



Life's Healing Choices

Choice 6 – Repairing Relationships

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"Blessed are the merciful." – Matthew 5:7a

"Blessed are the peacemakers." – Matthew 5:9a

CHOICE 6 – Repairing Relationships

Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me, and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others.

Why should you forgive others?

The main reason: You should forgive others because

_____.

"And whenever you stand praying, **if you have anything against anyone, forgive him**, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing." – Mark 11:25

Sub-reason #1: You should forgive others because

_____ has _____ you.

"(Bear) with one another and (forgive) one another if anyone has a grievance against another. **Just as the Lord has forgiven you**, so you are also to forgive." – Colossians 3:13

"Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, **just as God also forgave you in Christ**." – Ephesians 4:31-32

Sub-reason #2: You should forgive others because resentment _____.

Resentment is unreasonable.

"For anger kills a fool, and jealousy slays the gullible." – Job 5:2

"You who tear yourself in anger." – Job 18:4a

Resentment is unhelpful.

Resentment is unhealthy.

"One person dies in excellent health, completely secure and at ease. His body is well fed, and his bones are full of marrow. Yet another person **dies with a bitter soul**, having never tasted prosperity." – Job 21:23-25

Sub-reason #3: You should forgive others because _____ need forgiveness in the future.

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." – Matthew 6:12

How do you forgive others?

1. Reveal your _____.

2. Release the _____.

"Then Peter approached him and asked, 'Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as seven times?' 'I tell you, not as many as seven,' Jesus replied, 'but seventy times seven.'" – Matthew 18:21-22

3. Replace your hurt with God's _____.

"For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God." – Romans 14:10b-12

"Let the peace of Christ... rule your hearts." – Colossians 3:15

Why do you need to make amends?

"So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift."
– Matthew 5:23-24

"Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord. Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and defiling many." – Hebrews 12:14-15

How do you make amends?

"If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." – Romans 12:18

1. Make a list of those you've harmed and what you did.
2. Think about how you'd like someone to make amends to you.

"Whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them." – Matthew 7:12

Think about your timing.

"There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven." – Ecclesiastes 3:1

Think about your attitude.

Think about appropriateness.

Think about restitution.

3. _____ your life.

MAKE THE CHOICE

Action 1: Pray about it

You've worked through the first five choices of this series; you've made a lot of progress toward becoming the healthy, whole individual God created you to be.

The two-part process in this lesson's choice will bring you even closer to your goal, for in it you will find the healing of relationships – and broken relationships lie at the root of so much of our pain. But the choices in this lesson cannot be made alone. You need God's help to follow through. In this action step, we will ask God to help us both forgive those who have hurt us and make amends to those whom we have hurt. The freedom and hope found at the end of this process will bring you great release. Use your own words to ask for God's help, or join in the prayer below:

"Dear God, You have shown me that holding on to resentment for the wrongs done to me and refusing to make right my own wrongs has crippled me – emotionally, spiritually, and even physically. I ask You today to help me be honest about the hurts I feel. I've stuffed some and ignored others, but now I am ready to come clean and tell the truth about my pain. As I do, I ask that You give me the strength and the courage so I can release those who have hurt me and let go of my resentment toward them. Only by Your power will I be able to do this, Lord..."

I pray, also, that You will give me the courage and discernment to know how to make amends to those I have hurt. Help me to be honest as I look back and remember, and guide me as I find the ways to make restitution, where appropriate..."

Finally, I pray that I can begin a new life today as I refocus my life on doing Your will in my relationships. Help me set aside my selfishness and set my whole heart on You – I know I have a long way to go. I want the promise found in Job that all my troubles will fade from my memory and be remembered no more. Amen."

Action 2: Write about it

Now is the time to get some important issues down in black and white.

Those You Need to Forgive

We'll begin by dealing with those who have hurt you – those you need to forgive. Remember, admitting that someone has hurt you and that you are angry about what he or she has done does not mean you don't love this person. You can be angry with a person whom you love very much.

Here's how you begin: You make a list of those who've harmed you. Write down:

1. His or her name and relationship to you
2. What this person said that hurt you
3. What he or she did that hurt you
4. How the hurt made you feel

Put it down on paper so you can look at it. When you do, it loses its fuzzy quality and becomes real. Think about that teacher who embarrassed you or the parent who said, "You'll never amount to anything; you're a failure." That former boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife/friend who was unfaithful to you. Write it all down and reveal your hurt. This is your Forgiveness List.

Those to Whom You Need to Make Amends

You made your Forgiveness List of those who've harmed you. Now you need to make an Amends List of those you have harmed. Write down:

1. His or her name and relationship to you
2. What you said to hurt this person
3. What you did to hurt him or her
4. How you think you made this person feel
5. Why you are sorry for hurting him or her

Once again, when you write it down on paper or type it on your computer and get it down in black and white, the offence becomes real. It is no longer vague: "I think I may have hurt her with my words when I was angry." When you write it out, it becomes, "This is how I hurt her with my words when I lost my temper that night." Your Amends List makes your responsibility specific. Go back and review once more the names you wrote down in the moral inventory in Choice 4, column 5.

If you are having trouble thinking of anybody you've hurt, perhaps these questions will get you started:

1. Is there anyone to whom you owe a debt that you haven't repaid? A friend, a family member, a business?
2. Is there anyone you've broken a promise to? A spouse, a child?
3. Is there anyone you are guilty of controlling or manipulating? A spouse, a child, a brother, an employee, a friend?
4. Is there anyone you are overly possessive of? A spouse, a child?
5. Is there anyone you are hypercritical of? A spouse, a child?

6. Have you been verbally, emotionally, or physically abusive to anyone?
7. Is there anyone you have not appreciated or paid attention to?
8. Did you forget a child's birthday or your anniversary?
9. Is there anyone you have been unfaithful to?
10. Have you ever lied to anyone?

That's enough to get you started. If you still do not have anyone on your list, go back to Choice 1 and start all over again!

Action 3: Share about it

Offering Forgiveness

It is very important that you share your Forgiveness List with your accountability partner prior to sharing it with the person who hurt you. Your accountability partner can help you develop a plan for safely offering your forgiveness to those on your list. Your accountability partner also knows you and can challenge you to include anyone you may have omitted. It is vital when offering forgiveness that you do not allow the person to hurt you further. Using your accountability partner as a sounding board will help minimize the risk. Use the empty chair technique with your accountability partner to offer forgiveness when a face-to-face is not helpful or appropriate. You can also share your unmailed letter with your accountability partner, when you determine that a letter is the best approach.

Making Amends

Be sure to also share your Amends List with your accountability partner. An objective opinion can ensure that you make amends with the right motives. The Bible encourages us to "consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." Just as your accountability partner helped you offer your forgiveness, he or she can help you plan the right time and place to make your amends. If you owe someone money, your partner can help you develop restitution plans. You need your accountability partner to encourage you to make all the amends on your list. Once that is done, there will be no skeletons in your closet. Then you will have come to the point in your life where you can say, "I have nothing more to hide. I'm not perfect, I have attempted to repair all the harmful things I've done in my past. I have made amends and offered restitution for my part."