

Making Amends – Letting It All Go

8th & 9th Step - Lesson 1

Matthew 5:20-24 – “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

“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.”

What gets in the way of amends?

- Fear of consequences
- Shame
- Pride, need to justify yourself
- What else?

Fear of consequences – See Step 1

Shame – See Romans 8:1 – “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Need to justify yourself – “When you quit trying to justify yourself, you start getting better” (Psychologist Dr. Tom Lehmann).

- Compare Luke 16:15 -- He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight."
- And Galatians 5:4 -- You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

When you make amends, you're giving up ownership of an action you committed.

There's a kind of “death” involved in that, and we naturally want to avoid it. But with the Holy Spirit's power we actually seek it!

Matthew 16:24-25 -- Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."

Ways of making amends –

- Apologies
- Restitution
- Admitting a wrongdoing you'd been denying
- What else?

What Kinds Of Amends Do I Need To Make? What Kinds Of Amends Do I Need To Avoid?

8th & 9th Step - Lesson 2

[A response to "Dear Abby's" recommendation that a woman who had killed someone while driving drunk should write a letter of apology to the victim:]

DEAR ABBY: I can tell you from experience that the family of that victim will not feel better after receiving a letter of apology. It will only hurt the survivors by highlighting that the young woman survived, but their child, wife, sibling, etc. did not. Whatever peace they may have attained so far (if any) will be shattered and their emotions inflamed.

Speaking as a family member of a victim, I assume the other driver is sorry. I am not interested in letting that person unburden him- or herself to me, or in having any personal contact with them. It is almost insulting that the person would think a written note would make me feel better... -- STILL GRIEVING IN HOUSTON

DEAR STILL GRIEVING: Please accept my sympathy for the tragic loss of your family member. And thank you for discussing your feelings on this painful subject. I retract my answer to that question.

Romans 13:7-10 – Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Step 8: We made a list of persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them.

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Making amends isn't about getting forgiveness: Jesus dying on the cross is what gets you forgiveness. Making amends isn't a matter of "getting it off your chest:" that's what the Fourth and Fifth Steps are for. It's about...

- Doing something to help repair the damage you've caused in people's lives
- Making something good happen, to help counterbalance the bad you've caused to happen
- What else?

Some examples:

- Paying back money you've "borrowed" or scammed or stolen
- Letting the people whose minds you've messed with know that they're not the crazy ones
- Staying sane and sober and helping other people stay sane and sober
- What else?