Matthew 5:23, 24, "Therefore if you bring your (sacrificial) gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your (sacrificial) gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Relationships are to supersede religious service.

- 1) The one making the sacrifice is the offender.
- b. This is the only use of the Greek word, *diallasso*, in the New Testament. It refers to a mutual concession because there has been mutual hostility (“*dia*” two between two).
 - 1) One may have to confess a wrong and the other will have to forgive.
 - c. “Be reconciled” is a command, not advice; get reconciled!
 - d. The Greek tense of the word, *reconcile* also implies you are “to take the initiative” – go and be reconciled.
3. The major question is, “How to you reconcile?” The Matthew 5 passage does not give specifics; however, now we have all of the New Testament books to help fill in the practical aspects one must take to bring about mutual reconciliation.
4. What are at least four aspects of reconciliation?
 - a. Recognize your sin and confess your sin.
 - b. Repent by changing your thinking and then, change negative, selfish patterns of behavior.
 - c. Rebuild trust that you have destroyed because of your sin.
 - d. Reconcile on the basis of healing from the hurts caused by your sin.

Confess the Sin

- I. **Recognize and take ownership of all your sin and failures (and confess it as sin, with no buts).**
 - A. **Restoration with others must mirror how we restored fellowship with God when we sin. God’s love is unconditional (John 3:16) but our fellowship with Him is conditional (Eph. 4:30; I John 2:7).**
 1. Our relationship and fellowship with God must be based on truth and reality.
 - a. Jn 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.
 - b. I Jn. 1:7, “But if we (believers) walk (live) in the light (truth) as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another (i.e., God and us).

- 1) The pronoun, “we” refers to “God” and us. In application it can be so with fellow believers.
2. Our human relationships with others must function like our relationship with God. It must be based on grace and truth (reality, John 1:14).
 - a. Failure to mirror our human relationships with others like it is with God is self deceptive (we deceive ourselves). i.e., lie to ourselves. Sadly, many relationships are lie-based. They are existing, not relating.
 - 1) I Jn. 1:8, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”
 - 2) Mark 7:6,7, “He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honors Me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from Me. ⁷ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”
 - b. Self-deception leads to dysfunctional (“dys” prefix means bad, thus abnormal, broken, difficult, incomplete) relationships.
 - c. Self-deceived persons function in life like they have a relationship with God or each other but indeed they do not.
 - 1) I John 1:6, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”
 - 2) If we say we have a good relationship with each other while living in darkness (selfish sin), our relationship is a lie.
3. Jesus wants you to have a better quality of life based on truth and reality.
 - a. John 10:10b, “...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.”

B. Restoration to fellowship with God begins by confessing your sin, not just spending more time with God, reading, or listening to Christian music, etc.

1. Confession means that you say the same thing about your sin as a holy God would say.
 - a. The Greek word, confession, means “to say the same thing,” to agree.
 - 1) ill. “I was wrong for ...” (be specific, name it) not, “I was wrong for what I did.” What did you do?

- 2) It also does not mean to say, "I'm sorry." "I regret doing ...," "I apologize for..."
 - a) Saying either you're "sorry" or that you "regret" your actions, is not an acknowledgment of a moral wrong. You can be sorry for the consequences, not the offense. You can be sorry for how they feel but that is not confession of sin.
 - b) Sorry is an acknowledgment of an emotion, not a sin.
 - c) One can confess by saying, "I was wrong for" followed by "I'm deeply sorry, I regret what I've done." That would be appropriate.
 - (1) Or, "I have sinned by..."
 - d) "Whenever someone wants to give his thoughts and life a new direction, it always involves a judgment (call) on his previous view (perspective) and behavior."

2. Sadness, tears, regret, sorrow, guilt, remorse and despair are not the same as confession. // In fact, they can be efforts to avoid confession.
 - a. These are emotional responses to our sin and can lead to confession. These are good emotions IF they are accompanied by honest confession... "I was wrong."
 - b. Yet none of these emotions are mentioned in the clear command of I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins"
 - c. Judas experienced regret, despair and remorse for his betrayal of Jesus and even acknowledged to the priest (not God) he had betrayed innocent blood and returned the "blood money," in an attempt to undo his sin, yet he had no relief, (he did not find the way to genuine repentance) and left the presence of the priest and hung himself (Matt. 27:3-5), to relieve himself from emotional pain.

3. Not one of these human emotions (sorrow, guilt) is a biblical substitute for confession.
 - a. True, King David later acknowledged God wanted a "broken and contrite heart" (Psalm 51:17), yet this observation came after he acknowledged his sin (Psalm 51:3,4). (vs 4 "Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight.")

4. Confession of sin actually brings glory to God.

- a. Joshua 7:19, "Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me."
5. The offender who is seeking reconciliation must clearly state what he wants to be forgiven for (i.e., specific sin).
 - a. The Apostle John clearly states, "If we confess our sins," plural.
 - b. A general confession can cover up specific sins and continue a denial of the sinfulness of the hurtful behavioral pattern. That is the reason specific sin must be confessed specifically (Joshua 7:19-21).
 - 1) (Wrong pattern) General confession: "I acknowledge I did a lot of things that were wrong..."
 - a) No specific sin is confessed, instead, it's been generalized.
 - 2) (Clear pattern) "I was wrong for lying."
 - c. Specific details of the sin may not be necessary or proper.
 - 1) In the case of adultery, one has to acknowledge the questions of who, when, where and how long but never the "how-we-had-sex" question.
 - 2) Scripture names these sins but does not describe them (Eph 5:3,4).
 - d. Start by making a list of your specific sins and ask God's Holy Spirit to reveal the words, actions and attitudes that were wrong and make a list of people you offended.
 - e. It may help you to ask God to let you see what He sees and to feel what He and the offended person feels because of your sin.
 6. Specifically naming (confessing) the sin ("I was wrong for...") greatly reduces the possibility of the reoccurrence of the sinful pattern later. Why?
 - a. Specific confession sets up a small, mental road block, speed bump before you when the temptation to sin reoccurs. It probably will not stop it completely but it will greatly slow it down.
 7. The offended one is under biblical obligation to forgive an offender for his specific sins whether the offender confesses them or not.
 - a. Granting forgiveness is primarily for the benefit of the offended one and not for the offender.

- 1) Jesus forgave the Roman guards even though they did not acknowledge their sin (Luke 23:34).
 - 2) Steven forgave those who were killing him even though they did not acknowledge their sin (Acts 7:60).
 - 3) The Apostle Paul forgave Alexander the coppersmith even though he failed to acknowledge his sin (Acts 4:14).
- b. The forgiving person can be released from his anger and bitterness that may have resulted from being offended.
- 1) Sending the offender and his offense over to the Lord Jesus frees you and leaves the biblical concept of revenge to God (Rom. 12:19).
 - a) The word “forgive” in the Greek originally meant “to send away.” In the second century it began to mean release.
 - b) We send sin to Jesus and it gets nailed (retrospectfully) to His cross (Col. 2:14).
8. Forgiveness does **NOT** automatically restore relationships but it is a significant step in that direction.
- a. Granting and receiving forgiveness handles the legal or judicial part of the offense. It is the first step toward reconciliation but not the last step.
 - b. Forgiveness and trust are two SEPARATE issues. Rebuilding trust must always start with confession and forgiveness.
- C. You can have a positional relationship with God (i.e., child of God) and not have a fellowship relationship with God. //Sin and the results of sin prevent that fellowship.**
1. The Apostle John made this very clear.
 - a. 1 John 1:5-8, “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. “

2. You cannot claim to have a fellowship relationship with God and continue in an unrepentant, sinful pattern. You are lying to yourself if you think you can (I Jn. 1:6).
3. With God, religious activity and sacrifice are not a substitute for an honest, loving relationship with the Father or with others.
 - a. I Cor. 13:1-3, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ² And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing."
4. King Saul tried to use religious activity as a substitute for obedience.
 - a. I Sam. 15:22, "So Samuel said: "Has the Lord *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to heed than the fat of rams."
5. Again, King David had to admit he just could not offer tons of sacrifice to cover his sin with Bathsheba.
 - a. Psalm 51:16, 17, "For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give *it*; You do not delight in burnt offering. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart-- These, O God, You will not despise."
 - b. Psalm 51 is basically a whole chapter on David's confession.
6. The Old Testament priests could not figure out why God was not accepting their sacrifices until He reminded them of their abusive behavior toward their wives (Malachi 2:13-16).

D. It is very important to distinguish between the position you have with God or with your mate and the quality of relationship (fellowship) you have with either.

1. A couple can work hard at their jobs and home responsibilities and fail to have a fellowship relationship with each other because of mutual hurts that have not been healed biblically or continue to happen expecting something to change magically.
2. A couple can be legally married (position) but not have a quality relationship (fellowship) with each other.

3. Many in legal relationships have no healthy interpersonal relationships. They just co-exist, function, perform duties, become roommates, but the deep feelings of love are virtually gone.
 - a. This can happen in our relationship with God.
 - 1) Rev. 2:2-5, The Ephesian believers left off expressing their love for Him like they did at the beginning of their relationship with Him.
4. Position and quality of relationship are two separate things.
 - a. Sinful, offensive behaviors and attitudes are the biggest relationship killers. And of the two, attitudes are the biggest offenders because they come from the heart.
 - 1) Prov. 23:7, “For as he thinks in his heart, so *is* he....”
 - 2) Matt.15: 7 “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you saying: “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”

E. Failure to recognize and take personal responsibility for your sin now can be an automatic indicator that the sinful pattern will probably continue to be repeated in time, sooner or later. //This is the biggest fear of the offended one. But, as mentioned, specific confession sets up a small, mental road block like a speed bump before you when the temptation to sin reoccurs. True, it probably will not stop it completely but it will greatly slow it down.

1. Reconciliation that avoids this step (specific confession, “I was wrong for.....”) almost always fails to succeed over time.
 - a. In physically or emotionally abusive cases, the abused spouse may leave their abuser up to six or seven times before they stop deceiving themselves about the abuser’s alleged “change” (tears, remorse, regret, bribing). That’s performance of actions, not a change of heart.
2. Physically returning to the relationship does not necessarily mean that biblical reconciliation has taken place. It means other issues have entered in.
 - a. Loneliness, fear of being alone, alleged welfare of the children, financial fears are common reasons physical restoration takes place while ignoring the pattern of hurtful behaviors and insisting they be confessed and stopped.

- b. Denial, overlooking, forgetting or ignoring is not the basis for biblical restoration. Why?
 - 1) We cannot do this with God. Again, our relationship with others must mirror our relationship with God. We cannot overlook what we have done and move on. God and people are still at the point where and when the offense occurred.
- 3. If one fails to call his sin, "sin", he may believe in his heart (core beliefs) his actions were not sin and were even justified because of some alleged action of his mate. Or, he may just feel entitled to do it just because he can.
 - a. Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way *that seems* right to a man, but its end *is* the way of death" (spiritual, physical, relational separation).
 - b. All sin is justified or rationalized in the heart (mind) first as Adam and Eve did (Gen. 3:6). Offenders felt they were entitled to do what they did as rationalized by King Saul failing to kill King Agag as God had instructed (I Samuel 15:1-23).
- 4. The sin, justification, rationalization and entitlement for the sin must be acknowledged and confessed as sin!
 - a. 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - b. "I was wrong for lying, yelling, criticizing, gossiping, etc."

F. One of the biggest hindrances that prevent confession of sin stating, "I was wrong" is pride and feelings of shame. //Again, our human relationships must mirror our relationship with God.

- 1. God resists (a relationship with) the proud but gives grace (special favor) to the humble.
 - a. I Peter 5:5, "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*"
- 2. Humility before God results in exaltation (honor, respect) to a special relationship with Him.
 - a. I Peter 5:6, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,"

3. Humbling oneself by acknowledging and confessing one's sin (hurtful behaviors) greatly increases the probability the offended person will forgive and draw close to you for a relationship.

G. Relationship rebuilders who skip specific confession may prematurely reconcile and magically think the past sinful hurtful patterns will not reoccur again. //The truth is they will probably re-establish their dysfunctional (sin-functional) patterns and the past hurts will only resurface in time, often in a more hurtful way.

1. Temporary changed behavior without a core belief (heart) change is almost a guarantee one will return to old hurtful patterns in time because they feel they can or are entitled to do so.
 - a. Respectful behavior that comes from a heart that still harbors disrespect will in time return to disrespectful behaviors.
 - b. Proverbs 23:7, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."
2. A shortcut here in reconciliation (i.e. confession only) can be a setup for a painful relational failure later.
 - a. It is better to cry now (and do the hard work) and rejoice later than to "rejoice" now (premature reconciliation) and cry later and longer.
 - b. Usually at that point (reoccurrence) there is less energy to work on the relationship now and the relationship that could have been saved is dissolved.
3. Offenders may even use scripture to manipulate the one they have hurt to get them to restore a relationship and skip the scriptural way to restore. This is referred to as spiritual abuse.
 - a. The offender may say "God hates divorce" when in reality the offended mate is only seeking a temporary separation for the purpose of reconciliation. The offender equates the two in order to stop the separation.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, "Now to the married I command, *yet* not I but the Lord: a wife is not to depart from *her* husband. ¹¹ But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife."
 - 2) Separation and divorce are two separate issues.

H. Those who have been hurtful in the relationship may press for an early reconciliation after confession. //They fail to understand (denial) that there

are consequences to their behavior, but they do not want to acknowledge or experience those consequences and losses. They are still thinking about themselves (self-centered, narcissistic).

1. One of those consequences is that the offended person may need:
 - a. Time to heal. The offended, not the offender, is to determine this time table.
 - b. Time to see if there was a real change of heart and behavior in the offender.
 - c. Time to see if the offender is still acting in a selfish pattern by wanting his way now (selfish).
 - d. Time to see if he is ignoring (minimizing) the deep damage he may have caused.
2. Those who are quick to confess their wrong behavior and quick to press for physical restoration rarely do so for the benefit of the offended one.
 - a. The offender may just miss the benefits they have temporarily lost because of their sin but they are not genuinely repentant for what they did to lose them (consequences).
 - 1) The sexual intimacy may have to be suspended for a time as a consequence of the sin (adultery, emotional or actual). This is not punishment. It is time out to heal.
 - b. The offender may have a fear of being alone or have been in a relationally addictive relationship so they press for physical restoration quickly.

Repent by Changing the Mind and Behavior

II. Repent and change direction from your past sinful patterns (change thinking first, actions second).

- A. The Apostle John in writing to the church of Ephesus in the first century may have given a prescription needed for the church to re-establish their love relationship with God and for mates to re-establish their relationships with each other. They had stopped loving God and had substituted religious activity (just functioning) for a relationship with the Heavenly Father.

Revelation 2:1-6, "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ² I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; ³ and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. ⁴ Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent. ⁶ But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.'"

1. Believers were active in their church (2:3, 6).
 - a. Human relationships were replaced by work, kids, school, home, church, sports, classes, clubs and social activities but were void of love.
2. They failed to understand that God wanted a relationship with them personally, not a lot of activities that masked empty relationships.
 - a. People can fill their time with good activities and be devoid of any deep, meaningful relationships.
3. God confronted their failure to love Him: They exchanged a deep, caring relationship based on love for a flurry of activities that were to substitute for love. "You left (expressing) your first (priority) love (4b).
4. Believers were adopted into His family (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:15) to have a love based relationship with Him, not just to work for Him. Service is an outgrowth of love, not a substitute for love.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 5:14a, "For the love of Christ compels us ..."
 - b. John 3:16a, "God so loved the world that He gave ..."
5. The primary purpose people are put together is for relationship first, second and third is to experience mutual love.
 - a. John 13:35, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
 - b. John 15:12, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."
 - c. 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."

6. Many breakups are not just because of a failure to function well but for a failure to relate well in a mutually fulfilling relationship (mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically).
7. Activities and things can mask an empty relationship which in marriage can be a set up for loneliness and affairs (emotional or physical).

B. God gave the Ephesian church a three step repentance plan that could restore a love based relationship with Him. He gave them one warning if they failed to repent.

Step One of Repentance
“Remember”

1. “Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen” (Rev. 2:5a).
 - a. Most formerly good relationships began on a good footing (true, there are exceptions where it never was on good footing).
 - b. Most formerly good relationships deteriorated when loving attitudes and affections diminished and one is merely now doing the right thing because of duty and is not motivated from a heart of love.
 - c. This results in hurtful actions, words and thoughts that further results in withdrawal, distancing, avoidance, criticism which then could result in separation, divorce and alienating friendships.
 - d. The Apostle John describes the direction the relationship goes when love-based attitudes, communication and behaviors cease – down (“fallen”).
 - 1) When you stop holding a pencil in your hand, it falls down.
 - 2) If you stop demonstrating love based words, attitudes and behaviors, this usually results in a downward fall to destruction of the relationship.
 - e. Any relationship functioning on auto pilot will eventually deteriorate for lack of personal attention and maintenance.
 - 1) Men tend to think when they said, “I do” they meant, “I’m done” courting and pursuing.

- 2) One psychiatrist said, “A common and traditionally masculine martial problem is created by the husband who, once he is married, devotes all his energies to climbing mountains and none to tending to marriage, or base camp, expecting it to be there in perfect order whenever he chooses to return to it for rest and recreation without assuming any responsibility for its maintenance.” (Peck, Road, p. 167.)
- f. So the first step in repentance is to honestly review what the good, healthy ways of relating were when your love or friendship was the strongest.

Step Two of Repentance

“Repent”

2. Step two is repent from those hurtful patterns.
- a. Repentance begins with acknowledging where you were wrong and confess it as sin. Identify what good things you are failing to do now and what hurtful ways of communicating, thinking and acting that has replaced the good things.
- 1) You cannot change what you do not first believe is wrong. You can fake a change outwardly while believing in your mind your words, thoughts and behaviors were not wrong. This type of behavior change is only temporary and is guaranteed to deepen your own anger and bitterness that you have to “act” in a way you really do not believe is right because you really think in your heart you are right or entitled to have done what you did (Prov. 23:7).
- a) Solomon described it this way, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is way of death” (Prov.14:12). Death means separation and one of the forms of separation is divorce.
- 2) Failure to acknowledge your wrong behavior and call it wrong will prevent you from knowing what you need to change through repentance.
- 3) God’s word is the absolute standard of right and wrong, not what you think or others think. Behavior must be judged by His Word and not the opinions of others, however well-meaning they are. One has to ask himself if what he is doing, thinking and communicating matches the absolute standard defined in Scripture. If not, it must change through repentance.

- a) 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,"
 - b) Psalms 119:11, "Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You."
 - c) Psalms 119:7, "I will praise You with uprightness of heart when I learn Your righteous judgments."
- b. In repentance there is a complete reversal (like a "U" turn in your car) of your thinking (beliefs, entitlements) first and then, the reversal of your actions based on that new thinking (Prov. 23:7).
- c. Repentance does not start with actions. It starts by reversing your thinking (Rom. 12:2). Why?
- 1) If you change your actions and not your thinking, in time you will return to those previous actions because you really don't think they are wrong or you will become bitter because you feel you have to "perform" in order to get what you want but you still want to do it.
 - a) Prov. 23:7, "For as he thinks in his heart, so *is* he..."
 - b) Matthew 15:18-19, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."
 - 2) Before you turn your car around, you must first conclude mentally you are going in the wrong direction. Remember the way (direction) seemed right but then you later discovered in your mind it was wrong; then, you put an action in place to reverse directions.
 - a) Prov. 16:25, "There is a way *that seems* right to a man, but its end *is* the way of death."
 - 3) If there was tolerating, stonewalling, shutting down or withdrawing, you must admit it is wrong in your heart and then choose to engage in communicating, listening and responding appropriately.
 - a) James 1:19, " So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;"
 - 4) If there was criticism, then admit to yourself that is wrong, then choose to stop and replace it with appropriate verbal affirming, praise, especially words that are full of grace to meet the other person's need of the moment.

- a) Eph. 4:29, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”
 - b) Proverbs 16:24, “Pleasant words *are like* a honeycomb, Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.”
- 5) If there was demonstration of contempt (disrespect, arrogance, condescending) admit it, too, is wrong and replace it with respect, cherishing, admiration and honoring.
- a) Rom. 12:10, “*Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;”
 - b) 1 Peter 3:7, “Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”
- 6) If there was defensiveness designed to protect your pride, admit it is wrong and replace it with humble admission when wrong or a willingness to clarify an issue if and when the other party is open to receive it.
- a) One way to open the offended one’s mind is to state, “I would be open to share with you why I did what I did if and when it would work for you.”
 - b) Asking permission to share opens the door of the other person’s mind. Making a statement (defending) without permission is usually met with a closed mind.
- 7) If there was a legitimate reason for the action, ask for permission before you share it.
- 8) These are just four negative directions (tolerating, criticism, contempt, defensiveness) which, if present in frequency, will predict a divorce with 95% accuracy.
- d. Remember the church at Thessalonica was praised by the Apostle Paul for their repentance at salvation, “...How you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (I Thes 1:9b; CF Eph. 4:20-24; Rom. 6). Step two is to repent or change first your thinking, then, your actions that match your changed thinking.

Step Three of Repentance

“Re-do”

3. Now, redo the positive things you did when you first began the relationship. “Do the first works” (Rev. 2:5).
 - a. Some can’t do this because the relationship has always been difficult (bad).
 - 1) They may have started off in a deep sense of codependence which may have developed based on fear resulting in an “I-don’t-like-you-but-I-need-you” relationship (relational addiction).
 - 2) Mutual pain or fantasies may have brought you together or you felt a need to fix or rescue the other party.
 - 3) None of this is love. It’s dysfunctional, a relational “sickness.”
 - 4) Yet, allowing Christ to become the center of your life now instead of another human being, can give you biblical caring skills out of His Word that are based on love, not fear (being alone, abandoned, helpless, failure). This dependency may have been learned from your family of origin. If so, they need to be acknowledged, renounced and put away.
 - a) I Cor. 13:11, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”
 - b. Most relationships were initially based on good character qualities, attitudes, actions and forms of communication that were encouraging. They lifted each other up, by affirming, honoring, cherishing, trusting and sacrificing... that made each other feel good.
 - c. As God wants us to return to a relationship based on love (I Cor. 13) with Him, not just functioning, we are to return and redo those things that rebuild what has been lost in our human relationships.
 - d. Re-doing must be a life-long commitment that will need to be worked out daily. Relationships are work!
 - 1) Philippians 2:12-13, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.”

- a) This is to be a permanent change, not a temporary change.
- e. Selfish relational laziness will ultimately return to dysfunctional, destructive habits.
 - 1) Again, if you stop holding the pencil in your hand and relax, the pencil falls just like the quality of your relationships when you stop working on it.

Step Four of Repentance

“Warning”

- 4. Step four is to keep in back of your mind, the reality that failure, pain, rejection, loss and possible loneliness are in store for you if you fail to follow through on the three above steps.
 - a. God warned the Ephesian church that they would cease to exist if they failed to do those three things. The church did continue into the 5th century and then both the church and city declined and the area has not been inhabited since the 14th century.
 - b. The lesson: Decline can come over time and will always result in the same thing – cease to exist.
 - 1) Galatians 6:7, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”
 - c. No healthy relationship can exist over time without it being nourished by all parties in the relationship daily.
 - 1) “If we walk in the light (truth, reality daily) as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another” (I Jn 1:7a). Technically speaking, the “one with another” refers to us and God.
 - 2) Hebrews 3:13, “but exhort one another daily, while it is called *“Today,”* lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Rebuilt Trust

III. Rebuild trust that you have destroyed because of your sin. (It takes time.)

A. Trust is the basis of all healthy relationships.

1. When relationships are first established a person begins to rely on the integrity and consistency of the other person to be who they really are.
 - a. Psalms 34:8, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord *is* good; blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!"
2. There is developed a hope upon which one can rely.
 - a. Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."
3. There is a responsibility imposed on the persons in the relationship that they will keep the other person's needs and boundaries paramount in their mind, therefore, they are safe and secure in the relationship.
 - a. Proverbs 31:11, "The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain."
4. One's care (physically, emotionally, spiritually) is entrusted to the person who has proven their integrity and trustworthiness. One can now commit with confidence. Their proven love has removed any fear this trust will be betrayed.
 - a. 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."

B. (But) Trust is the first casualty of a continued, hurtful conflict.

1. The integrity, safety, confidence and reliability that once was there has been betrayed over time or by one event such as in adultery.
2. The word that is now hung over all relational conflict is BETRAYAL.
 - a. The trust has been betrayed.
 - b. The confidence has been betrayed.
 - c. The integrity has been betrayed. (Prov. 20:7)
 - d. The expectations have been betrayed.
 - e. The reliability has been betrayed.
 - f. The responsibility has been betrayed.
 - g. The safety has been betrayed. Not safe.

- h. Loyalty has been betrayed.
 - i. Faithfulness has been betrayed.
3. The violation of trust is like a sword that is plunged into the innermost part of the heart. The trust is deeply wounded if not destroyed.
 4. The result of a deeply wounded heart is that a major change has happened in the wounded person's core belief system (heart). Results of these wounds are lack of trust, little confidence, questioned integrity, shattered expectations, unreliability, insecurity, disloyalty and faithlessness.
 5. This is the heart condition that is not healed, mended or restored with a simple confession of sin regardless how sincere. This is now a time issue.
 - a. Proverbs 18:19, "A brother offended *is harder to win* than a strong city, and contentions *are* like the bars of a castle."
 - 1) When a brother (friend, spouse, relative) is offended in a conflict, it may be as difficult to restore the relationship as it would be to conquer a heavily fortified city. The estranged relationship is like "barred gates;" they are hard to remove but are not impossible.
 6. How much time should it take? Only the offended one knows (days, months, years).

C. Confession of sin and repentance (change of thinking and acting) lays the foundation for this third step which is rebuilding trust that you have destroyed or greatly damaged.

1. Just as change will take time to be accomplished, so trust will take time to be rebuilt (restored) by one word, action or attitude at a time like bricks in a building.
2. Demanding physical reconciliation with a wounded, betrayed person can be an automatic set up for a relational disaster later.
 - a. Time does not heal all wounds but steps taken over time can.

D. Granting and receiving forgiveness may be the easy part of reconciliation. The wounded person must work toward forgiveness as soon as possible (Eph. 4:26). God requires it. But God does not require instant trust. Forgiveness and trust are separate issues.

1. Demanded trust without earning it only creates further distance in the wounded partner.

- a. It also creates pressure and stress and rekindles fear which results in further distancing, not reconciliation.
2. Demanding trust reflects the same selfish heart condition (core belief) that was present in the hurtful parts of the relationship.
- a. Beating the offended party up with selective scripture taken out of context is viewed by many as spiritual abuse.
 - 1) A verbally abusive husband may threaten his wife by stating, "The Bible does not give you grounds to separate from me except for adultery. You must be submitted to me."
 - a) Paul states that she can leave and remain single or separate and be reconciled.
 - (1) I Cor. 7:11, "But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife."
 - b) God never gave a husband the right to tell his wife to submit. That's God's responsibility. Plus, forced submission is called "lording it over a person" and that is forbidden for people in authority.
 - (1) I Pet. 5:3, "nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;"
 - c) Lording is the strategy of the Gentiles that was pagan idol worship in the first century.
 - (1) Mark 10:42, "But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them."
3. Reminding a mate of your change is a further indication you may be jumping through hoops of performance to get a response without making a genuine heart (thinking) change resulting in repentance.
- a. The offended one is looking at you the same way God does.
 - 1) (God to Samuel) 1 Samuel 16:7, "But the Lord said to Samuel (while selecting a king), "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord* does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

4. It is demeaning to an offended person for you to list your changes as if they are blind, ignorant or non-observant. Your focus is still self-centered.
5. Your task in rebuilding is to “let your light (life) so shine (display) before men that **they** may see your good works (good deeds, fruit of the Holy Spirit) and glorify your Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

E. It is in your circle of responsibility (Rom. 12:18) to confess, repent, rebuild trust and allow the Holy Spirit to use that to potentially restore the relationship.

1. Sadly, the Scripture indicates that at the end of this age, people will be irreconcilable (2 Tim. 3:2). Nevertheless, it is in our circle of responsibility to make the effort.
 - a. Matt. 5:23, 24, “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift (sacrifice) there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. “
 - b. Again, in this passage Matthew does not define how to do it, but we now have Scriptures that give us an indication as to what can be done.
 - c. 2 Peter 1:3, “as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,”

Rebuild the Relationship

IV. Reconcile on the basis of healing from hurts caused by the sin.

A. Honestly identify what has taken place in the conflict.

1. Truth is the first casualty in a conflict.
2. It is very important that all the aspects of the conflict (past, present) be identified and brought to the light of truth.
 - a. God only gives grace for the truth (John 1:17).
3. Reluctance to do this usually comes from a fear of:
 - a. Acknowledging a reality one does not want to face.
 - b. Experiencing an emotion one does not want to feel.
 - c. Assuming a responsibility one does not want to assume.

d. Admitting a motive one does not want to acknowledge.

B. Assign responsibility for all the parts of the conflict (Rom. 12:18).

1. Confession of sin
2. Repentance of sin.
3. Restore trust based on confession and repentance.
4. Seek personal healing for your own hurts that may have been experienced from your family of origin (mom, dad). Often present conflicts have an historical source that is influencing one's present actions and/or reactions.

C. Accept total ownership for each of these steps with a commitment to correct them.

1. Dr. William Glasser M.D. "Help people to make a commitment based on their value judgments of their own behavior. IF they do not keep their commitment, don't accept any excuse but ask when they plan to carry them through or do they want to forget the commitment" (to change). (Reality Therapy).

D. Fulfill what is in their circle of responsibility.

1. God does not bless the "knowers, "only the "doers" of His Word (James 1:25).

E. Gradually schedule times to be together in various situations and allow those times to be an opportunity to demonstrate a change of heart and actions.

1. It is appropriate that reasonable conflicts arise so that each of you can see how you now handle conflict and that you have a pattern to handle conflict in a healthy way.

F. Purpose to rebuild on a scriptural basis. This will give you the strength, wisdom and patience to deal with the psychological, emotional, volitional and physical issues that will arise.

1. "Unless the Lord builds (or rebuilds) the house they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1).
2. "You can do anything God expects of you through the strength He gives you through Christ" (Phil. 4:13 paraphrased).

- G. Restore your spiritual disciplines: prayer, personal Bible study, church attendance and participation in church activities, involve yourself in a small group study that will strengthen you and your relationships.**
- H. Find a mentor, counselor, pastor or close Christian friend who will encourage, correct you and one to whom you can be accountable and trust to keep confidence.**
 - 1. Eph. 5:1, "Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ."
 - 2. Galatians 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."
 - 3. James 5:16, "Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

V. Conclusion

- A. Recognize and confess the sin.**
- B. Repent first in heart, then in actions.**
- C. Rebuild trust.**
- D. Reconcile on the basis of healing.**

VI. Bibliography

- A. Peck, M. Scott. *The Road Less Traveled*.**
- B. Glasser, William. *Reality Therapy*.**

Reconciliation Letter

Dear Bob,

I would like to share my heart with you about the possibility of our reconciling and what I feel needs to take place in preparation for a discussion of reconciliation. Bob, I need you to list in writing, all the hurtful ways you realize you have spoken to me, acted towards me and thought about me. I need for you to preference each one with the statement; "I was wrong (not sorry) and would you forgive me for" It is my concern that if you do not go on record and acknowledge what you have done wrong, I'm afraid there is a good possibility it will occur again.

After I go over your list, if there were things I feel you missed, I will let you know, so you can add them to your list. I assure you I will rewrite the list and state, "I forgive and release you for" In obedience to God I must do this. (Eph 4:32)

Second, I need for you to genuinely repent for what you have done. For me that would mean that you change the **thinking** behind your behavior and not just change your behavior. My concern is that if you just changed your behavior and not your heart (thoughts) behind the behavior you would become bitter towards me, that you have had to make these changes that down deep, you really did not think you were wrong.

I feel you may think you were justified or you were entitled to do these hurtful things to me. Again I feel your past behavior will, in time, just return. For me, I need for you to acknowledge to me your past thoughts or core beliefs about me and then tell me plainly how they have changed.

Third, I need time to allow you to rebuild the trust that you have destroyed. Forgiveness, I must choose to grant, but trust is what you must earn. Love is unconditional, but relationships are conditional (I Jn1:3-10 and Jn 3:16). I don't know how long it will take but I'm open to allow you to rebuild my trust in you.

The final step will be for us to establish how we can begin to spend social time together as an opportunity to rebuild the love that we both thought was there in the beginning. Please feel free to seek any help you need to accomplish this.

Karen

*Special Note: This letter should not be sent without the sender first reading and praying through the notes, "Biblical Pattern for Reconciliation." It should be read by another trusted friend or biblical counselor before it is sent or shared in person.

Chuck Lynch

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