

A Lesson in Reconciliation . . .

The North American Indians had a unique way of celebrating restored relationships. To signify reconciliation after personal conflict or even all-out war, they sat in a circle and passed from one to another a stone bowl of burning tobacco, which they smoked through a long, hollow stem elaborately decorated with feathers. To smoke this “peace pipe” was to take part in a ceremony that established peace and friendship between enemies. God created us for a relationship with Himself and with others. You will always be vulnerable to disappointments, disagreements, and differences, but instead of starting a war dance of revenge, develop a heart that seeks reconciliation. True reconciliation enables you to live in peace . . . even peace with your enemies.¹

*“If possible, so far as it depends on you,
live peaceably with all.”
(Romans 12:18)*

Q: “Should I seek reconciliation even when I am still angry?”

Reconciliation will not take place if you have not dealt with your unresolved anger. Allow the Spirit of God to bring about true repentance on your part and an attitude that can soften the heart of the one offended.

*“A brother offended is more unyielding
than a strong city, and quarreling
is like the bars of a castle.”
(Proverbs 18:19)*

Q: “What do I do if my effort to bring about reconciliation with someone fails?”

Others will be watching your response, so continue doing what is right.

*“Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought
to do what is honorable in the sight of all.”
(Romans 12:17)*

Q: “I was wrong in the way I related to a member of my family. What do I do if I know I’ve blown it too much to be forgiven?”

You cannot know that you will not be forgiven. What you do know is that you are to go and ask forgiveness and leave the response of the other person to God.

*“The Son of Man has authority
on earth to forgive sins.”
(Matthew 9:6)*

Downward Spiral to a Hardened Heart

We are ultimately accountable for how we interact with others. A *hardened heart* that refuses to take responsibility in life only invites trouble in life.

A hardened heart . . .

Denies conflict exists
Dwells on personal injustice received
Dominates conversation and makes no concessions
Discusses the problem with defiance
Deafens ears to apologies
Deflates any solutions offered
Detaches emotionally
Determines not to be hurt again
Desires revenge
Damages the reputation of the other person
Disowns personal responsibility
Discounts any past commitments

*“He who is often reprov-
ed, yet stiffens his neck,
will suddenly be broken beyond healing.”
(Proverbs 29:1)*

Seeking Reconciliation

Prepare your heart for seeking reconciliation.
(Colossians 3:15)

Know that refusal to seek reconciliation affects the intimacy of your relationship with God.
(Matthew 5:23–24)

Seek forgiveness and apologize for words that have hurt the other person. (Proverbs 6:2–3)

Recognize the ground rules of communication.²
(Ephesians 4:2)

- Offer unconditional acceptance.
- Confront the problem, not the person.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Verbalize feelings.
- Aim for mutual understanding.
- Give more than you take.

Be kind and gentle, trusting God to work in the heart of the other person.³ (2 Timothy 2:24–25)

Reflect the character of Christ in all that you do.
(Galatians 2:20)

Enlist a mediator if necessary.⁴ (Matthew 18:16)

Do not hold yourself responsible for the outcome.⁵
(Romans 8:28)

Rest in the knowledge that you have done all you can do to seek peace. (Romans 12:18)

Key Verse to Memorize

*“In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,
not counting their trespasses against them,
and entrusting to us the message
of reconciliation.”
(2 Corinthians 5:19)*

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Matthew 5:23–24

When Reconciliation Is Refused!⁶

Remember . . .

- If your heart has been repentant, you have God's total forgiveness. (1 John 1:8–9)
- Pray for the one who refuses reconciliation—there is an unmet need. (Matthew 5:44)
- God never leaves you when you suffer the loss of a close relationship. (Psalm 34:18)
- Control what you say about those who refuse reconciliation. (Romans 12:14)
- Don't be vengeful—in time God will deal with those who do wrong. (Romans 12:19)
- God will do a work in you that is good in spite of the difficulty. (Roman 8:28)

*“Let us not grow weary of doing good,
for in due season we will reap,
if we do not give up.”
(Galatians 6:9)*

Test the Condition of Your Heart

- Do my actions *demonstrate love* toward my opposer? (Matthew 5:44)
- Do I *speak well* of my opposer? (Luke 6:28)
- Do I do good acts toward my opposer? (Romans 12:17)
- Do I have a *forgiving spirit* toward my opposer? (Matthew 6:14–15)
- Do I exhibit *meekness* toward my opposer? (Matthew 5:5)
- Do I show *deference* toward my opposer? (Philippians 2:3)
- Do I *pray* on behalf of my opposer? (Matthew 5:44)
- Do I focus on *eternal values* when I think of my opposer? (Colossians 3:1–3)

Related Topics . . .

- Anger:
Controlling the Fire Within
- Communication:
The Heart of the Matter
- Conflict Resolution:
Solving People Problems
- Forgiveness:
How to Forgive . . . When You Don't Feel Like It
- Friendship:
Iron Sharpening Iron

HOPE FOR THE HEART's *Biblical Counseling Library Quick Reference* provides immediate, concise, biblical truths for today's problems.

For more comprehensive help, refer to our *Biblical Counseling Keys . . .*

Reconciliation:

Restoring Broken Relationships.

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For prayer encouragement and biblical counsel call 1-866-570-HOPE (4673).



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1 See "Tomahawk," <http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/society/A0848995.html>, and "Calumet," <http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/society/A0809954.html>.

2. See Myron Rush, *Hope for Hurting Relationships* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1989), 123.

3. *What Do You Do With a Broken Relationship?* (Radio Bible Class), <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/ds/q0703/q0703.html#page5>.

4. *What Do You Do With a Broken Relationship?* (Radio Bible Class).

5. *What Do You Do With a Broken Relationship?* (Radio Bible Class).

6. See Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 197–204, and *What Do You Do With a Broken Relationship?* (Radio Bible Class).