

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Steps to Biblical Reconciliation

Luke 17:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:15-21

Introduction

We all sin and hurt one another unintentionally or otherwise. The thing that should differentiate us as believers is the way we handle our own sin and the sin of others. Biblically, these things should be dealt with in love. But often we find all kinds of excuses for not dealing with the problem directly and in a biblical manner.

I The Crisis of Reconciliation (Chinese characters: Dangerous opportunity)

A. The *obstacles* to reconciliation

1. Fear

- Rejection
 - “They may deny it”
 - “I’ve tried talking to them about it before”
- Hypocrisy
 - “Who am I to say anything?”
- Loss
 - “They may reject me”
 - “They may never speak with me again”

2. Disobedience

- Judge, gossip or hold a grudge
- Be bitter and refuse to “let that happen again”
- Refusal to offer to others what God has offered to us

3. Indifference

- “It’s none of my business”
- “What’s the point, they’ll never change”

4. Spirituality

- “I committed him/her to God”
- “I’ll just pray for him/her”

5. Selfishness

“Has someone wronged you? Are you harboring a grudge that you just can’t let go of? How is it making you feel? Probably not very happy. Forgiveness gives you the power to take back your happiness. Take hold of that power and find the peace you’ve been looking for!”

B. The *benefits* of reconciliation

1. A **clear** conscience

Acts 24:16 “So I strive always to keep a clear conscience before God and man.”

2. Personal and spiritual growth

- Exposing and undoing the cycle of sin
- Assisting another person in discovering and changing harmful patterns
- Rescuing another from the traps of the enemy

3. **Advancing** of the Kingdom

- Learning and growing in skills vital for discipleship
- Helping others effect real change in their lives
- Teaching others how to effectively disciple others

Proverbs 28:23 “He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue.”

II The Motivation of Reconciliation

A. **Obedience** to God

John 14:21 “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

B. *Love* for others

Colossians 3:13-14 “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

C. *Restoration* and **unity**

2 Corinthians 2:7-8 “Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.”

Galatians 6:1 “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.”

III The Steps to Reconciliation

A. Reconciling the *world's* way

1. **Apologizing**

Apologizing is not biblical:

To apologize means to “express one's regret for having injured, insulted, or wronged another” or a “vindication or explanation”.

Unfortunately an apology leaves the other party not knowing what to say. Usually, a person will respond with "That's okay." This same problem exists when we use the unbiblical phrase, "I'm sorry."

2. "Auto-forgiveness" (auto meaning, "alone" or "independent of others")
Healing of memories: "Politically Correct" forgiveness
3. "Time will heal all wounds"

B. Reconciling *God's* way

1. God's pattern
Ephesians 4:32 "Forgive each other, just *as* in Christ God forgave you"
Colosians 3:13 "Forgive *as* the Lord forgave you."

As = Houtos = "In the same manner and in the same measure"

What are the biblical conditions in order for us to reconciled with God?

1. Awareness of our sin
2. Confession of our sin
3. Repentance from our sin (including asking for forgiveness)

What does God promise in response to these steps?

1. He promises to forgive us - 1 John 1:9
2. He promises to never bring it up again:
 - a. Cast into the deepest part of the sea - Micah 7:19
 - b. Cast as far as the east is from west - Ps 103:12

Question: Does God forgive those who refuse to confess/repent of their sin?

Of course not! If He did, then ...:

1. The many commands in scripture to repent would be pointless!
2. We would have to reject the concept of salvation by faith in Christ alone and embrace universalism!
3. We would be free from obligation to be reconciled to God/others!

So, what does one do when a sinning brother or sister refuses to repent?

We do what the Lord does – He appeals, waits and is ready to forgive!

Illustration: The parable of the prodigal son - Luke 15:11-32

2. What about ?
 - a. Christ forgiving the crowds from the cross in Luke 23:34
 1. Jesus clearly had authority to forgive sins (Jesus healing of the paralytic). "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."
 2. But here Jesus said from the cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." This was not a pronouncement of forgiveness, but a prayer to the Father for future forgiveness once they became aware of their sin and repented.

3. When was this prayer answered?

In Acts 2:36-39 when Peter preached on the day of Pentecost!

- b. The texts that seem to indicate that we are to forgive apart from any act of repentance from the sinner? (For instance, in the Lord's Prayer)

But we need to be careful to consider the whole counsel of God's Word when developing our theology and doctrine – including how a person is to be reconciled to God or to others.

The abbreviated summary passages (including the Lord's Prayer) do not negate the overwhelming evidence that forgiveness of sins is conditional upon confession and repentance of sin.

3. The **rule** of thumb

- a. If you can genuinely let it go

Prov 10:12 "Hatred stirs up dissension's, but love covers over all wrongs."

Prov 17:9 "He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends."

1 Pet. 4:8 "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins."

- b. If you can't let it go, then ...

C. *Steps to Biblical Reconciliation:*

1. When you're the **offender**

In Matthew 5:23-26, Jesus lays out the principles of reconciliation when you know you have offended someone.

- a. You are obligated to go quickly and confess his sin
- b. You are to ask the offended person to forgive you (repent)
- c. You are to deal only with your own sin

God insists you must be on good terms with your brothers and sisters if you expect to remain on good terms with him.

2. When you have been **offended**

Leviticus 19:17 "Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt."

Matthew 18:15-17" "If your brother sins against you go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two other along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he

refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

- a. Go directly to the one who has sinned against you
- b. Confront the person with his/her sin
- c. If the person repents, you are to forgive him/her
- d. You are to forgive, regardless of how you feel and you are to forgive as many times as you are asked to forgive (Luke 17:3-10). **When you forgive, you are making a promise not to bring the matter up again to anyone, including yourself!**
- e. Take one or two others with you
- f. Take the leaders of the church
- g. Take it before the church

D. Preparation for Biblical Reconciliation:

1. Attitude

- a. **Examine** your own heart

Matthew 7:1-5 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

- Are you reacting out of the flesh?
- Is there something in your own life that is causing you to respond negatively?
- How have you contributed to the problem?
- What might God want to show you through this person's issue?
- How can Christ-likeness be promoted in my life through this situation?

- b. Confess your own sin

- To God

Prov 28:13 "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

- To others

James 5:1 "Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

- c. Pray for wisdom and insight

James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

- What is God's will for me in this situation?
- How does He want me to respond?
- Knowing this person, what approach will be most effective and helpful?

d. Search the **scriptures**

- What does God's word say about the problem, about the person, and about you?
- Consider not only verses that deal with the facts, but also with attitude (Proverbs is outstanding for this)

e. Pray for the person(s) involved

- Do you love them?
- Is their benefit your objective?
- Are you prepared to commit yourself to the relationship?

f. Be **prepared** to forgive

Ps 86:5 "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You."

2. Approach

a. **Timing** and location

- Is this the best time for them; for you?
- Plan to share in a private comfortable setting where you will not be interrupted

b. Pray together with the other person

- Be relaxed and brief
- Be intentional about not loading the prayer or creating unnecessary fear in the other person

c. Approach person and topic with **humility**

- Assume the best in the other person
- Affirm the good in the other person
- Don't make accusations
- Seek to understand their perspective
- Consider others better than yourself - Phil 2

d. Learn to **ask** questions

- Don't assume anything
 - Get the facts
- Prov. 20:5 "The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out."

e. Freely share your own failings and sin

- This evens the playing field
- Remember, "we all have sinned and fall short"

- f. Share honestly, openly and accurately
 - Speak words that reflect Christ's message, not your own - 2 Tim 3:16
 - Be gentle, but firm and clear
 - Be prepared to give specific illustrations
 - Point person to biblical principles

- g. Listen, listen, listen!!!!!!
 - James 1:9 "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."

 - Make eye contact, be attentive, don't interrupt
 - There are few things that more practically demonstrate love than being a good listener

- h. Be prepared for initial rejection
 - Rarely are people able to immediately respond with, "Thanks, I needed that"
 - The flesh is in a life and death struggle, so don't be discouraged if changes aren't affected immediately. Let the Holy Spirit work.

- i. Be self-controlled
 - When confronting another person, especially our spouse or another family member, it is particularly important that we seek to exercise self-control. Don't be drawn into a battle of the flesh. Seek to remain calm and rational.
 - Prov 16:32 "Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city."

- j. Pray together regardless of the outcome

- k. Demonstrate patience and commitment to individual
 - Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

 - Follow up after the confrontation
 - Demonstrate willingness to work through the issue with the person

Conclusion

As a spiritual family in Christ, we are to be compelled by Scripture to reconcile with each other when we have offenses. Take the long view! Be hopeful, prayerful, committed and self-controlled in the process. In the midst of all of our cultural differences, God wants us to experience unity and He's provided that plan through His Word!

1. Be growing disciples of Christ
2. Be used by God in preparing God's people for works of service
3. Become mature in our faith
4. Attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ
5. Mutually edify and build up those in the body of Christ
6. Be effective disciple-makers
7. Be iron sharpening iron and "Be reconciled to God and to one another!"