

Proclaiming God's Forgiveness

Go and Be Reconciled: *What Does This Mean?*



*Therefore, confess your sins to one another (James 5:16).
Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,
as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32)*

**Ambassadors
of
Reconciliation™**
Cultivating Lifestyles of Reconciliation

Go and Be Reconciled: *What Does This Mean?*

The cross can remind us how we are reconciled. *In our vertical relationship*, God reconciled us to Himself through Christ. We remember that we are His children, called to a lifestyle of repentance, receiving His forgiveness. *In our horizontal relationship*, we are called to be reconciled with other people for whom Christ has died. We confess our sins to the other person, forgive as God forgave us through Christ, and restore others with gentleness.

Be Reconciled to God

2 Cor. 5:18-20

Remember Whose You Are

How does my identity affect reconciliation?

Repent before God

How do my conflicts with others affect my relationship with God?

Receive God's Forgiveness

How am I reconciled to God?

Be Reconciled to Others

Matt. 5:23-24

Confess to the Other Person

How does my confession lead to reconciliation?

Forgive as God Forgave You

How does forgiving and resolving lead to reconciliation?

Restore with Gentleness

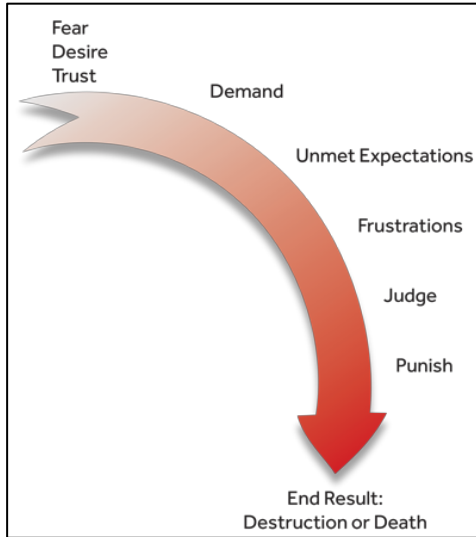
How does restoring others lead to reconciliation?

Proclaiming God's Forgiveness

When someone confesses his sins, whether against God or us or other people, Christians have the privilege of proclaiming God's forgiveness.

Although the Bible does not require a specific form for confession and forgiveness, these forms provide simple ways to confess sin to our pastor, fellow Christian, or family member and receive the good news of God's forgiveness.





The Development of an Idol

We slide down the slippery slope of idolatry when we elevate a fear, desire, or trust into a demand.

When expectations are not met, frustration increases. We judge those who will not give us what we want and we punish them.

Left unchecked, idolatry results in destruction or death of the idol and/or the person worshipping it. In other words, idolatry leads to death. (James 1:14-15)

Guidelines for Confession

Confession and forgiveness lead to life (2 Corinthians 7:10). Expressing godly sorrow in confession reflects true contrition which is a result of repentance. (James 5:16)

Go as a beggar. (Matthew 5:23-24; Luke 15:19; Luke 18:13-14)

Own your sin. (Numbers 5:5-7; Psalm 32:3-5; Psalm 51:3-4)

“I sinned against God and you when I . . .”

“I was wrong . . .”

Identify your sins according to God’s Word. (Exodus 20:1-17)

Sinful thoughts, words, and actions. (Matthew 15:19; Ephesians 4:29; Galatians 5:19-21)

Sins of omission (e.g., failing to love, as in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Express sorrow for hurt your sin has caused.

(Luke 15:21)

“I am sorry for how my actions hurt you when...”

If unsure how you hurt, ask! (“Can you help me understand how my actions hurt you?”)

Commit to changing your behavior with God’s help.

(Matthew 3:8)

“With God’s help, I will not do this again.”

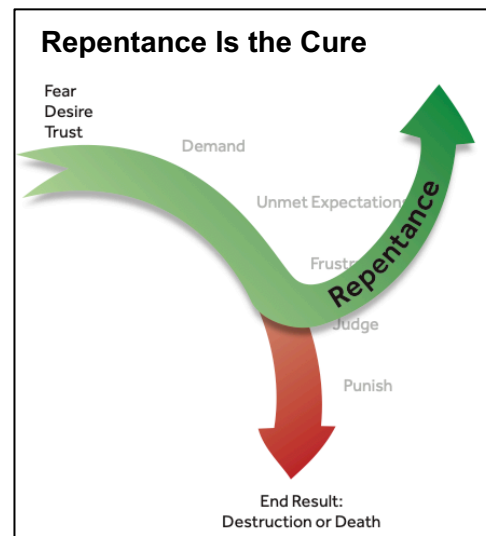
Be willing to bear the consequences. (Luke 15:21; 19:8)

Ask for forgiveness. (Genesis 50:17; Psalm 32:5; Luke 18:13)

Trust in Christ’s forgiveness. (Colossians 1:13-14;

Ephesians 1:7-10)

Regardless if the other person forgives, trust in Christ’s forgiveness.



The Confession

Confession of sin is a private matter. A Christian hearing a confession and proclaiming God's forgiveness is obligated to respect the confidential nature of a confession.

When confessing, you may prepare by meditating on the Ten Commandments and by praying Psalm 6, 7, 13, 15, 51, 121, or 130. If you are not burdened with particular sins, do not torture yourself to search for or invent other sins. However, if particular sins trouble you, naming them out loud will help you own your sins. Moreover, it will help comfort you for those specific sins as God's forgiveness proclaimed to you.

NOTE: *When confessing sin, it is not necessary to use any specific rite or prepared words. However, some may find it helpful to use the following:*

The person hearing the confession begins:

Since Adam and Eve sinned, all people have been born in sin. We sin against God by disobeying his commandments, and we also sin against others around us. Nevertheless, God promises in the Bible to forgive us when we confess our sins because Jesus died for all our sins (see Psalm 32:2-5 or 1 John 1:8-9). Thus, you are invited to confess your sins so that you can hear God's forgiveness proclaimed for you.

The person confessing prays:

Heavenly Father,

I know that you created me and love me.

You have taught me in the Bible how to live as your child.

But I was born a sinner.

And I have sinned against you and others around me,

by what I have done, and by what I haven't done.

I deserve your wrath and eternal punishment.

I am sorry for my sin, known and unknown.

(optional) **I am especially sorry for ...** [mention specific sins that trouble your conscience]

Have mercy on me.

Please forgive me for Jesus' sake.

Help me to live in the way that you teach me.

(optional – you may pray additional thoughts to God.)

In Jesus' name. Amen.

If you sinned against the one hearing your confession, you may also say:

I have also sinned against you, and I ask you for forgiveness, too.

Fellow Christian Proclaiming Forgiveness

(Pastors may provide another form for individual confession and forgiveness.)

Upon hearing a person's confession, a fellow Christian announces God's forgiveness:

God loves you. He promises to be merciful to you and strengthen your faith. Do you believe that God's promises of forgiveness given in the Bible are written for all God's children, including you?

I do.

Then hear and believe what God's Word promises you (*use one or more Bible verses, including those on the following page*).

In 1 John 1:9 God promises: "If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Through Romans 8:1, the Lord declares: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

In 1 Peter 2:24, God assures us: "[Christ] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."

Therefore, _____ [name], believe this Good News: For Jesus' sake, God forgives you all your sins.

Amen.

If the person confessing has also asked for forgiveness from the one hearing the confession, these words should also be spoken:

As God through Christ has forgiven both you and me, I also forgive you your sins against me.

Amen.

May the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.



A prayer of thanksgiving may follow. Psalms 30, 31, 32, 34, 103, and 118 are also appropriate. The one hearing confession may know additional Scripture passages with which to comfort and strengthen the faith of those who have great burdens of conscience or are sorrowful and distressed. He may include some of the passages listed under "God's Word Proclaiming Forgiveness" from the following page.

God's Word Proclaiming Forgiveness

When proclaiming God's forgiveness, comfort the person with the assurance of God's love by reading Bible passages that proclaim God's grace. Personalize the promise by inserting in the verse the person's name and personal pronouns as noted in the brackets below.

Blessed is [Name] whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is [Name,] against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit (Psalm 32:1-2).

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward [Name] who fears him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove [your] transgressions from [you] (Psalm 103:11-12).

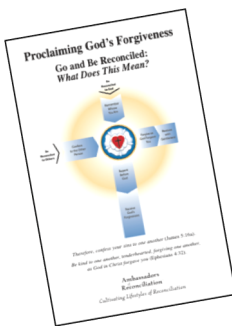
[Jesus] was delivered up for our trespasses and was raised for our justification. Therefore, [Name,] since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the glory of God (Romans 4:25-5:2).

There is therefore now no condemnation for [Name] who [is] in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

[Name,] for our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [you] might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

[Name,] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds[, Name,] you have been healed (1 Peter 2:24).

[Name], the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses [you] from all sin (1 John 1:7).



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