



Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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Reconciliation: Accomplish Justice

Note: This month, we continue our look at reconciliation, the voluntary process designed to re-establish relationship after fracture has occurred. We consider the third and forth elements of reconciliation - justice and change.

"When is Justice Done?" asked the newspaper headline. It is a great question. However, it is one that can only be answered in the context of our understanding of justice.

Our views of justice are about as varied as the definitions offered by the standard dictionary. At its core, justice speaks of what is fair, balanced, and in good order. Yet, how we seek to regain that fairness and balance after an offense has occurred varies quite dramatically.

For many of us, justice has long been equated with judgement and punishment. We refer to courthouses as "Halls of Justice". When we are harmed, we insist that justice be administered *to* the offender. In this approach, we use punishment as the way to re-establish a sense of balance and fairness ("justice").

With such a focus on punishing the offender, however, two things often occur. First, truth is often hidden or lost. In a fearful attempt to avoid

punishment, the accused rejects responsibility and attempts to create an alternative truth.

Second, the real victim, with real wounds and real needs, is often ignored. With so much energy focused on punishing the offender, the victim is left to gain only vicarious satisfaction from pain administered to their offender.

Reconciliation takes a different approach to justice. It does not focus on punishment, but rather on raising up and caring for those who have been harmed. Within the process of reconciliation, justice is characterized by *restoration, rightness, and respect*.

- **Restoration:** Reconciliation justice is accomplished through efforts to restore the wounded party to their proper position of health, peace, and dignity, to the extent possible. Steps are also taken to restore the offending party to a healthier way of living and relating (eg. therapy, rehabilitation, accountability).

- **Rightness:** Reconciliation justice is accomplished through efforts to "make things right", to replace what was taken, or to repair what was broken (if this is possible). It involves removing what is unjust and replacing it with what is right and proper. Even though the past can't be altered, change must occur for the

present and the future. We'll look more at this need for change on page 2.

- **Respect:** Reconciliation justice is accomplished through the establishment of mutual respect and relationships based on equal value, consideration, and fairness.

For those who pursue reconciliation, justice is accomplished, then, not by taking from the offender, but by giving to the victim and to the relationship. This justice exists in a context of caring, growth, and commitment to the relationship. It leaves punishment, revenge, and their related fears outside its doors. It works to restore balance, health, and strength to the relationship, while honoring our ability to choose and to change.

This path is challenging and may not be appropriate for all situations. Yet, for those who choose to rebuild their relationship, reconciliation offers the opportunity to pursue justice that is often more just than that rendered by our legal systems. It is a justice that is built, not imposed. It is designed to serve, not be served. Ultimately, it is to be used to achieve a level of living and relating that surpasses what was, and reflects what is proper and good.

For reconciliation to have strength, conviction, and meaning, this justice must occur.



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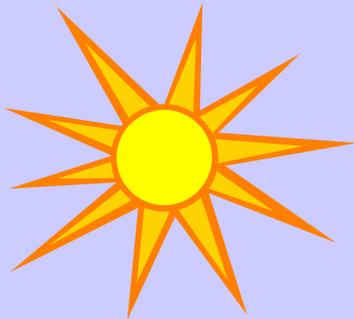
Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to design, accomplish, and maintain healthy life change.

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Commit to Change

In order for the justice in reconciliation to fully occur, change must be involved. That which is unjust must be removed. Hurtful behaviors must stop. Unhealthy attitudes and mindsets must be released. Damaging words must be restrained.

Reconciliation does not exist to re-establish and continue the unjust, hurtful patterns of the past, but rather to create a forum for *new* beginnings involving *new* behaviors and attitudes.

All of us who offend are called to change, to leave behind what is harmful and to conform our way of living to a higher standard. In the Christian faith, we refer to this as "taking on the mind of Christ". Whatever standard or moral value we adopt, it must become a constant presence within us so it can guide us as we change.

Then, as we consistently live out this new higher standard (or dusted off old one), we can invite those with whom we seek to relate to again trust us.

This is both just and good!

P - proclaim truth
E - establish responsibility
A - accomplish justice
C - commit to change
E - enact mercy

"The important thing is this: to be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for what we could become."

- Charles Du Bos