

# Ending the Cycle of Relational Distance and Failures

**The Ministry of Restitution** - if our actions or attitudes have brought hurt to another person there may be a need to go to that person and make right any wrong to break the destructive patterns in our relationships. God has forgiven us for the wrong the first time we ask. But to break the cycle of reaping from what we have sown and to begin restoring trust it is often necessary to make every effort to bring healing to others and to seek to restore the fractured relationship. Even if we feel the other person is 98% wrong and we are only 2% wrong, we are 100% responsible to walk in forgiveness and repentance for our 2%. (see Matthew 5:22-26; Psalm 109:17-19, 29).

It is not enough for a forgiving person to forgive you. You may still carry unconscious guilt or shame for the offense and have a need to ask for forgiveness to be free. There can also be a block in the relationship until you acknowledge to them that you have wronged them. The other person may have forgiven you but trust has been violated. Until you acknowledge your offense it is difficult for them to trust you again because forgiveness and trust are two different things. You will then either respond with self pity (feelings of sorrow over our suffering) or repentance in action that begins to rebuild trust with those who were offended (2 Corinthians 7:9-11).

**Self pity** seldom leads to transformed behavior or restored relationships.

- It diminishes, in our eyes, the gravity of each sin we commit against love and honor towards others.
- It hinders Godly repentance by feeling that life has not been fair with us and believing that others are the cause of our frustrations. Thus we do not look to God but people to meet our need.
- It places the primary fault upon others for relational conflicts because we feel that we have been treated unfairly. *If they would not have done that to me... Or, If only they would have done this for me then life would be better and I would not be forced to act in such a way!*
- It excuses our negative attitudes by seeing the weaknesses in others and feeling that our rightness justifies our judgmentalism or actions.
- It tries to get others to feel sorry for us and to get them to feel that we have been treated unfairly (defilement) thus strengthening the stronghold of self-pity within.
- It may try to compensate for our relational failures with increased hyper-religious activity, aggressively striving to earn self-worth or acceptance, or we may take on a false sense of responsibility and place all the blame upon ourselves for relational conflicts thus denying others the opportunity to deal with their own issues.
- It often leads to others feeling manipulated or demeaned by closing our heart to those that will not come into agreement with our self-pity, thus leaving others feeling that they have little value or honor in our presence.
- It may result in hidden anger at our feelings of loss or unmet expectations. This increases our blame towards others and results in deeper feelings of anger, insecurity, shame, isolation, self-condemnation, addictive compulsive behavior, and/or depression.
- It leaves us dissatisfied at work, church, and at home and we want to escape to a place where we can find rest.

On the other hand, **Godly repentance** always involves action. It is not just emotions and tears. It is to be so grieved at the wounding and stress that our actions and attitudes have brought to others that now we are willing to humble ourselves and do whatever it takes to restore healthy relationships.

- It is to be so grieved at the hurt that our actions and attitudes have brought to others that now we are willing to humble ourselves and do whatever it takes to restore healthy relationships.
- It comes to hate the destructive habit patterns that have misrepresented God's love and grace to others.
- It becomes more concerned with others' needs than our own pride and walls of self-protection.
- It is willing to lay down the need to be right in order to see healing in those whom we have hurt or offended.
- It chooses to walk in openness and transparency, and willingly comes forward and acknowledges our sin against love and how we have hurt or offended others.
- It does not seek to make excuses, seek to put the blame on others, or diminish the depth of our self-deception or fear of intimacy with which we have struggled.
- It takes the focus off of ourselves (self-pity) and begins to focus our energy upon humility, confession, forgiveness, repentance, and healing the pain that we have caused others.

## Practicing the Ministry of Restitution

- 1) **Ask God to reveal to you each way you have brought hurt or offense to others.** (see Psalm 139:23, 24)
  - Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the names of people that you have offended.
  - What is the basic offense - how did you demean, devalue, or dishonor each person?
  - Ask the Holy Spirit to bring conviction and repentance to each individual issue. (see John 15:26; 16:7-8; Romans 2:4)
- 2) **Ask mature spiritual leaders who know you personally to speak admonition into your blind spots.**
  - Review with them the above offenses that you have noted. (see James 5:16; Ephesians 4:15)
  - Give them permission to speak the truth in love to you, about what they have seen in you that could be perceived as offensive or defiling.
  - Ask for input as to how you can approach those you have offended and bring restoration to the relationships.
- 3) **Ask forgiveness for how your immaturity, attitudes, actions, or neglect has caused hurt or offense in others.**
  - Be thankful for this opportunity for growth. God is using this situation to help expose hidden destructive habit patterns and to bring them to death.
  - Call on the phone or schedule a meeting with each individual person to whom you may have brought offense or defilement. A letter is not the best way because it does not give opportunity for the offended party to respond, plus it documents instead of removes the offense. Approach them with humility and respect.
  - Schedule the meeting during the best time of day for them. Allow plenty of time to discuss the issues.
  - You may want a spiritually mature individual to go with you who has helped you see your blind spots and to whom you are holding yourself accountable.
  - Begin the meeting by telling the one who you have hurt or offended that God has been revealing to you how your attitude and actions have misrepresented God's love to them. Example: *"God has brought to my attention how wrong I was \_\_\_\_\_ (tell them the basic offense without going into detail) \_\_\_\_\_. It would mean a lot to me if you would forgive me. Will you forgive me?"*
  - Do not go into too much detail or it gives the enemy something to work with and to stir up bitterness, resentment, or defilement in the other person.
  - Do not expect them to forgive you. They may, but do not require it as it does not always happen.
  - At this time, do not mention their faults. Just take ownership of your own. (Later, if your spiritual authority thinks it wise, and some trust is restored with the person, you may go to them about hurts you have received from them.)
  - Do not try to diminish your offense by blame shifting, justifying your behavior because of past hurts, or try to make an excuse because you were having a bad day. That only serves to diminish Godly repentance. Take full ownership of your misrepresentation of God's love.
  - Ask each individual you go to if there are other areas that they have personally seen that have brought offense to them or others. Ask forgiveness and apologize for each area they mention.
  - Do this individually with each family member, peer, office worker, or authority that you may have offended or defiled.
  - If your attitudes or actions have brought offense or defilement to a corporate group (family, work place, church, or group of friends) after you have gone to them individually, then you may want to gather the group together and be specific about how your attitudes have brought offense to the group. Ask them corporately to forgive you and to give you grace while you are attempting to make some changes in life.
- 4) **Ask the spiritually mature person to whom you are accountable to meet with you weekly or monthly.**
  - Be sure that this individual is mature and is not afraid to speak the truth in love to you and that they do not come into agreement (defilement) with the issues you are having with others but that they know how to help you judge yourself in each matter (see 1 Corinthians 11:31).
  - Discuss any other blind spots that are being exposed and have them pray with you over issues.
  - Ask them how you can grow and mature relationally.