



Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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Reconciliation: Mercy and Forgiveness

Note: This month, we conclude our look at reconciliation, the voluntary process designed to re-establish relationship after fracture has occurred. We consider the fifth element of reconciliation - mercy/forgiveness.

Repairing a relationship is not an easy task. Reconciliation requires the commitment of those involved to proclaim the truth, establish responsibility, accomplish justice, and commit to change. Yet, all of this work falls short of producing the desired peace and relief unless the final element is added - mercy.

Mercy is the attitude, the approach in relationship that opens the door to forgiveness. It is often thought of in combination with "grace", but while grace exists when we receive a blessing we don't deserve, mercy exists when we don't receive a penalty we do deserve. It is the attitude and character behind the act of forgiveness.

The mention of forgiveness, however, has the power to evoke strong reactions within those of us who have been wounded in a relationship. At times, we run toward it, leap-frogging over the other difficult, uncomfortable steps of reconciliation in a "gracious" attempt to quickly restore normalcy. Other times, we actively resist it, believing

that forgiveness will inhibit the needed change that only tension and separateness will produce. Ultimately, though, it is mercy and forgiveness that give the reconciliation process its unique power - the power to release, to reclaim, to rebuild.

Forgiveness, however, is not a simple task. Consider for a moment the true nature of forgiveness. When we unjustly wound someone in relationship with us, we incur a debt to them. The balance of justice has been broken. Forgiveness declares that the wounded party has cancelled our debt. We no longer owe them any payment for their injuries. Debt is cancelled; balance is restored. Yet, everything is *not* "back to normal"! The old normal did not work. Rebuilding the relationship means working together to establish a new, healthier normal.

Other characteristics of forgiveness are worth noting. Since forgiveness flows from a heart of mercy, it can only be given as a free gift. We can never earn or demand it. It is given in a context of open-eyed awareness of truth, not as part of an avoidance of painful reality. In declaring "You no longer owe me for the injuries done", it cancels the need for repayment, but does *not* remove the need for change.

And finally, it need not produce amnesia. Yet, true forgiveness frees us from keeping the offense in our line of sight or within our easy reach.

Also, by cancelling our debt, forgiveness restores balance to our relationship like nothing else can. Revenge, punishment, and returned pain cannot pay the debt or fix what was broken. In fact, they only insult the significance of the debt. Forgiveness, on the other hand, recognizes that there is no adequate payment for this kind of debt. Through pardon, it breaks the negative "debt connection" between us and those we hurt, replacing it instead with peace, relief, and the freedom to move on in life, either in relationship or separately.

Like reconciliation itself, intentional forgiveness is a choice. However, when we choose to bless others, or are blessed by others, with forgiveness, reconciliation attains its ultimate power. All of the elements of reconciliation come together with meaning and purpose as the restrictive imbalance of debt is removed.

Mercy and forgiveness - the final keys to reconciliation. Strength wrapped in kindness; sacrifice designed for gain. What a gift!



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CONTACT INFORMATION

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.

You can contact me at:

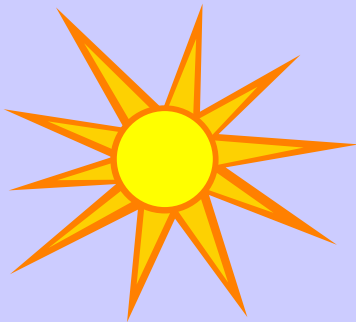
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What Will You Choose?

Reconciliation, when done properly, offers the freedom and power to move beyond injury and reclaim relationship. Yet, it remains a choice. Some relationships are unhealthy or dangerous and need to end. Others lack the mutual desire to heal. Even for those of us who want to claim the power and grow, there is a cost.

Besides costing us time, effort, and comfort, it may also cost us pride, the "safety" of dishonesty, control, power, selfishness, dominance, or even old, unhealthy sources of escape and nurturance.

But what have these things already cost us? Are they really our friends? What will we gain personally and relationally if we let them go?

Today is a great day to look at our own relationships, to identify which we have lost (or are losing) due to injury or neglect, and to decide if we want to reclaim them. Agreed, ours is only one of the decisions needed. But it is a start! And who knows what might just follow!

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

"... and be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you."

-Ephesians 4:32