

***Question: How important is it to apologize, and how do you make a sincere apology that will be received in the spirit intended?***

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “apology” as a “statement saying that you are sorry about something: an expression of regret for having done or said something wrong.” The Bible does not use the word “apology,” but it does teach Christians to seek forgiveness from and reconciliation with anyone we may have wronged through words or actions. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24). The book of James instructs us to “confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:16). King David said that when he kept silent about his sin, his “bones wasted away” and his “strength was sapped.” But when he acknowledged his sin, he found blessings in forgiveness (Psalm 32:1-5).

We often have no problem with saying “I’m sorry” for the little accidents and mistakes of life that happen every day; but when we have seriously hurt someone by some intentional or unintentional action on our part, our pride often keeps us from making a genuine apology. If we will “deny ourselves” and follow Jesus (Matthew 16:24), we will want to do whatever may be needed to bring about healing and reconciliation with the offended person. We will apologize.

To say the words “forgive me” is often not as difficult as it is to fully accept responsibility in our hearts for any hurt we have caused. We must not try to rationalize, make excuses or cast blame. Such a conditional apology suggests that the heart is not convinced that any wrong was done that needs forgiveness. Obviously, before making an apology, the head and the heart (thinking and feelings) need to be in full agreement.

An apology may be either spoken or written, but nothing communicates sincerity like looking someone straight in the eyes. A true apology is a selfless act that does not expect or demand anything in return. It is not about getting selfish attention or praise. Hopefully, the offended person will forgive and be reconciled to the offender, but no one has the right to expect such. One should apologize because he is convinced in his heart

that it is the right thing to do; however, he should be prepared to deal with whatever reactions may come from the offended. One may have some uncomfortable feelings in this process, but remember that a sincere apology is about the offended and not about the offender. We should accept full personal responsibility for what we did.

Sincere apologies unselfishly go beyond why the offense occurred to seek to release the burden of guilt and to soothe the pain of the hurt caused by the offense. Loving our neighbors recognizes that we need one another and that we must not allow our pride to hold us apart from one another (Mark 12:30-31).

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12<sup>th</sup>, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: [universitychurchmurray.com](http://universitychurchmurray.com) ] 2016/04/29