

Be Reconciled!

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Don't be ignorant of the words that give life, but be skilled in their administration.

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Introduction

This book is a guide for Christians who have been sinned against by someone, believer or not, so that they may know the Biblical and spiritual way to resolve conflicts of sin and be reconciled to the offender. Reconciliation is the goal. Reconciliation is the main objective of God's Judicial system, and the hoped for outcome when addressing wrongs. Reconciliation is not the only outcome, but that will not be known until each person responds to the other in an appropriate and Godly way. Both persons in a conflict have an obligation, before God, to be reconciled in righteousness.

Reconciliation must be viewed as a subset of Justice where Righteousness and Love are of higher value in the Kingdom of God. Justice is a complex system in the Kingdom. Righteousness is God's description of how to do things. Love is the intent, manner and emotions as demonstrated by God Himself.

Psalm 89:14-16 "14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Loving kindness and truth go before You. 15 How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! O LORD, they walk in the light of Your countenance. 16 In Your name they rejoice all the day, And by Your righteousness they are exalted. " NAS

Additionally, this book is an introduction to practical Justice for leaders in the Body of Christ. My purpose is to begin to help Justice be restored and then to be implemented, first with each other, one on one, but then to be functional in every local church for the benefit of all. Blessed are the people that hear the joyful sounds of settled conflicts and restored relationships.

Colossians 3:12-14 "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection." NKJV

The words of Paul to the Colossians church show us the preferred course for the Church, and for us as individuals. Let the words sink in; hold them in your heart. Also, understand that real life situations will arise where a more formal and objective process is needed to support [Agape](#), (see Glossary) which is love in action. This book and plan are for those lives where divisions and conflicts seem to overwhelm the love that we would all like to give and receive. It must be noted that while love is frequently defined as a passive response to imperfections in others, love must never be defined as condoning sin, or enduring abuse, or as being involved in any way with unrighteousness or injury!

Love, Righteousness and Justice are inseparable in God's Kingdom and these function together so that relationships are harmonious and repairable when disruptions come. The principles concerning Justice in Scripture are designed to provide satisfying solutions to practical problems of everyday life. Our hope is that members of the Body of Christ will see the promises of hope and be able to escape the fear of personal loss and penalty that now prevent Justice from being a reality in the Church.

Part I

Chapter 1 The Crocodile Book

Let us begin with a whimsical, heart warming story of a real life pastor and his sons as they experience what it means to be righteous Christians in deeds as well as in words. This story is a direct quote from a Sunday morning message.

“Back at the beginning of the summer, I had this letter that came in the mail from the library, our wonderful public library. I love that place, I love to hang out there. I love to read and my boys are learning to read, so we go and hang out there as frequently as we can. I got a letter, I got a letter from the library, that says basically this, ‘Mr. Laskowsky, this book called Crocodiles, you checked it out at such and such a time, and it was never turned back in.’”

When there is an offense between two or more individuals, then there must be communication between them to correct the wrong and to restore the relationship as it was before the offense. It is incumbent on the one who first is aware of the offense to initiate communication. If you have sinned against a brother, then go talk to him about it and get it straightened out, even small things can cause a division. God wants unity and not divisions. If your brother offends you, in a sinful way, then you have a love obligation to bring it up with him. If you can’t overlook the offense because it is sin or because it has adversely affected the relationship, then you need to talk to him about it. The goal is reconciliation and not revenge or punishment. The library contacted the pastor, and see his first reactions, self defensive and self justifying.

On October 9, 2005, Pastor Greg Laskowsky of Grace Covenant Church, Statesville, NC preached a sermon on being a citizen of the Kingdom of God. It occurred to me during the illustration on the Crocodile book, that every element, or almost every element, of the Justice model was included. So, with Pastor Greg’s permission, we will parse the illustration to show you how Kingdom Justice applies now. This is a wonderful story.

” I thought, well, I know good and well we turned that book in. We sure did. We got that letter, Teri and I,... we rallied the boys This book, Crocodiles, has not been returned to the library, so they say, so we turned the house upside down looking here, there, everywhere. The book did not show up.”

"I know I turned that book back in!" Did he? No. Did he sin? Even though it was unintentional and a small thing to most of us, he did sin. It was not his book to have and hold. (Our lessons will be better learned if we do not dismiss or excuse the small things.) Although, he ultimately did what was right before the Lord, he has a little struggle with being accused of something he was sure he had not done. I think this is totally normal for most of us, but he did not let it end there. He and family searched with due diligence to find the missing book. And then, he showed the proper example to his sons by taking them with him to defend his case at the library. (The sons probably learned more from this whole episode than anyone else and will be better for it.) When we think we are accused of wrong falsely, it is a good idea to listen to the accuser who certainly has a different, and perhaps more accurate perspective than our own. Good and open communication is part of the Justice model. Just a short word on bad communication. If someone accuses you of something, there is no need to immediately become defensive and try to talk your way out of responsibility. Do not think that to be accused is to be guilty. No one has any right or authority from God to accuse or condemn without proof and especially when the accuser is personally involved. Work your way through to good communication as a necessary component to reconciliation.

"So, I said okay, I'm going to the library and I'm going to tell them, 'You know what? We turned that book back in, we have turned our house upside down' ...That's exactly what I did. The person there was very nice, the gentleman there, I think his name is Gary, some of you probably know him. We have such a wonderful town here. Great guy. I told him, 'You sent me this letter and you are saying this book is missing, and we have failed to turn it in, but we are absolutely certain that we turned that book in. And you know what? He was very gracious, he said, 'Well, okay, ...it's odd, but it would not be the first time...you know we are in transition...we're changing locations...we moved from the old building into the new building.' So, he granted what we call 'Grace,' And so, you know, I went back home and weeks went by...this was back at the beginning of the summer and just two weeks ago we happened to be pulling books off the boys book shelves, they have about two hundred plus books. Okay, we have four boys and there are books galore. They pull out one, and guess what happened to show up on the book shelf? The Crocodile book."

The pastor communicated back with his accuser and declared his innocence, the circumstances, and his diligence to locate the missing book. Was this right? Or should he have just plead guilty and paid the fine? He was totally correct, from a Kingdom perspective, to defend himself. Even though he was really guilty, he told it just the way he saw it. Make believe humility, admitting to something we have not done, is not just.

Now, who had the authority to forgive the debt or demand replacement of the book? God? The

librarian? Or the pastor, himself? Of course the librarian had the choice to enforce a penalty or to do as he did in erasing the charge. Does this mean that the pastor could have put pressure on the librarian to get an easy outcome. No! Any pressure to manipulate someone we have wronged is a perversion of Justice. God sees straight though that kind of action. This judgment by the librarian, to forgive the debt, was a demonstration of mercy. Mercy always has the characteristic of helping someone who can not help themselves. Notice, I said it required a judgment to determine whether to have mercy or to require replacement of the book, plus a possible fine. The librarian would be perfectly just to decide either way. It might also be noted that the librarian was most graceful, giving a gift, because the pastor did not offer to make restitution at this point. He only declared his innocence.

Think of God as the Chief Justice of the Kingdom, who has given all authority to judge over to the Lord Jesus. He has instituted Justice in the Church so that we might learn to work out disagreements, disputes, and sins among ourselves first. (This includes sin in troubled marriages.) This is actually to be preferred to having to give Him an answer for our misdeeds and our offenses toward our brothers and sisters. He is more strict than one can imagine with the unrepentant and will not show mercy to those who have not been merciful.

“Now, I’d love to tell you that Pastor Greg, your wonderful, spiritual pastor, immediately thought, ‘We must make this right!’ But, I did not. I said, well, I thought in my mind, ‘You know they have already written it off, I’m sure they have insurance to cover lost books, (laughter)...I was heading down a course...I had decided, you know, ‘done deal’, until the Holy Spirit spoke through my eight year old...(louder laughter)...Zachary spots the book and says. “DAD!, there’s the book about crocodiles!!” “That book that we said we turned in, and the library sent us a letter, they told us we owed them money and we told them we don’t and they said we did, and we told them we don’t, and we went to the library, so they took it off our account. Zachary’s good with details! (laughter)”

“There is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed!” (Let none of us think that anyone gets away with anything.) This was true mercy of the Holy Spirit to bring forth the hidden book. The pastor was given an opportunity to make a wrong into a right, to teach his sons a lesson in righteousness, to lead his family as a Godly father and husband, and besides all that, he passed his personal test. What test? Every person’s character is tested by life events and the results affect his eternal reward. Each of us have similar opportunities to pass (or fail) the tests of life.

A refinement: When the pastor declared, “It’s a done deal” he set aside his capacity to here from the Lord on the matter. Well, who has not done that? Still the Holy Spirit, the paraclete, came along side the boy to help the dad. This reminds me of Samuel who, in his boyish innocence, heard the voice of

the Lord calling when the high priest's ears were dulled. If any of us conclude a matter, we assume that God has nothing more to say about it, but He is faithful to work out His purposes in us. God will use donkeys, wise men or fools, bosses, spouses and little children to get our attention. It does not matter how we hear as long as we hold a continuing desire to hear Him when He speaks.

“And he said, “Okay, Dad, what do we do now?” And, of course, God began to speak to me. Not only did I need to take the book back, it wasn't mine, it was theirs, we needed to take the book back. Not only did I need to take the book back, but I needed to apologize, face to face with the man that I assured that I didn't have the book. The third thing I needed to do was pay what ever penalty they might impose. And in my mind I'm thinking, ‘Lord!, have mercy, they might charge me \$100 for that thing.’ (laughter) And you know what? We went there, humbly, and I brought my boys with me. (laughter) You see, God does not let your pastor get away with anything! I tried to think of all kinds of reasons why the boys should stay in the truck. But, they wouldn't give in.. God wouldn't either, so I brought the boys in and I asked for them to come out. I explained the whole thing. And, you know what? They said, “We understand. It's okay.”

“Okay, Dad, what do we do now?” I think this man heard from the Lord, because he then recites the path to forgiveness and reconciliation with the library. There is a predictable pattern when God gives us instructions in Righteousness. It is the path of Repentance. (I'm afraid we've lost touch with what is involved in Repentance following the idea that *“I did that when I got saved, so I don't need to do that again”* kind of thinking.) In the God's Justice system, Repentance is the most wonderful gift that we could hope for. It is a chance to change our minds and actions, to make wrongs into rights, and to be changed to be more like Jesus. Imagine, if we had only one, two, or even three times to 'get it right' and then faced the Judgment of God. Wow!, I'd be a fried critter for sure! How 'bout you, reader?)

Repentance always has these components as illustrated in The Crocodile Book:

- a. Godly sorrow
- b. Admission and confession of responsibility
- c. A change of mind and actions
- d. Communication with the other person
- e. Restitution (apologies are often not enough)
- f. Asking for forgiveness or mercy or both
- g. Strengthening the relationship.

“I said, “Thanks for receiving my apology, but please, let me pay you because I feel terrible and I begged them to let me pay for the book, and she said, the lady that was helping me, she said, “Gary has already worked your account in such a way that I can’t really do that. We can’t charge anything to your account because it’s been completely eliminated. That is an awesome example of the forgiveness of God. And that’s what motivates us now as Kingdom people. It’s not this threat of punishment, it’s not this threat that God’s gonna beat me up and throw me into Hell. We don’t want to live like that! You’ll never be successful in the tension between the two worlds because what the kingdom of this world does, it wants you bound up with fear, and to drag you all through those repeated patterns of sin because you are living in the bondage of fear. The moment we begin to understand, then we are motivated differently, it’s love, God loves me, unconditionally, and as soon as I understand that, I begin to love Him, and appreciate Him in greater and deeper ways...” (end of illustration)

The pastor showed a great attitude in offering to pay for the book, even if it cost \$100! But the real life questions most Christians need to adjust for their own lives are more like, *“Is making restitution or making amends really necessary? Shouldn’t we be released from obligations if the other person is a real believer? Are they not unforgiving if they expect repayment?”* My answer, which I think reflects the heart of God, is this: Do what ever is necessary to repair the relationship though it costs all you have. Do what is right. Demonstrate love for God and love for the other person. Put yourself last and you will come out ahead.

Please, know that Justice exists as a system whereby we can be reconciled to those that have sinned against us and to those we have sinned against as well. Using the term ‘sin’ in connection with this illustration might seem strong to some, but let us not excuse unrighteous conduct as a mistake or an accident when motives and heart attitudes are in anyway un-Christ like. I am convinced that if we would judge ourselves and discipline ourselves, then we will be more apt to find mercy with God rather His displeasure for our self-justification. Remember, it is His Kingdom and not ours.

Personal Procedures

Bible believers might consider the following steps as a guide for what to do or attempt to do whether they have been injured or they are one who has caused injury. Both parties in any conflict or dispute have an obligation from God to be proactive in the resolution and to seek reconciliation. Justice does not take sides and it is incumbent on each of us to be involved, regardless of what we think it might cost us. The greater embarrassment, when giving an account to God, will come as a result of doing nothing.

1. Relationships → *
2. Injury →
3. Communication →
4. Admission and Confession of Responsibility →
5. Repentance →
6. Restitution →
7. Asking for Forgiveness →
8. Granting Forgiveness & Mercy →
9. Reconciliation

* The (→) arrows indicate that the previous aspect must be addressed before the process moves to the next stage.

Chapter 2 Relationship and Injury

You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, all your strength, all of your mind and all of your life. Next to that, you shall love and honor your neighbor at least as equal with yourself.

Relationship

A relationship exists where ever we touch someone else in the Body or in the world. We have a responsibility to maintain that relationship. When it is damaged, whether we are the cause or another person is the cause, we each must do what ever is necessary to repair the damage in order to restore the relationship and the functioning of it. Justice in the Kingdom of God provides a system whereby relationships can function with equitable balance and, if damaged or abused, they can be restored. All citizens of the Kingdom will, sooner or later, come to an understanding that Justice is more important to Godly relationships than “winning the argument”, “defending one’s innocence”, and certainly getting “personal gain” at the loss of another.

I do not wish to imply that everyone ought to be able to function with anyone and everyone else within the Church. “How can two walk together except they be agreed?” Amos 3:3. No relationship should be forced in a legalistic way or function when there is no spiritual oil that makes it work smoothly. Our focus is on ‘what to do’ to maintain relationships and patterns from scripture that show us how to be reconciled when there are injuries or wrongs.

The patterns found in the Justice model begin with a relationship between individuals. The relationship need not be of great depth to be important or of close intimacy. All levels of peer and vertical relationship are potentially subject to injury. Acquaintances, friends, spouses, children; each represent a different level of relational importance, and each participant influences the well being of the others to some degree. Biblically, the positive purpose intrinsic to all relationships is that they should function for the benefit of all the participants.

This is especially true for those God calls to be overseers to His Church. While Christians are commanded to submit and to follow those who are given the watch care over their lives, there is no hint in Scripture that leaders are exempt from Justice and can do as they wish with impunity. Leaders are to lead in the demonstration and establishment of Justice which means they are subject to just standards more than any other group. The Supreme Leader is right and just in all He does; so should it be with all those down the chain of command.

This does not mean that ministers have to make everybody happy and never stir the pot of spiritual conflict. Church Justice, however, must include a means of review of complaints against ministers to determine where there is true injury and where there is only a conflict of ideas or personal preferences.

While “vertical” relationships, involving ministers and members, require a more complex and problematic administration, the principles are the same. Following the model with the same spirit of reconciliation and righteousness will make the Church a better place, i.e., more user friendly.

We will mostly address injuries between members in this work with an eye to the larger picture in the future. Hopefully, we can grow, be happy and productive in life because of what we give others in relationships and because of what others contribute to our lives. The sum is intended to be greater than the individual parts. (see 1 Corinthians 12 esp v.27)

We look at the importance of Justice with regard to restoring relationships in the example God provides within Himself. God came Himself, in Jesus Christ, to resolve the wrongs of His people, paying the penalty Himself, making restitution for us to Himself, so that, potentially, all injuries to righteousness could be repaired, and then, for there to be reconciliation with the Father for those who are ‘in Christ Jesus.’ How much more should we be conscious of the importance of even small relationships and our responsibility to keep them in good repair.

God provides us with workable solutions to building up the broken places. These solutions, while simple in principle, can become quite complex in real life. Our goal is to clarify the steps and inter-dependencies of the steps in such a fashion that they can be adapted to multiplied situations and lives.

If you injure your neighbor, you must make it right with him before you may relate to God.

Injury

An injury happens when there is sin by one person against another. There are many kinds of injury including slander, false accusations, exploitation, betrayal, infidelities of all kinds, physical traumas, and wounds of the heart to name a few. Anything that reduces your brother's life and worth, doing him harm rather than building him up, is an injury. Conversely, any harm done to you by anyone is an injury. Any action or word that diminishes the relationship constitutes an injury that should be addressed with the Justice model in order for reconciliation to be completed.

An injury takes away from the personhood, the personal integrity and worth, of the one injured. The one who injures another is the foremost person to restore and heal the victim by giving them back their wholeness and value. Repentance and restitution by an offender replaces what was lost in the personal identity of the injured as well as physical property. The offender alone can satisfactorily answer the question of "why" plus whatever else is important to the injured person, which gives the victim the opportunity of expressing mercy and compassion to the offender. These actions and attitudes of the offender strengthen and heal the victim beyond all psychological counseling attempts. When these actions are promoted in the Church, persons who were victimized will be restored and will no longer be victims.

A significant consideration is whether an injury is intentional or accidental. If a person is innocent in their intent when an injury occurs then that person, while still needing to make restitution and seek reconciliation, is more worthy of leniency than one who purposes to hurt another. Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul give us confirming words that ignorance of what one is doing are Kingdom grounds for mercy and forgiveness. Jesus on the cross asked the Father to forgive the Romans executioners because "they don't know what they are doing." Paul stated, "Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." 1st Timothy 1:13, NKJV. This of course does not mean that a victim should automatically be merciful. All the steps of the Justice model need to be in place, and then mercy is an option of the one who is in a position to help the offender.

The point for us to observe is that, many times, someone may injure us when they are unaware of the hurt and need us to inform them so they can correct the behavior and pay for damages if that is called

for. When someone unintentionally wrongs us, then we should be quick to enter the reconciliation process with them. Ignorance or innocence will be present in most of the conflicts that are encountered in the church, and this truth should make reconciliation an easier process. Do not think that accidental injuries should be excused without the steps that produce genuine reconciliation. If any of the steps are omitted then the restored relationship will never again be healthy as before.

Some will insist that an insult is not important and should be overlooked. Scripture bears this out. “*A prudent man overlooks an insult.*” “*Love covers a multitude of sins.*” Consider that, when an insult hurts the relationship and causes division, then it should be addressed rather than glossed over. Love covers, and serves righteousness at the same time. If possible, a believer should do his best to live out Col 3:12, 13. , but this verse does not excuse the responsibility of the other person to conduct themselves in a Godly manner. I have never heard Colossians 3:12 used in application for offenders, but rather to those who are victims. If you will read the whole chapter, you will see that the apostle addresses the works of the flesh, i.e. offenders who need to crucify their sinful deeds and be converted to the love mentioned in v.14. The Church in America speaks to those who have been wronged and tells them to bear the burden, but does not speak to the offenders to repent, confess, or make amends. This is injustice.

More important are situations where insults are the usual, and even though small individually, the sum of them is recorded in the heart of the hearer producing a larger wound and offense. Often insults are clothed in 'humor' and everyone is expected to take a joke. It is true that poking fun at each other is a loving, relational thing and no one should be so sensitive as to be offended with the occasional jibe. We should overlook an insult, or misspoken humor, but not tolerate repeated or habitual vile and demeaning words.

Each one of us has an obligation to guard our hearts from fiery darts. Poison from those darts of insult and abuse will accumulate until life is lived more as a victim than as an overcomer in Christ. An habitual offender has not guarded his own heart, and has allowed poison to accumulate which overflows to others around him. He needs correction, and healing to be restored. It is best to overlook an insult, but the healing of an offender's poisoned heart is not the obligation of his victims except in response to the offender's repentance.

Ezekiel, The Dog

Ezekiel is not his real name. I have changed his name to protect him from public scorn. Ezekiel is called Zeke for short and he is a big golden retriever. He has a powerful voice and uses it when ever he wants even before daybreak. Zeke lives about one hundred feet from my easy chair in a fenced

back yard that belongs to his loving owners, Brad and Kate. Zeke, who is now eleven years old and hard of hearing, barks at everything that moves, and since nothing moves on his side of the fence, that means anyone or thing, including cats, that moves on my side of the fence. At first it was only distracting, then it became annoying, and finally, really irritating to hear the sharp challenge to any invader to his territory. I suspect that many of these intruders exist only in Zeke's imagination, but that may be making him more human in behavior than he really is.

I live in a condominium which means there are other neighbors who actually live closer to Zeke, as close as twenty feet. They hear Zeke more clearly than I do, and they don't like the noise either. Zeke likes to bark at various times of day and night which are unpredictable, but most likely to coincide with the rising and setting of the sun.

Over the course of more than a year, I fretted (I know about Psalm 37: 8) about the problem until I knew I must DO SOMETHING! Doing something is exactly what should happen, but for the Kingdom's sake, our doing must be in accordance with Godly principles if we want the same results that God wants. Hence, I wrote out what I should not do as well as considering what I should do. It was certain to me that I could take no action or adopt any attitude that would in fact be *revenge* even if I could somehow justify my actions because of '*what they did.*'

Someone said, "You should pray for them and put it in God's hands!" I did pray and He told me to follow the directions that He had already provided in Matthew 18. He actually wanted me to be a participant in right doing rather than standing off at a safe, self preserving distance.

Someone else said, "I just rest in the Lord." That didn't help answer the mandate that I and the Church have to maintain righteous relationships. I had a mental picture of an ostrich with its head 'resting' in a hole in the sand.

Another of Job's friends came along and said, "You need to be patient and 'love' them." What does that mean? Love has been so redefined by the god of this world that 'love' sets aside the Words of God. Love is God. Love is defined as doing what He tells us to do with regard to others.

To me those arguments are 'issue avoidance' rather than Godly responsibility in action. Trusting in God, keeping my cool, and loving others is made manifest by following the directions of the Scriptures under the active direction of the Spirit.

Some one will say that I made too much of the situation, and should have just let it go, or 'just love them' in spite of the noise. That is certainly the choice of most of my neighbors, but the law and order of our community suffered as result of following the dictum of 'do what ever you want to do regardless of the effect on other.' But for me, in wanting to do it God's way, acquiescence was not and is not a choice.

The idea of stepping over or walking around relational problems is not an option in New Testament thought. Pretending that problems do not exist is not healthy in community. Citizens must work together for the maintenance of peace. Righteousness must be maintained or unrighteousness will

prevail. Zeke is really a beautiful and friendly dog, and needs to learn how to live in harmony with me and his other neighbors.

Chapter 3 Revenge and Personal Gain *Even though someone does you wrong, you must not punish them in any way. This is giving evil for evil.*

Revenge Is Society's Most Popular Substitute For Justice.

Leviticus 19:18 *“do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people.”*

Proverbs 24:29 *“Don't say, “I'll get even; I'll do to him what he did to me.” (Don't say, “I'll pay him back!”)*

Romans 12:17-21 *“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ⁸If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ⁹Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. “*

Revenge is responding to evil with evil, to good with evil, to the misunderstood with evil.

Revenge, being a work of the flesh or of the fallen, Adamic nature, will never satisfy the heart or mind. It increases guilt, increases hatred or disrespect, and increases anger.

Revenge always ends in a more broken relationship. Revenge can be the terminal act by an injured person to a relationship.

Jesus command to love our enemies is the heart of not responding to evil with evil. From this we also see that Love is characterized by righteous behavior much more than fond feelings.

Revenge is produced by a wounded or contaminated heart driving an un-renewed mind. Revenge is sin and it hurts the vengeful person and their victims alike.

Persons, who have been injured by another are not authorized to punish the one who has injured them. Justice, that produces reconciliation, sets aside getting even as this would only perpetuate the disunity.

Revenge demonstrates a lack of trust in God who said that He would repay all those who injure us.

Revenge demonstrates a lack of understanding of the biblical way to handle conflict. Revenge demonstrates an uncontrolled spirit and too high a value on one's individualism.

You may think the one line gems listed above are dry and boring, but they are straight from my own life, which I suppose could be observed as dry and boring too. Those scriptures are my notes to myself as I faced a situation where I really wanted to get a little pay back, a little, "I'll show 'em!", "I'll pay them back!", a little personal satisfaction in causing my neighbors to suffer as they had caused me to suffer. Making a list like this might be what you have to do to make sure you have the Biblical directives and standards in order before you do something stupid, that you will later regret, and that will not be pleasing to God. I have done so time and time again.

This is Zeke's List.

I made that list about revenge when thinking what I would like to do concerning Zeke and his owners. After I reviewed what not to do, I was in a better position to 'do it' God's way and produce a harvest of righteousness. I am certain that what ever comes our way, we are not to respond to any wrong with another wrong or in our own authority to punish or enforce righteousness. Seeking Justice on a personal level is not intended to bring revenge but reconciliation and resolution of problems. If I had only made a list of rules or laws and coolly applied them, it would be legalism, but I submitted the list to the Holy Spirit that I might also *live* the list with the right spirit myself. This did not always work out with the 'right spirit' as you will see further on.

Infliction of punishment in return for a wrong committed is reserved for those authorized to judge and to punish those who are un-repentant in having injured another. I must admit that the possibility of punishing my offenders crossed my mind. Not that I would hurt Zeke, but I was really open to doing something to show his owners how much the noise bothered me. There was the possibility of surrounding their property with large speakers and an amplifier that would be triggered every time Zeke barked so they would get a large dose of their own medicine. No, better not do that... How about calling them of the phone when he barks and asking for their help? I actually did that, but somehow reached a fax machine. Maybe that was God intervening?

I did know that Communication must take place with his owners if Zeke was to be kept from disturbing the neighborhood and me in particular. They might not even know there was a problem. If that was true then the community relationship would be injured and they would never know. I went to see them at their front door one afternoon. More about the meeting later on.

Many in the Body of Christ today 'take revenge' or punish other people where they are not authorized to do so. This variety of revenge usually works through trying to gain support from others, who may

or may not have been injured by the offender. Often close friends or relatives are drawn into a conspiracy that builds support for the 'injured' person. After all, if I can get you to do my dirty work for me or join me in it I'll get some satisfaction. Right? Most often this pay back is in the guise of normal gossip and chatting, but which then sinks into conspiracies of accusation, separation from and rejection of the absent person.

Functional relationship might be shut down in order to punish the other. Yes, God is looking for us to work together without the disruption of unresolved conflicts or other relational failures. Justice is a system that can bring resolution to most relational problems when properly applied and this requires fairness and impartiality. Here is a simple guideline. If you listen to and agree with negative talk about another person, you are guilty of conspiracy against the accused person. The obvious exceptions are if you are being asked to be a witness by the accuser or if you are an authoritative counselor to the accuser.

Deuteronomy 32:35, quoted in Romans 12:19 *“Do not take revenge (in any form) but leave room for God’s wrath for it is written, ‘It is mine to avenge, I will repay.’ (for you), says the Lord.”*

Have faith in God! That He will not permit any unresolved injustice done to you to be unaddressed. Either the offender will submit to righteousness, and do what is just, or he will receive punishment. No evil deed will escape the judgment.

Again the offender will have opportunity to repent and seek forgiveness. If he refuses, he will be subject to God’s review and possible punishment.

Many times God is more patient than we would be in giving room for repentance. Recognize that we would want His patience and kindness if the roles were reversed and we were the offender; a position we will all be in at one time or another.

It seems clear that God wants us to continue in love, i.e., Godly character and behavior, when we suffer injury from our enemies or our friends. Matthew 5:44-45. This forbearance on our part brings glory to God by our demonstration that we are His and we are trusting Him for perfect Justice on our behalf. He is our advocate and avenger. Do not, however, confuse carnal quality love, the passions and lust, with true Holy Spirit grown qualities of love. See 1 Cor 13

Having a sense of compassion, or even of pity, replaces resentment when we are connected with God in the midst of conflict. We are enabled to see the fate of the offender. We are warned though not to rejoice in that fate (Proverbs 24:17,18) as that would not only stay God’s hand, but would only be more carnality on our part. *“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad*

when he stumbles; Or the LORD will see {it} and be displeased, And turn His anger away from him.”

Proverbs 24:17,18. NAS

“When they hurled their insults at him, he (Jesus) did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.” 1 Peter 2:23 NIV

“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.” 1 Peter 3:8-9 NIV

Church Discipline Is Not Revenge

“I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. In no way did I mean the immoral people of this world, or the greedy and swindlers and idolaters, since you would then have to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who calls himself a Christian who is sexually immoral, or greedy, or an idolater, or verbally abusive, or a drunkard, or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person. For what do I have to do with judging those outside? Are you not to judge those inside? But God will judge those outside. Remove the evil person from among you.” 1 Cor 5:9-13. NET

This scripture is to be carried out under the authority of the church and not to be initiated by an injured member. If there is a conflict of interest with someone, always lean toward social interaction that will bring justice and reconciliation rather than moving unilaterally to ostracize them.

God’s Promise of Payback—He is Just in all He does.

2 Thessalonians 1:5 NET

“This is evidence of God's righteous judgment, to make you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which in fact you are suffering. For it is right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to you who are being afflicted to give rest together with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. With flaming fire he will mete out punishment on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will undergo the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his strength, when he comes to be glorified among his saints and admired on that day among all who have believed--and you did in fact believe our testimony. And in this regard we pray for you always, that our God will make you worthy of his calling and fulfill by his power your every desire for goodness and every work of faith, that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 1:5 NET

"Serve the Lord Christ. For the one who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong and there are no exceptions." Colossians 3:25 NET

"Alexander the coppersmith did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him in keeping with his deeds. You be on guard against him too, because he vehemently opposed our words."

2 Timothy 4:14-18 NET

Personal Gain

C.S. Lewis wrote in "The Problem of Pain" p59, *"If, being cowardly, conceited and slothful, you have never yet done a fellow creature great mischief, that is only because your neighbor's welfare has not yet happened to conflict with your safety, self-approval, or ease. Every vice leads to cruelty. Even a good emotion, pity, if not controlled by charity and justice, lead through anger to cruelty"*

Chapter 4 Communication

If an injury or insult diminishes the relationship, it is time to go talk it out and seek a righteous reconciliation.

Summary:

Communication is person to person speech that explains, listens, and produces understanding.

Communication is for healing, not for deepening the division by winning the argument.

Communication is not to “set the other person right.”

As the Scripture says “Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks,” so it will become clear what are the true sentiments and attitudes, of both parties, toward correcting the wrong, if any was done, and to return the relationship to parity.

Do these things:

- a. Go to the one who has injured you.
- b. Receive the one who says you have injured them.
- c. Talk in out and conclude, together, what will “make it right” and restore the relationship.

How do I know when to communicate about a wrong?

If you have been injured and can't get past the issue, then the situation needs to be brought to the attention of the one who hurt you. Give them a chance to explain or do what ever is necessary to fix the problem.

If there is a loss in relationship or a division then attend to the matter quickly. When your brother has something against you, and you know it, then go square the problem with him so that your relationship with God will not be impaired. (Matthew 5:23-26). When your brother sins against you, go to him privately and discuss it with him. (Matthew 18:15)

When there is a breakdown in unity then the whole Body suffers.

When there is a complaint against a leader, make sure this is a matter that concerns you and not someone else. Then treat him just as any other member of the Body. Give him respect for his position of authority, but do not think that he operates under a different standard or that he does not owe you righteous conduct. It seems to me that this is an intimidating situation for any church member, but if members insist on righteousness with ministers, then the little sins would not escalate into the major crimes that are rampant in America's churches.

"The Lord Showed Me..."

If you have a doctrinal dispute or think the pastor needs correction on some sermon point, then it will be best to keep it to yourself if you have no authority over these areas. This does not preclude having discussions with the minister and pointing out your understanding or view, but don't think you will be seen as a messenger from God. Everyone has an opinion, but not many have the *rhema*, 'Word of the Lord.' If you are going to speak as a prophet, be ready for the same responses that all your brother prophets have received through the centuries.

"Talking it out" Is The Essential Requirement.

Sometimes this is easy and sometimes it is the most difficult part of the process, but love risks itself to do what is right. Love always seeks to be expressed by and to restore righteousness in relationships.

Skill with words is required to communicate effectively. Knowing what to say, and how to say it are aspects that challenge us all and keep most from saying anything. When the words do not come easily, then one should recognize that the relationship is in jeopardy and seek even harder to *'talk it out.'* Unfortunately, most Christians would rather say nothing than risk rejection or seeming to not be *'loving.'*

Where reconciliation is the objective, then finding the right time and the right words becomes a positive thing. Having an attitude that reflects love is the most important component to successful communication. Do you love yourself more than the person who has wronged you by avoiding confrontation? The test for being *'loving'* is simple. Are you trying to correct a wrong and be reconciled, or are you trying to come out on top? Proving oneself to be in the right, or stubborn refusal to yield one's position or meet the other in fairness will be obvious and courts rejection from your hearer.

Let It Slide

The easy way and more risk free way is to do nothing. Let it slide. Accept injustice. But what is lost or damaged is the relationship and your heart that may *'get over it'* or not. The easy way out has more long term risk and the hurts (already there) will not be healed for either person.

Some ministers, at this point, will advise to *'forgive and move on'*, but this is really only the easy way out in religious garb. Since it takes two people to have an offense, (unless of course, one sins against themselves alone) it will take two to correct the offense and restore the relationship. If there is a

wound of soul, then being advised to 'heal thyself' is poor counsel simply for its practical ineffectiveness. It is usual, but not good, to separate the victim from the offender and place all the burden on the one who has been harmed without expecting the offender to be corrected and compelled to be righteous toward the one he has injured. When a minister advises a victim that 'you must forgive', without involving the offender, he does not offer the whole counsel of God, and is fostering and perpetuating injustice and unrighteousness.

Does God deal and work in these unilateral situations where the offender is absent? Yes, indeed He does, but this does not obviate a bilateral approach. Nor is the healing as complete, nor is the relationship restored if the offender and victim cannot walk through the reconciliation steps together.

There is an idea that, if we will just trust God, then everything will be okay. Blind trust that God will work things out will never replace doing what He says to do where we have responsibility to others, and from others. There is a time for passively trusting God, but doing nothing is also a remarkable form of disobedience. Doing nothing when the instructions are clear, is only *'doing it my way.'*

Hindrances To Communication

Hindrances to communication include facing the possibility that you will cause a deeper conflict than already exists. If you are rejected when you try to communicate about a wrong done to you, then the issue becomes one of maintaining righteousness within the Body of Christ. Where there is sin, we all have an obligation to help the sinner recognize his obligations and to help save him from his sin. It is not love to condone sin in the Body, and particularly where there is no repentance. If your brother will not listen to you, then take a witness with you and try again.

Sometimes, where we feel we have been wronged, we are afraid to raise a question with an offender because:

- 1) They may not agree with our point of view,
- 2) They may think we are wrong or 'unloving' for bringing up an issue,
- 3) We have been taught that we should unilaterally forgive everyone for anything they have done to us, and to not do so is 'unforgiveness',
- 4) There is a history of rejected attempts to communicate,
- 5) We don't know exactly what to say,
- 6) We might make it worse,
- 7) We don't want to be rejected,
- 8) Of the influence of shame.

Zeke's Owners

The time came, after several month of stewing inwardly, that I knew that I must do something about Zeke's barking. I must actually go and talk to his owners, Brad and Kate, and ask them to be responsible neighbors by doing what ever was necessary to keep Zeke more quiet. First, I went to the president of the home owners association, and explained the situation.... which he was already aware of from other residents. He authorized me to speak on behalf of myself and the other owners in asking Brad to do something.

Now, please remember that I am walking on new ground now and it might be a mine field! So if I go a little over the top, it is because I am not confident in what I am doing. I think the reader will understand what I faced. I am about to go onto another man's property, knock on his door, go into space where he has authority, and I do not, and make a complaint about his dog. This is not a warm fuzzy prospect! It will be equally difficult for the reader to approach someone who you think has done you wrong. They will have a different view of things and perhaps, the situation could blow up in your face. That is what Satan want us to think when we try to do things God's way, and why it is so necessary that we risk rejection and scorn from the other person in order to do what is right. The Kingdom of God is not about self preservation; it is about doing the right things to restore relationships. Make every effort to restore the relation to equity or the Kingdom will be divided. I felt a little weak kneed as I walked up the steps to Brad's house. He had remodeled an older house himself and had done a really first rate job. No door bell. I knocked with a little timidity. No one came. I knocked with more boldness which was heard by the youngest member of the household, Brad Jr. aged 5. He saw me at the door and started yelling about a bad man at the door. I was not comfortable! Finally, Kate came to the door and explained that Brad was not home. She stepped out onto the porch to talk with the strange man who might be a bad man too.

She was nice and I felt very uncomfortable explaining who I was and the complaint about Zeke. She was apologetic and explained how Zeke had acquired this new behavior just recently, probably an aging problem. Kate didn't promise any change, but said she would take it over with Brad. I said that I would write them a letter as a follow up to our conversation as soon as I could do so. We said goodbye and I beat a swift retreat. Zeke seemed to know what was going on and he objected later that evening with an unusual barrage aimed at nothing in particular. I knew that it was not over.

If he refuses to listen...., What's Wrong?

The first thing to do, which we should have already done before beginning communication, is to examine our own motives. Perhaps there is a beam in our own eye, maybe not. Is our motive to bring correction in a condemning way, or is it to redeem the relationship? Is our motive to prove our superior spirituality and understanding of God? I am not proposing that these things would disqualify anyone from confrontation, but only that we might need to correct our attitudes before we confront an offender. Let us ask ourselves if we are willing to carry a share of the responsibility and are open to hearing what that might be from the offender's point of view. Having checked our own heart, and our motive is to be reconciled on a fair basis, then we should be heard.

Are we afraid? This will make us appear to be weak and unworthy of the offender's attention. You will find that it will take more courage to be righteous than to do nothing. When anyone begins to honor God by obeying his directions, then spirits rise up that we never thought about with the purpose of oppressing us into inaction.

Am I a Beam Eye?

Matthew 7:3-5, NCV (paralleled in Luke 6:41-42)

"Why do you notice the little piece of dust in your friend's eye, but you don't notice the big piece of wood in your own eye? How can you say to your friend, 'Let me take that little piece of dust out of your eye'? Look at yourself! You still have that big piece of wood in your own eye. You hypocrite! First, take the wood out of your own eye. Then you will see clearly to take the dust out of your friend's eye." Matthew 7:3-5, NCV

Jesus continues his condemnation of condemnation here, but only as a self checking step rather than as a prohibition to confrontation. He says, "Make sure your attitudes are okay before you confront another. Get yourself in shape before you confront."

These verses prompt us to formulate a check list to use prior to confronting anyone.

First, we should examine our attitudes, and intentions. Also, it is wisdom to think how to best handle any possible negative response from the one we want to help or the one who has wronged us.

1. Let us check our own attitudes for spiritual pride and condescension where, thinking our position to be superior, we point out how the other person has wronged us.

It is certain that a violation of the Golden Rule of treating others as we wish to be treated will happen if we have a wrong and superior attitude.

2. Romans 2:1-4 is a parallel passage that warns against a condemning attitude when the critic is in fact doing the same kinds of things. If we tell a person not to gossip, when we gossip ourselves, this is not good. The apostle makes it clear in Romans 2 that this conduct will bring God's judgment. It is all in having the right attitude of reconciliation.
3. The offending person will either listen to you or not. If he does not listen, then the scripture tells us to take two or three witnesses to hear the offender's defense.
4. Have a truly sincere objective of helping the other person rather than condemning them. Even then, pure motives may not be recognized by the other person.
5. The person who has the mote/speck/dust may not be ready to receive correction, especially from another member. The Holy Spirit should be the leader here in pointing out faults, and He does that a lot. If God leads us, He will also give us the grace and the right words to say. Surely, all the prophets had words of correction that were directed by the Lord. They were almost always rejected by the sinner, and in some cases, murdered for their good intentions.
6. Do we have the ministerial authority to rebuke and correct? Better to leave correction to those who do. We all have authority to Warn a sinner of the potential penalties in order to 'save his soul'.
7. When we have the right motivation, then seek to point out the fault. Critical people, almost never, see that they are critical and that they will be rejected by the one they want to help. We assume that being a help should be the operative motivation, but some are just critical without really wanting to be a constructive help. No one will receive correction from anyone with a superior attitude, but will, or should, hear someone who wants to save him from a sin or fault that hinders the person in life.
8. If anyone is going to confront another they must be ready and willing to also be merciful by lending a helping hand.
9. This type of situation is not usually one where there is a personal sin or offense between the two people. These verses should not be used to support some notion that we should not communicate with those who have personally sinned against us or offended us. It has then become our business and we are directed by the law of Christ to confront for the sake of repentance and reconciliation.
10. Jesus teaches here that if we have gone through the process of recognizing our own faults and then to overcome it that we would then have a better understanding of what the other person is going through. No one wants the very thing they desire to be free of to be thrown in their face by someone who is only trying to put them down.

On the other hand, the offender may not listen because he is innocent or thinks he is, or the matter is not important to him. He will, by reflex, defend himself. He will hear the complaint and justify himself, condemning you. He may not fear God or recognize that the innocent and abused have God on their side. He might not fear God's punishment, looking at you as not having the will or strength to do him any harm. He may just be ignorant of how Kingdom Justice functions and of the obligations he has to cooperate with you.

Also, a very real possibility is that he too is wounded, maybe not by you, but still hindered in finding sufficient love to be able to listen to you. You are not expected to set aside righteousness because someone is hurt or has been abused in childhood, or has some other reason to disregard the issues you bring. We know that "hurt people hurt people," so this becomes a matter for the church to look into and the next step of calling for witnesses is appropriate. All these possibilities, and more, make confronting a scary thing, but it is God's direction and with faith we will risk a negative outcome.

Chapter 5 Witnesses

Introducing a witness to a conflict brings a whole new level of objectivity for everyone.

If a plea to an offending brother fails then the priority shifts from reconciliation to the maintaining, even to the enforcement, of righteousness. (see Matt 18:16) For this purpose, the member is advised to take one or two witnesses to address the offender. With reconciliation as the objective, determining truth and confirming responsibility will be the primary functions of any honest witness.

The witnesses serve to report to the church what the offender's response is to the victim. Witnesses may not have seen the original incident, but now are called to observe how each person conducts themselves. Witnesses may not be able to support the victim's position, but can validate before the church the victim's attempts at reconciliation.

With Zeke, I Have Failed, So Far, to Find Someone Willing To Be a Witness.

Several months went by and there was little or no improvement with the Zeke situation. I had written a follow up letter to Brad to which he responded graciously, promising to do "whatever it will take to appease you." Very nice, but no change. I offered to buy a collar that would buzz Zeke's neck when he barked. A training device. They already had one but failed to put it on because Zeke did not seem to like it. What should I do, Lord?

Sally, the young woman nearest to the fence where Zeke lives, had complained to me, but not to Kate, about the noise. She even offered to go with me to talk to Brad and Kate about the situation. I thought it would not be right to do so. A witness' prime virtue is their objectivity. They have no side to take and position to advance. They just observe what takes place that would affect an outcome of reconciliation or division. Sally would just be another complainant like myself and if she went with me to talk to Brad and Kate again, then they would feel like we were ganging up on them and putting unreasonable pressure on them.

Additionally, I asked a couple of people in church we attend if they would go and be a witness for me. People looked at me like I was crazy. No one was willing to go through what could be an unpleasant situation or worse for themselves personally. "It's just a dog! Give it up!" I was told. I could not. It should be clear to every reader by now that I was being tested by God at every step to see if I would live out the principles I am writing about. There can be no hypocrisy in the Kingdom. I would have

to know how difficult it can be in *'real life'* to be obedient to the Words given. I would have to trust God for grace to do what I could not do. I would have to face the spiritual entities that prevent Christians from truly representing the Kingdom of Light and cause them to hide in the shadows of soul preservation.

Witnesses may come away from the meeting with a different view than when called by the victim. The one who first presents his case seems to be right. It may be, however, that the victim's cause is frivolous, inaccurate, or even malicious, and this becomes evident at the meeting. Witnesses can then act to bring the victim to repentance as representatives of the local church. *"Let every matter be confirmed by two or three witnesses."* Matthew 18:16, Deut 19:15.

Taking witnesses will generally not produce warm, and sentimental reconciliation, but it will speak loudly to the offender that he should take this the situation seriously. If the witnesses have first hand knowledge of sin then they should convince the offender of it. There might also be the sin of self justification present which hinders reconciliation, but that issue would be presented as a secondary issue.

The appearance of witnesses who support the accuser does not seal the offender's guilt. The provision of witnesses by God is to discover truth and to bring the authority of the church into play. One only has to remember the situation with Jesus when a woman was accused of being caught in the act of adultery and He proceeded to uncover there own sin of being false witnesses whose only purpose was to trap Him. See John 8:1-11. As always, Justice is fair and impartial. Reconciliation is the objective.

There are true witnesses and false. Those who might only support a friend, the victim, and those who fear God, and are not willing to pervert Justice.

Personal friends of victims do not make believable witnesses as they usually have a prejudiced bias. Family members should be avoided in choosing a witness, as they, most likely, are only on the side of the victim. Having another person present your case for you might be a wise thing, but do not confuse that with taking a witness in the Biblical sense. Just remember that witnesses are not advocates of one person are another. They only serve to observe and report what they see and hear.

Witnesses, recruited by a friend to make a strong show for them, must realize they risk losing their friendship with the victim if they seem to 'betray' the victim in supporting the offender's position. As the Church is in great need of objective witnesses to help resolve divisions, please, don't be trapped by

a friend or family member who says they want you to be a 'supportive witness' when the real need is for an 'objective witness.'

Credible witnesses are those who serve the discovery of truth. If the fear of God is present, good witnesses report a true picture. The best witnesses have first hand knowledge of the alleged offense. This is simple to understand. They actually saw and heard clearly the offense as it happened. They are not sympathetic to one side or the other.

True witnesses have righteous reconciliation in mind rather than winning the cause of anyone. False witnesses might 'spin' the story to be persuasive, but in God's system, they will then suffer the same punishment as they wish for the alleged offender. See Deut 19:16-19. In the Law of Moses, the witnesses that caused a man to be found guilty, had to cast the first stone to take his life. This made it a 'very personal' issue for them as well.

The Woman Accused of Adultery

Jesus teaches us a number of important principles concerning righteous witnesses in John 8:1-8

"Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning he went back to the Temple, and all the people came to him, and he sat and taught them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery. They forced her to stand before the people. They said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught having sexual relations with a man who is not her husband. The law of Moses commands that we stone to death every woman who does this. What do you say we should do?"

They were asking this to trick Jesus so that they could have some charge against him. When they continued to ask Jesus their question, he raised up and said, *"Anyone here who has never sinned can throw the first stone at her."* Then Jesus bent over again and wrote on the ground. Those who heard Jesus began to leave one by one, first the older men and then the others. Jesus was left there alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus raised up again and asked her, *"Woman, where are they? Has no one judged you guilty?"* She answered, *"No one, sir."* Then Jesus said, *"I also don't judge (condemn) you guilty. You may go now, but don't sin anymore."* John 8:1-8 NIV

The woman was acquitted before Jesus, not because she was innocent **or** guilty, not because he excused her sin, but because the witnesses were perverting Justice. Their purpose was to trap Jesus

into making a ‘judgment’ that contradicted the Law of Moses. They wanted to kill Him more than they wanted to bring the woman to Justice. Jesus used the Law to defeat them in their own hypocrisy. Remember, any witness, who falsely accuses, is subject to receiving the same punishment he would bring upon the accused. It is implicit that the sin of the accusers is a current sin and associated with their lack of honesty in their accusation. This seems likely since no one is required to be sin free to be a witness or even to be a judge. “*All have sinned,*” and all are capable of sinning. Never the less, God has given authority to the Son of Man and to the Church through Him to judge one another and administer Justice in the earth. Therefore this must be a sin of false accusation against the woman herself or in the manner they were conducting the trial.

The accusers were teachers of the law from a sect called Pharisees. There was nothing to indicate that an authorized judge was among them. They accused her publicly rather than through any judicial protocol. Just because one is a teacher of the law or of the Bible is not sufficient qualification to be a judge in the Kingdom. In Matthew 23:23, Jesus proclaimed seven curses on this group. “*Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.*” Matthew 23:23. NIV

Furthermore, Jesus could not judge her guilty or not guilty even though He had authority to do so. There were no credible witnesses nor was there an injured husband present to accuse her. Case closed.

There is also the factor that Jesus’ time to judge had not come. At this point, He said His role was to save the world not judge it, while asserting that He was authorized by the Father to Judge all things as the Son of Man. The time is coming for Justice and Judgment to begin at the House of the Lord.

If the one accused of offending really feels he is right and is not guilty, he should immediately appeal to the church himself, through the witnesses, so that an impartial review can be had.

While reconciliation is the first objective, it must not be coerced, extracted or synthesized. Reconciliation can only be accomplished by righteous means. See Amos 3:3

Chapter 6 Discerning Good and Evil

Is it our Father or our adversary, demonic spirits, who tell us that we can not or should not recognize when someone has sinned?

"And a person who is living on milk isn't very far along in the Christian life and doesn't know much about doing what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, who have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong and then do what is right." Hebrews 5:12-14

TLB [\(see Scriptures, Hebrews 5:12-14, and Greek reference in the Glossary\)](#)

There is an obligation for every Christian to be able to know the difference between good and evil, what is right and just before God, and what is not. The Church has an obligation to her members to provide a proving ground in which to habitually practice exercises in knowing good and evil. The Church is a forum where right and wrong questions are discussed and issues decided so that we may know what the mind of Christ is for any conflict of life.

If there is no official means within a local church for deciding what is good and evil in real life situations, the member is not exempted, and is still responsible before God to continually practice discernment of good and evil. Good preaching is necessary, however it is not enough to build discernment. Hearing the Word must be followed by doing the Word. Without doing, the Word is only a nice theory, but with no impact. Christians are required by God to grow up, and that means applying the teachings about righteousness with tangible results in everyday situations. I do not mean to say that all of life's conflicts are good or evil, but rather that we need to know the nuances and apply only what is good and wise.

Many situations arise where one can have a 'good' view of things and be in conflict with another who also has a 'good' view but distinct from the other's view. Working out a solution (perfecting maturity) 'good' for both sides is a needed function of Justice within the local church. My idea can be good for me, but is it good for others too? Who should say? The wise elders of the church can provide such answers. Please, do not think of Justice as only a means of discovering evil and punishing evil doers. Justice works to settle questions among the righteous.

There is an idea in the world that God's definitions of right and wrong should be excluded from public debate. The, so called, logic is that persons can have an opinion, but that those opinions could not

have originated in the mind of God, nor does anyone have a right to speak on behalf of God. Therefore, any believer, of any faith, must close the door on their beliefs in public, leaving definitions of right and wrong to those who act only from a secularized, God removed, world view.

Certainly history would support that imposition of 'religious beliefs' by civil governments does not always produce what is expected or desired by God. On the other hand, we might look around us at civil government or public education to remember that there are ungodly people who will do anything, right or wrong, to hold power over God's people and all others too. It is they, the ungodly and unbelieving who put on us, the light of the world, that we must not 'impose' beliefs, our definitions of good and evil, and that this would, some how, violate the rights of society.

I am not here advocating public rebellion or even demonstrations against corrupt judges and politicians. I am saying that, beginning with our own interior life, the thoughts that run continually, Christians would be wise to work hard at learning what is good and what is evil. If we are willing to give attention to ourselves and then, through disputes and conflicts, to interact with those around us, we will learn in a more perfect way of righteousness, what is good and evil, as defined by God. The present situation in America demonstrates the failure of thousands of churches to promote the maturity of the saints through discerning good and evil. The prevailing philosophy is that we will not be 'loving' if we are discerning too, so let's pretend that everything is alright. In contrast, we should have confidence that if we get it right in Church, we can change America. Public demonstrations and parades will do little without reformation at the personal level. As the saying goes, "What we do at home will affect the whole world."

We could say that Adamic mankind has attained to godhood, everyman doing what is right in his own eyes. But that kind of man is only the puppet of a powerful, but unseen, spirit pretender to the throne of God. Know this: there is a god, who is no god at all, at work to drown the voice of the agents of God who are the Church. Will Christians submit like sheep for the slaughter or will they, with courage, speak and act and live as God directs us?

"You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness" was the prophetic reflection concerning Jesus (Hebrews 1:9 quoting Psalm 46:6,7 NIV) It shows us the attitude and guiding principle for the brothers of Jesus to follow. Having those attitudes and actions will bring to us the oil of joy directly from our Father.

In moving and growing from being babes in Christ to those who are mature, where do we begin? To be more perfect will require each one to recognize his own state of imperfection. None will grow if he considers himself to be 'good enough' thereby justifying himself in immaturity. We begin to grow

with a realization that we do not know what is good rather than dogmatically defending our view as good. The immature idea is: if I am right, then why do I need to change my thinking? To change a view, one must come to the conclusion that the current view is inadequate, if not evil, by God's standards. If there is a need to grow, one must shed the old concept for a modified, more mature concept of good. One who dwells in shadows must leave the shadows behind to enter into more illumination. Shadows of evil consume us!

Realize that in making errors of judgment, we will grow in making accurate judgments. Making no judgments of good and evil will only give permission to and perpetuate evil. As no one is perfectly mature in the handling of the Word of righteousness, we not only need help of the church, but we need to really and truly work at developing discernment individually. It seems to me that Christians, myself included, let society and non-believers determine for us what is good or bad. Rather than we, the Church, seek the mind of God for wisdom and understanding and then talk among ourselves to know what is right for our society and us in private relationships.

Let no one say to you, "You can't judge!" in order to neutralize your knowledge of what is Godly. Let no one silence you with, "That's just your opinion," when you know the fundamentals of God's Words. Let no one defeat you in public life because you have not grown in discernment by working though applying Scripture to private, personal problems in order to reach right conclusions.

Read on and learn how you are not judging any action that God has not already Judged. He has already decided every major issue! You are not taking the place of a lawgiver or judge when you recognize what is evil and sinful. The only demand on Christians is that they are in harmony with and obedient to the Judgments already made.

Lawgiver and Judge

The first and most foundational element of Justice is for there to be a common understanding of what actually is 'right' and what is not. If there is no agreement about righteousness in the conduct of relationships, then chaos rules and everyone does what is '*right in their own eyes*'. Judges 21:25. Thanks be to God! He has given us the law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus which leads to freedom. We do not have to risk being unrighteous in making our own judgments of what is right and wrong! You are not being 'judgmental' when you point out a sin to someone when God has already determined that conduct to be sin. Said another way, you and I do not make the judgments of what is sin or not and it is not be judgmental to know the what God's ruling is. Many times a sinner will try to justify their sin by the counter-accusation, "you can't judge" when they in fact are making a judgment that their action

is righteous when in fact God says it is sin. You are in fact a loving friend who is trying to save the person from the penalty that will be theirs if they continue and do not repent.

Laws are the codifying of what is right or righteous and what is wrong or unrighteous. Laws, or rules of conduct within a society, not only put limits on the conduct of each person, but they also provide order, stability, and unity for that society. Imagine if there were no stop signs or traffic lights. There would be terrible confusion and many collisions on the streets.

Obviously, two people are the minimum number to constitute a society, and they must come to an agreement of how to relate; what constitutes a violation to the relationship; how to return equity to a conflict; and what penalties are necessary when the relationship can't be reconciled. There will always be a lack of peace if one person dominates and subjugates the other, so an objective and a wise Law giver is the answer. Also needed is a Judge to decide the means to resolve disputes. God serves as the only Lawgiver, and He has given all Judgment to His Christ.

As one looks around the world, he will see different legal systems and collections of laws that are the standards for that particular society. There will be some laws that are common in all cultures and there will laws in each nation that are unique to that nation. For example, ; "Do not kill.", will be found in most every social group on earth. "Do not slander you neighbor.", although appearing in some legal codes, is enforced in few if any.

The major reason, special cultural needs aside, for the differences in legal codes is that men, i.e., kings, presidents, congressmen, judges, and other men in civil government presume to make laws that are derived independently of God, the Supreme Lawgiver and Judge.

Man, having Godlike qualities, can make evaluations, decisions and judgments. God's Laws are the correct basis from which man is to make his judgments. At the foundational level of Christianity, a judge is one who determines what is right and wrong as applied in a specific situation working from a set or code of Laws that are given to him by God. Please note that immediately after the giving of the Law, judges were appointed to administer that Law in the fear of the Lord.

Adamic man's involvement brings a gradual corruption of the Righteous Law which over time deteriorates into unrighteous or unjust law in the earth. A rebellious spirit came to begin this corruption, it continues today as a subtle and slow process. It is the plan of the evil one to discredit God and replace Him as Lawgiver to man with his own set of rules.

The methods of Satan include the bringing of a Law of God into question as right or not; to suggest an unrighteous alternative that seems more appealing to Adam; and then to settle for a compromise. See Genesis 3:1-6 for this story in detail. In philosophy, this strategy is very similar to the Hegelian dialectic which creates or identifies a social problem; suggests an outrageous solution and then moves to establish a seemingly ‘reasonable’ intermediate solution, or compromise, which really changes the motion of society toward the outrageous change.

The Bible is seen in many hands, but the understanding of how to apply the “*Law that brings freedom*” is not known by many Christians. Since Christians are largely illiterate of the Bible, they are vulnerable to being taught or imprinted with just about any compromised idea of what is right in life. For example, someone might think that *love* always must make one feel good, but if *love* condones unrighteousness for the sake of pleasure, is it really love? Godly love is always righteous.

Looking forward to the Kingdom of God, which we all pray to be established in the earth, all law will come from God the Father, with Jesus as the resident King and Administrator. “*Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: the law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations.*” Isaiah 51:4-5 NIV

God has always been the Lawgiver. From the beginning in the Garden of Eden, God set forth a few simple rules with only one prohibition. The enemy of God came, and convinced the man and woman that they could do as they desired without penalty. Also, they were told that they would have more ‘*personal growth*’ in the bargain. With Satan’s help, mankind began the sin spiral that required God to periodically intervene by giving more and more laws until there was no more preventing of iniquity. Then came the flood.

Notice the contrast between the collusion of Satan and Adam and submission of Jesus, the last Adam, to the Father. Isaiah speaks to the future when Jesus and those who are with Him will rule in the earth.

“*Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;...*”
Isaiah 11: 1-5 NAS

Not even Jesus presumes to “do His own thing” or develop His own way of doing things, but He is in complete harmony with what ever the Father says is right and the way of good conduct. If we are in Him, we will adopt the same mind and the same submitted actions. This scenario explains why “*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.*” I Corinthians 15:22. NAS

When God gives a Law, it is the result of a judgment, evaluation or decision He has made. Knowing that everything He does is just and good, then there can be no equal or superior source for Law. If any person makes a judgment that is in conflict with the Laws of God, then that person has made himself a lawgiver. He violates Kingdom Authority by becoming a judge of the Law of God which cannot be done without causing harm. That person will be himself judged according the law he declares. Hence the warning from Matthew 7:1, “*Judge not lest you be judged!*” This warning is, first of all, against replacing righteous Law with someone else’s private version of what is right.

“Well!, what does that have to with me?”, the indignant member asked. This. We are all in the process of being changed and part of that change is from unrighteous thoughts and actions to righteous. From being in Adam to being in Christ. So, we all have a history of doing what we want, deciding what is right and wrong for ourselves, and condemning others based on our own ideas and limited information. If we do this, we are guilty of judging God’s Law and replacing it with our own. Taking the place of the Lawgiver in determining what is right and wrong may lead to other and more serious problems.

The worst violation any person can make is to say that which is evil in God’s Law is actually good, or that what is good is called evil. Someone will quickly say, “I would never do that!” But the trend in society is heading in that direction, and there are many violations like this in the Church. For example: The Pharisees said that Jesus drove out demons by the power of Beelzebul (a satanic spirit). Today, there are many in the Church that say exactly the same things about deliverance ministries. Speaking in tongues is ‘of the devil’ is another common example of calling what is good and edifying to be evil. Those who have healing ministries are commonly called “charlatans, who are in it for the money.” I fear that too often those things which God says are Holy are being said to be unholy.

These are very heavy duty ideas and I have expressed them strongly. Why? This book is to make the principles and Laws of Justice clear so that we may maintain relationships in righteousness. To do so will require that we not make up our own rules of how we will or will not approach these problems. If King Jesus says to confront our brother when he sins against us then, we are not permitted to do otherwise. If we do otherwise, we have made a judgment against righteousness and God himself.

Chapter 7 Repentance

If you do not correct a wrong against a brother, then the Lord will Himself extract restitution and set a just punishment for you.

An Overview

1. The first action of repentance is to cease doing what ever caused the injury. It is more than “*being sorry*”, it is more than saying “*I’m sorry.*” It requires a change of mind and understanding sufficient to turning away from words and actions that injure, and toward what is right. Six elements identify when repentance is complete:
2. Godly sorrow,
3. Changed behaviors and attitudes,
4. Admission of Responsibility and Confession of Wrongs,
5. Restitution: Making a repayment that makes amends,
6. Seeking mercy and/or forgiveness,
7. Resumed relationship.

Me and Zeke

Zeke does not understand ideas and interconnected actions as complex as we are presenting here, but he is definitely showing signs of repentance. He is not barking as often or as long as before. Now, this is difficult for me to evaluate being an involved person myself. (Everyone thinks his position is correct on every matter.) But something has happened across the fence to make me think that Zeke has truly repented and ceased from annoying behavior for all time. It is impossible for me to make a final decision on this matter, but I desire to have the matter finished and my relationship with Zeke, and Brad and Kate to be cordial and considerate in every way.

I have not mentioned any faith related considerations of Brad and Kate and honestly, I do not know if they are Christians or not. My obligation is to promote Justice whether they are believers or not. Justice is for all peoples and Christians are the only true administrators of Kingdom righteousness as

detailed in the Scriptures. Brad and Kate might become believers if they see me or any other Christian who is interested in fairness and impartiality in community relations.

It is easy to extend absolution of past transgressions to Zeke, after all, he doesn't really know what he is doing. You will notice that not all six of the components of repentance are in evidence, but I am satisfied with conditions and willing to forego the unknown. Restitution is not needed nor desired in the case. The other items are implicit in the quiet results. We will see what happens next, but as far as I am concerned, all is well, and life is good in the neighborhood.

In looking back over this situation of the last nine months, I am convinced that God has used it to compel me apply the steps that I offer to others. It is needful that I know from experience that the deepest work of all has takes place in the heart of one who seeks out someone who has wronged them. These steps are not easy, but relationships maintained and repaired in righteousness are very high on God's agenda for the Church. I thank God for Zeke.

A Rabbi's Reflections on Repentance

We offer selected portions of an excellent article by Rabbi David Blumenthal, Professor of Judaic Studies at Emory University, Atlanta. Blumenthal identifies the components of Teshuva, repentance, from a classical rabbinic point of view. * We can learn from him. The full article may be found at <http://www.crosscurrents.org/blumenthal.htm>

Teshuva (Repentance)

“Teshuvá is the key concept in the rabbinic view of sin, repentance, and forgiveness. The tradition is not of one mind on the steps one must take to repent of one's sins. However, almost all agree that repentance requires five elements: recognition of one's sins as sins (hakarát ha-chét'), remorse (charatá), desisting from sin (azivát ha-chét'), restitution where possible (peira'ón), and confession (vidúí).

"Recognition of one's sins as sins" is an act of one's intelligence and moral conscience. It involves knowing that certain actions are sinful, recognizing such actions in oneself as more than just lapses of praxis, and analyzing one's motives for sin as deeply as one can. For example, stealing from someone must be seen not only as a crime but also as a sin against another human and a violation of God's demands of us within the covenant. It also involves realizing that such acts are part of deeper patterns of relatedness and that they are motivated by some of the most profound and darkest elements in our being.

"Remorse" is a feeling. It is composed of feelings of regret, of failure to maintain one's moral standards. It may also encompass feelings of being lost or trapped, of anguish, and perhaps of despair at our own sinfulness, as well as a feeling of being alienated from God and from our own deepest spiritual roots, of having abandoned our own inner selves.

"Desisting from sin" is neither a moral-intellectual analysis nor a feeling; it is an action. It is a

ceasing from sin, a desisting from the patterns of sinful action to which we have become addicted. Desisting from sin involves actually stopping the sinful action, consciously repressing thoughts and fantasies about the sinful activity, and making a firm commitment never to commit the sinful act again.

"Restitution" is the act of making good, as best one can, for any damage done. If one has stolen, one must return the object or pay compensation. If one has damaged another's reputation, one must attempt to correct the injury to the offended party.

"Confession" has two forms: ritual and personal. Ritual confession requires recitation of the liturgies of confession at their proper moments in the prayer life of the community. Personal confession requires individual confession before God as needed or inserting one's personal confession into the liturgy at designated moments. The more specific the personal confession, the better. One who follows these steps to teshuva is called a "penitent" (chozér be-teshuvá).

The tradition is quite clear, however, that recognition of sin, remorse, restitution, and confession, if they are done without desisting from sin, do not constitute teshuva. Without ceasing one's sinful activity, one has only arrived at the "preliminaries to teshuva" (hirkurí teshuvá). Actual desisting from sin is what counts. Thus, if one desists from sinful action because one has been frightened into it, that is still teshuva and the person is considered a penitent. For example, if a person ceases to gamble compulsively because someone threatens to beat him severely the next time he does it, such a person is considered a penitent. Or, if a person ceases to steal because he has been told he will be sent to jail the next time it happens, such a person is considered a penitent. Furthermore, if a person becomes convinced that he or she will be punished in the life-after-death and ceases sinful action on that account, this person too is considered a penitent, though this motivation for desisting is higher than the previous ones because it is a function of a larger religious worldview which considers the

wrongdoing as actual sin.

Teshuva which is rooted in fear of humans or God is called "repentance rooted in fear" (teshuvá mi-yir'á) and, while not the highest form of teshuva, it is the core thereof. Reform of one's character through analysis of sin, remorse, restitution, and confession, when combined with the ceasing of sinful action, is called "repentance rooted in love" (teshuvá mei-ahavá). "Repentance rooted in love" is desirable but, without cessation of sin, reform of one's character is useless. Maimonides, the foremost halakhic (legal) and philosophic authority of rabbinic Judaism, lists desisting from sin as the very first step to teshuva.

Rabbinic tradition teaches that all the steps to teshuva are necessary. Their interrelationship is best described as a spiral which touches each of the five points, yet advances with each turn. Thus, one may begin at any point -- with action, analysis, remorse, restitution, or confession. However, as one repeats the steps of teshuva again and again, one's analysis and remorse deepen, one's restitution and commitment-to-desist become firmer, and one's confession becomes more profound. As one cycles through the five phases of teshuva again and again, one's teshuva becomes more earnest, more serious. At its height, one achieves "full teshuva" (teshuvá gemurá) which would require full consciousness and action such that, given the same situation, one would refrain from the sin for which one had repented. Sinfulness is a very deep dimension of human existence and dealing with it calls upon all our spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and moral resources -- even when we recognize that ceasing to sin is the base line of repentance."

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Consider The Alternatives To Repentance

Dear friends, where would we be if we could not repent? God has given us a wonderful grace and a place to meet with Him when we have gone astray. We might think upon the tragic mistake of 'godless Esau' who had a time to repent, to meet with God to settle his sin, but did not value his inheritance and lost his place of repentance and the opportunity to make it all right again. There is a place and time of repentance. I suspect that most Christians have a hope for the transformation to Christ likeness, but postpone the now opportunities hoping for some after death prospect of conversion. This is an idea that I can find no substantiation for in Scripture. Christians, myself included, must look at the now opportunities that present themselves as the only opportunities that we may have. None know when death will overtake us.

When we have an issue of personal sin, or just an error of actions, or a character flaw (which will lead to sin), or a difficult person that brings out the worst in us, God will be present with us to show us a better way of life, the way of Jesus. The key that opens up His involvement is our willingness to come before Him humbly to find how to repent.

Suppose God had rules that provided '*three strikes and you are out,*' for sin. Two chances to repent and be righteous and the third sin produces a conclusive judgment. We would all be in deep trouble! There are so many ways to go wrong, and no one ever gets it right the first time, and often not the tenth time. If God did not give us many chances to 'work out our salvation,' there would be only a fearful expectation of judgment without mercy.

God intends to have sons and daughters who live in righteousness all the time, and He works with us through repentance, when we ere, to mature us in righteousness that is intrinsic to us as new creatures in Christ. Let us be sure that we do not make the same double mistake of Esau where we give away our inheritance for some trivial temporal thing, and then forsake the wonderful opportunity to turn, to be changed now, and to have our inheritance in the eternal Kingdom of God more sure. (See Romans 2:7)

Remember that repentance may not be pleasant to the flesh, but it is an opportunity for repair, growth and reward.

Things That Hinder Repentance

The Flesh

What the Bible calls the '*old man of the flesh*' will do anything other than admit that he has done wrong. Repentance is connected to admitting responsibility when needed. This is the story of Adam when confronted by God over the events in the garden of Eden. This is the story of man today as we continually hear the blaming of others by a guilty person for what he is responsible for. Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the snake. No flesh wants to admit responsibility of sin and as a consequence, they reject the power of God to bring Christ likeness to that area of their personhood. Also, with Adam and Eve we see the consequences today of their unwillingness to admit their responsibility in the sin of disobedience and of forsaking their governing responsibilities.

I think we will find the path back to the Tree of Life opened to us as we disallow self-protective attitudes for the sake of being transformed to the likeness of Christ by pursuing His way of doing things. The natural man does not understand the things of God. Only the transformed man of the spirit can understand the wonderful gift of being able to find a place of repentance before God and man.

Looking again at the garden of Eden, we see that the serpent, or Satan, will work in our personal garden to tempt us to sin, and, I think, will continue to tempt us to self justification to keep us from turning, repenting, and be saved from the results of our sin.

False Doctrines

There is a message in the land today being fostered by many evangelists and liberal churches which deliver the ideas of 'universal acceptance and unconditional love.' Be clear that God loves and accepts those that repent of their sinfulness, who obey Him in all things, and who serve His Kingdom. He takes us as we are when we come to Jesus, but the objective is complete transformation of our nature, our self, our soul. He loves those who obey Him and punishes or rejects all those who are disobedient. Do not be deceived!

Our society has a belief woven into it that says, "*Do what you will!*" which effectively exalts the individual to place of making up what constitutes righteousness for themselves. This belief sets aside the reality of a Supreme Lawgiver who determines what is right and wrong, good and evil, and then the need to repent at each point. Personal guilt is not something that anyone should feel or respond to in this belief structure. People will do most anything to not '*feel bad*' and the faculty of [conscience](#) is burned up. Please, know that there is a distinct difference between being guilty and feeling guilty, between the feelings that are associated with doing wrong and those of unjust condemnation and shame.

Misdirected Sympathy, Compassion and Mercy

Often well meaning ministers will try to remove what they view as condemnation or shame when the person is under conviction of the Holy Spirit and needs to repent. Romans 8:1-4 must be applied correctly to those who are *'in Christ Jesus.'* Church counselors and saints alike are eager to remove the emotional pain a person is feeling by telling them that *'God loves them and they are forgiven'* and not even mention the need of the person to repent of what they have done. A victim can also be a sinner who needs to repent of their own actions and the contributions they have made to the troubled relationship. Do not think of it as *'compassionate mercy'* to set aside God's ways which include personal repentance. Godly compassion leads people in the ways of God that produce true healing and freedom for them and others. That's what Justice is all about.

Universal Acceptance and Unconditional Love

In the Church, the doctrine of *'universal acceptance and unconditional love'* teaches that any person may come to God through Christ and enter the Kingdom of God by confessing that they have sinned and repeating a sinner's prayer. If this doctrine omits the idea of repentance from those sins, it is incomplete and incorrect. To tell one that they are accepted *'just as you are,'* and that God *'understands their heart and loves them anyway'* without true repentance is misleading and unscriptural. To say that life long turning from sin is not necessary for salvation or eternal life cheats the hearer. It seems needless to say, but these doctrines not only are error but they keep most converts in same condition as when they came to church the first time. I fear that we ministers will say most anything, twisting the Holy Words, to 'build a church' in numbers but not of Godly people.

Removing Repentance From The Process

On *'Relating Love, Mercy and Justice,'* Dan Juster, in his book **'Due Process'** says, "Because God loves us and is still just, we have a dilemma. How can God be accounted just by His own standards, and yet forgive and bless? The answer is in the cross. The full penalty of justice was paid on the cross and because we are in Him, we are accounted as having paid the price justice demands. To be accounted righteous, we must, by His power repent of sins. True repentance always includes restitution wherever it is possible. We do not deserve this grace, yet in mercy God offers it. He can offer it only because the cross satisfies His standards of justice." P64

"When a believer sins by lying, stealing, slandering or teaching false doctrine, that believer must repent. If repentance is true, the one who stole returns the stolen goods, plus extra compensation, according to scriptural standards. Because of the cross, and of our sincere repentance and restitution,

God does not hold us eternally accountable for our violation. Our sin is under the blood. However, it is not under the blood if there is no restitution. The slanderer must do all in his power to restore the reputation of the individual or of the group slandered. The one who taught false doctrine seeks to inform all who were mistaught of what was false so that any wrong influence is nullified.

This process demonstrates how mercy, love and justice come together in the plan of God. The prophets understood it. If God indulged those who 'ripped off' the poor, it would not be merciful, but grossly unloving toward the victims! When Zacchaeus repented, he said, *"Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore it fourfold."* Jesus responded, *"Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham."* (see Luke 19:1-10)

What if Zacchaeus has said, *"Look Lord, I thank you that you are loving and forgiving and even though I have stolen and been bad, I now receive your love"*? I am certain that Jesus would not have responded positively. However, in today's church world, one group could require someone to repent and make restitution while another group could respond that such restitution was harsh and judgmental, that the situation was under the blood. Only sincere repentance puts sin under the blood, and there is no sincere repentance without truly desiring to make restitution.

Yes, God longs for us to receive His mercy, but He cannot provide it in such a way as to violate His justice. He longs to recognize the cleansing blood of Jesus in our individual lives, but He can apply it only to the truly repentant. That is the nature of God's mercy, love and justice. It is a love so deep that He sent Jesus to die for us. It is a justice so true that it required the death of Jesus for our sins and our repentance to receive it. Thus God is *"just and the Justifier"* of those who are in Jesus.

Those who understand God's mercy and love to be indulgent toward those who are in sin cause unrighteousness to prevail in the Body of the Messiah and demean the work of the cross. They have humanistic concept of mercy, not a biblical one! " P65-66

Combine these false doctrines in the Church with the societal and demonic pressures and you can see how robbed God's people are of the true benefits of repentance and the necessity of turning from everything that displeases our Father. Being able to repent is a wonderful gift from God! It leads from death to life!

Kingdom Significance

Jesus explained the importance of repentance in his first recorded public message. "*Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand!*" This statement links the concept of repenting, i.e., turning, changing, to the concept of being a citizen of and entering into the Kingdom of God.

Keep in mind that the suggestion, "*repentance is not really important*" or necessary will always be stressed by the friend of the world and its systems. The spiritual man, a son of God, will see repentance as a wonderful opportunity to leave one level of life behind in order to enter to a higher level and to grow up in Christ, which is pleasing to the Father

Hebrews 6:1 declares that repentance is a foundational principle, even a basic idea for the children of God to be continuously turning away from acts that lead to death. We all should have a thorough understand of these teachings, and also be about having in place the personal disciplines and practices that repentance demands.

Without repentance there can be no forgiveness and no reconciled relationships!

This is an awesome statement and needs to be thoroughly supported from Scripture. An attendant idea is that forgiveness is not automatic and is not something that can be expected or extracted from anyone we have sinned against whether God or man. Please, read the scriptures below and decide for yourself if these statements are true or not.

What Should I Do?

Recognize that you have a responsibility for reconciliation in situations where things have gone wrong. Do not react, when confronted, with self justification or excuses. Most of all, do not reflect the blame back at the other person. Listen, and then consider carefully what has been said and the validity of it all. It is alright to respond, but you don't need to be self defensive. Most times a good explanation is all that is needed. Misunderstandings are often settled with good communication rather than the silent treatment. Cutting off the other person emotionally is not pleasing to God. If you are not sure how to respond then tell the other person seek God on the matter and meet with them again. Seek God for His specific confirmation and direction for your responses. This will take a little time and patience which should be agreeable to the other person. When you have determined what your Godly response should be, then meet with the person again.

1. If you are guilty: Communicate, with godly sorrow, your remorse to the persons affected. Be sincere in wanting to restore the relationship. Stop doing the wrong thing. Be baptized unto repentance in a private ritual washing from sin before God. This is an act of faith that produces true spiritual results. A full immersion is best, in my view, but if your heart is connected to the Lord, one can do this in the shower. Then bring forth the fruits of repentance, changed behavior, and God will give you grace.
2. God is very understanding, but people, often, are not. Therefore, do not feel that you have to bear an unjust guilt or more responsibility that is appropriate. You may have done something wrong, but you do not have to be victimized in return. The objective is to repair the relationship.
3. If you are innocent: Communicate your view in a respectful way and perhaps have an objective witness there if you feel you will not be received well.
4. Do what is righteous before God with regard to the others involved. Make full and complete restitution for the wrong. Give a little more to demonstrate sincerity. Search out the scriptures that speak on these things.
5. Ask for forgiveness which means, not only that the indebtedness is removed but, that the relationship can be reconciled. If you have broken the other person's trust in you, it will take time to prove yourself worthy of their trust again.
6. Relate to the person as before. Of course, this may be difficult for both parties, but it will be successful with mutual effort to be reconciled.

Opportunities In Repentance

Opportunity To Be Reconciled to God And To Others

The two primary commandments are to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. When ever there is a breakdown in either relationship, God has constructed a pathway of opportunity to be reconciled so that the two commandments may be sustained.

Opportunity to Get It Right

Get it wrong and there is an indebtedness to God or man that must eventually be settled. There is punishment for all unrighteousness which is sin. God gives us opportunities to '*get it right.*'

Opportunity to Grow

We all begin as '*children of God,*' but the opportunity remains to grow as '*sons of God.*'

Opportunity to Heal Others

If we have sinned and wounded another, we have an obligation to them and an opportunity to bring

healing to their soul. I think the repentance of an offender toward their victim is the single greatest potential therapeutic event for anyone injured by another. Healing the heart is difficult and often impossible without the offender's positive involvement.

Opportunity to Gain a Greater Inheritance

Who does God value more in His Kingdom. One who is willing to turn from sin to righteousness or one who does not repent and claims he is saved by the Blood of Christ? Does imputed righteousness save the unrepentant? I think not. Does our seeking to do, and actually doing what is right, please God? I think it does and very much so. Look beyond this limited time of natural life and think of the possibilities of pleasing God as we turn from dead works to life giving deeds.

Romans 2:7 KJV. *"To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life"*. Repenting, when needed, fulfills this idea of continuance in well doing.

(Please, review the scriptures on repentance in the Appendix.)

Chapter 8 Restitution

If you steal from a customer, and do not make it right, you will never do business with him again.

Most of us cringe at the thought of having to go back to an old situation like paying a fine for a forgotten parking ticket. In this kind of situation we would rather keep the violation forgotten and 'forgiven', and not be bothered with the obligation nor the expense of something that means nothing of positive value to us. Society has said, "*Don't park here! and if you do, you will pay a fine or even have your car impounded.*"

Unfortunately, there is a parallel tendency in the Church to have the same attitude to old or unimportant violations that we have committed in relationships. Think for a moment and ask the Lord if there is a similar attitude at work in your life. Is there any relationship that is not the same or is worse than it used to be? Are there any lost friendships that could be regained if you could just do the right thing?

If you can remember any, then please consider the positive benefits that could be yours by redeeming what was lost through following the Justice steps which include making restitution for your old 'parking tickets'.

Not understanding the need and purpose of making restitution for wrongs then we might only see it as a fine or a judgment, a price to pay for sin (which it also is) that is more bother than beneficial. Scripture tells us that "*Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright!*" Proverbs 14:9 NIV, and my purpose is to help us all move away from our natural and instinctive foolishness that places more value on ourselves and our own lives than on the all important relationships with God and with others.

Remember above all else, as repeatedly emphasized in these writings, that the order of importance from God's point of view is that we should love our neighbor as ourselves, which is defined as maintaining righteous and healthy relationships, before we can approach Him or fulfill the ultimate commandment of loving Him with all our heart, mind and strength. "*If you remember that your brother has anything against you or that there is an unsettled injury with him, then leave your love offering at the altar and be reconciled to your friend so that the way is clear to worship and relate to God.*" Matthew 5:24 KSTV.

Defining Restitution

Restitution means, initially, to replace or repair property that was damaged or destroyed through an individual's faulty action. This sound awfully mechanical and non-relational, doesn't it? So, perhaps this definition is incomplete!

The main principle of Justice that we are observing in making restitution is not just paying for an injury that we have caused, but to also restore the feelings of the other person that tell them that your intentions, though faulty or imperfect, are honorable, just and loving! Making restitution give an incentive to someone you have injured to be in relationship with you again. It makes them want to be your friend again rather than holding you at 'arms length' relationally. When we make satisfactory restitution to another it is a very personal attempt to heal their heart woundedness that we have caused as well as getting even in property or physical terms.

Perhaps the best New Testament example of making restitution from the heart is shown in Luke 19:8-9, KSTV where the tax collector Zacchaeus exclaimed to Jesus, *"Lord I will give half of my goods to the poor, if I have taken anything from anyone by lying extortion, I'll pay him back four times the loss!"*

We might say that this is 'way over the top', but Jesus liked the heart intent of Zacchaeus, and declared that his actions showed him worthy of salvation and of being a true son of Abraham. I wonder if any of us today are as concerned as Zacchaeus with making amends with those we have wronged so that we might be pleasing to the Lord.

Hoped For Results

While we can never be certain of how the injured party will respond, it will be helpful to be mindful of the intended results to guide us through the actual processes.

Restitution will:

1. Prove the intent of true repentance,
2. Restore fairness and equity to the relationship,
3. Strengthen the relationship by proving trustworthiness,
4. Be viewed as love expressed: *"love your neighbor as yourself"* Mark 12:31 and showing, *"greater love has no man but to lay down his own personal wellbeing for another."* John 15:13 KSTV,
5. Demonstrate humility in contrast to pride,

6. Pave the way to forgiveness and reconciliation,
7. Clear the conscience of the offender. Acts 24:16

Restitution In Relationship To Value

Since our work here is aimed at restoration of personal relationships rather than criminal injuries, we limit ourselves to those levels of restitutional values. For example, the Scripture says this, *“The person that has sinned and is guilty will restore all that he has taken or destroyed whether innocently, by accident or by deception, or that which was given to him for safekeeping, or that he got by lying. He must restore the principal value and shall add twenty percent to it in the same day that he seeks forgiveness from the Lord for his sin.”* Leviticus 6:4-5, KSTV.

This is the letter of the Law of Christ, so we keep in mind that while there are just requirements, it is the spirit of reconciliation that brings life to the whole process. Doing a little extra goes a long way in healing the relationship!

“Lagniappe means a little something extra. It's a Louisiana French word, derived from American Spanish la ñapa, and originally meant a gift given to a customer by a merchant at the time of a purchase, such as a 13th beignet when buying a dozen.

Mark Twain writes about the word in a chapter on New Orleans in Life on the Mississippi (1883).

‘We picked up one excellent word -- a word worth traveling to New Orleans to get; a nice limber, expressive, handy word — 'lagniappe.' They pronounce it lanny-yap. It is Spanish -- so they said. We discovered it at the head of a column of odds and ends in the Picayune, the first day; heard twenty people use it the second; inquired what it meant the third; adopted it and got facility in swinging it in the fourth. It has a restricted meaning, but I think the people spread it out a little when they choose. It is the equivalent of the thirteenth roll in a 'baker's dozen.' It is something thrown in, gratis, for good measure. ‘”

Courtesy of Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia>

“Do you hear God’s instruction? Get it? Do it!” James 1:22 KSTV

Restitution for Intangible Injuries

What about slander? What about hate filled animosity and reviling? What about situations where anger and violence are the injury rather than property?

Please, follow completely the guidelines of repentance, and then give a Lagniappe in a meaningful way. Buy a gift, perform a labor of love, cut the grass, do the dishes. Do whatever you can think of to soften the heart that is hardened toward you and your actions. You might say, "*They should not hold that stuff against me!*" indicating that you need to do nothing. You are wrong! It is up to you to show that your repentance is genuine. The injured person only has a responsibility to respond favorably when your repentance is proven to be true.

“You have not because you ask not.”

Asking for Forgiveness Includes Admission of Responsibility

How hard is it to say, “I was wrong, and now I want to make it right.”? It must be difficult, because we hear it so infrequently. Confessing our error to the one we have wronged is often offered with

1. making light of the offense,
2. telling the other person how they caused it to happen. It is in fact, their fault.
3. in some other way displaying pride and insolence that the offended person was offended at all.

Trying to use any element of the Justice system for personal gain or escape from responsibility is a misuse of the system and will result in a penalty for that person.

Jesus gave up life, demonstrating humility, so that we might have it as example of what our attitude and purpose should be toward one another.

Transferring the responsibility of attitude and action to the offended person is really easy to do. You make them feel guilty for even bringing up the offense. Then hint that you will forgive them if they forget the offense. Duh? What a twisted attitude.

Asking for forgiveness is easy if it is done with the predisposed attitude that the offended person “*must*” forgive them in order to be forgiven by God. Only a fool would think that everyone will be or must be forgiven for everything. Can anyone manipulate and maneuver Justice with legalism? Being granted forgiveness must follow repentance and restitution.

Trying to use any element of the Justice system for personal gain or escape from responsibility is a misuse of the system and will result in a penalty for that person. Jesus gave up life, demonstrating humility, so that we might have it as example of what our attitude and purpose should be toward one another.

It may be that Christians in general see forgiveness from God as a given, even a right, and devalue the importance of obtaining forgiveness from other Christians. Forgiveness from God is always preceded by a truly repentant attitude, confession, and restitution. “*You have to forgive,*” is common doctrine, but does not compare scripture with scripture to gain a comprehensive view of Justice.

Admitting responsibility is not easy. Try it and see.

Chapter 10 Forgiveness

Forgiveness: Don't take it Forgranted!

Forgiving

Forgiving, as incorrectly defined in many parts of the present day Church, is an obligation, for someone that has suffered wrong from another, to cancel any claim they might have as a result of that injury. Forgiving, in the Church at large, means the unilateral release of indebtedness by the injured in order to be forgiven by God for the debts owed Him through sin, disobedience, and the violations of righteousness committed by the injured person. There is also the message that, with *'true forgiveness from the heart,'* the injured person will have no wounding of the heart or the wounds already there will be healed. The burden for healing of sorrows is placed on the one who has been injured.

Matthew 18:35 and Matthew 6:14 are used as proof texts and are interpreted to say, *"God will not forgive you unless you forgive everybody who has done you wrong."* Too often the message to the injured person runs something like this. *"You have been wronged and now the burden is on you to prove to God you are not guilty of the sin of unforgiveness yourself. You have to forgive!"* This is not a correct or just idea.

The more correct understanding of these passages could be expressed as, *"Do unto others as you would have them do to you for God himself will use with you the same measure that you use with others. Be eager to forgive those who have done wrong and want to make it right with you, and who want to be reconciled"*

For an offender to seek forgiveness without intending to make restitution, is an injustice itself. The person who has done wrong to another and wants to use *'forgiveness'* as a means to escape responsibility and the obligations to love the one he has wronged is a violator of all that God intends in terms of fairness. To *"do justly,"* equates to loving others as we love ourselves or as we want to be loved. (see Micah 6:8)

True forgiveness is a response by an injured person or a judge to the actions and attitudes of the one who caused the injury. If the offender is repentant, and offers to make restitution, forgiveness may be appropriate to help repair the relationship.

Where there is a repentant sorrow with a mind to make restitution by the perpetrator, forgiveness may be granted. I have known very few Christians who were not eager to extend forgiveness if they could do so.

More Illumination on Forgiving

When considering Jesus' instruction to *'forgive 70x7 times'* in Matthew 18:21-22, it should be immediately compared to Luke 17:3,4 where repentance is added to the mix. Repentance is a key ingredient and can not be excluded. Comparing the two passages does take us to a greater understanding of this hard saying of Jesus.

Think on these things.

1. Does this unlimited level of forgiving apply to the same sin done in a repeated fashion? If so, then one would legitimately question whether the sinner is truly repentant or just manipulating the situation for personal benefit or escape from penalties. Repentance must be sincere and accompanied by appropriate actions that prove the repentance.

Example. If a person comes and takes some money from your purse and when caught, claims to be repentant, we should accept his word. If he comes and does it again then it is wise to question his sincerity even though he may again give some excuse or express repentance. Forgiveness is always extended to those who are repentant and seek to repair the relationship. The proof of this is found in Matthew 18 where the master punished the first servant because he did not demonstrate true repentance to the master by misdealing with the second servant.

2. This passage makes more sense (to me) if there is a distinctly different character failing, or sin, at each juncture. In those very different circumstances, it would be good to have a patient attitude of understanding with the sinner and even though he commits 7000 sins in a single day. We would then reflect God's great patience with us as we battle the sin that is so deeply rooted.

Although trying of my patience, it would be easier to believe that a sinner is truly repentant if there is a different issue in each occurrence. While God's patience is amazing, it is not extended forever to those who are hard and stubborn and will not come to repentance. He will undertake severe discipline with us to bring forth the fruit of righteousness in us.

In like fashion, we should not support an unrepentant sinner who is not sincerely doing his utmost to overcome the sin and to be righteous. The sinner has an obligation to the relationship too. Further on in Matthew 18, at verses 16 and 17, Jesus says that it necessary for the sinner to 'listen', meaning to come to repentance, so that the relationship is restored. So there is a connection between the ideas of extending forgiveness, the sinner repenting, and

the relationship continuing in righteousness.

3. The prerogative to forgive is always with the victim remembering that God will repay us if we are unrighteous in withholding forgiveness. To say that we all must forgive everyone of everything, unilaterally, is the easy way out (for preachers), but it only serves to support unrighteousness if the sinner is playing a game where he thinks he can manipulate the foolish Christian with faked repentance. Forgiveness serves reconciliation in righteousness and is not the end of the matter in itself. A healthy relationship to each other is what needs the uppermost considerations.
4. As we all need patience from God, we should be patient with one another.

No Regret?

Where there is no such regretful attitude from the one who caused injury, accompanied by acts that return balance to the relationship, then requirements of Justice are not finalized. The offender may think he is free, but penalties are only postponed for him. He will have to give an explanation to Jesus who may not be sympathetic with him.

If the offender is not sorry, but defiant, then forgiveness, or acceptance of restitution by the injured party would produce an incomplete and insincere remedy for restoration of the relationship or healing of the injured person's heart. The man who has beaten his wife will do well to prove a change of heart before he expects her to forgive him or to be reunited with him.

The law of God is simple on these points. When someone sins against God or a fellow member, he will make restitution, humbly seek forgiveness, or his sin will follow him until he is punished with a just penalty. Any offender is the person at risk in Justice not the injured person. If you sin against another member, do not treat it as a trivial or unimportant thing. If you don't make it right with them, then God will take up their cause, and you will be punished for your unrighteousness.

God, in His compassion, has given us a procedure where we can work problems out with each other and escape having to face Him and the possibility of His wrath. Matthew 5:25 clearly illustrated that it is much safer and wiser to work out problems with members than to risk trying to justify ourselves before God. *"Come to an agreement quickly with him who has a cause against you at law, while you are with him on the way, for fear that he may give you up to the judge and the judge may give you to the police and you may be put into prison."* BBE. It is far better to work it out with a humble member than with the Righteous Judge.

Truly, the Fear of God is absent from the Church and society. As a result we cheapen forgiveness among ourselves thinking Jesus' blood is so freely given to make restitution for us with God, and some how it can be applied to our sin without our repentance. The Holiness of the Kingdom will burn us I fear.

Who Is Authorized To Forgive Sin?

Forgiveness is in the power of the injured, whether it be God who is wronged or the beaten wife. The wife who was abused by her husband must be satisfied by true repentance, and reconciliation or the husband will be compelled to answer to the Church, I speak prophetically, or directly to God, who might give him a greater penalty. Forgiveness can be viewed as a resultant of repentance, and not as a substitute for it. Forgiveness is an option for the person injured and not a 'right' of the one who causes damage or injury. I am afraid that we do not recognize the power held by someone who has been injured. Also, Jesus, who is given authority to forgive sin by the Father, has passed authority to forgive sins on to the Church, and I will comment on this provision later in the book.

Rabbinical Perspective

In support of these ideas from a rabbinical perspective, we offer an excerpt from an article by Rabbi David Blumenthal of Emory University, Atlanta. <http://www.crosscurrents.org/blumenthal.htm>
 "Sin disrupts our lives on the human level; it distorts our relationships with other persons, social institutions, and our selves. Sin also disrupts our spiritual lives; it distorts our relationship with God and our deepest inner spiritual being. Because sin alienates us from humanity and from God, there is more than one kind of forgiveness.

In a civil contract, one party incurs a debt to, or obligation toward, or claim against another. In such a situation, the creditor can forgo the debt, waive the obligation, or relinquish the claim. The creditor can do this for no reason at all, although the creditor usually has some grounds for being willing to forgo the debt. Similarly in the matter of sin. When one sins against another, one incurs an obligation to right the wrong one has committed. This is a debt toward the offended party borne by the offender. The more serious the wrong, the more serious the obligation to set it straight. In rabbinic thought, only the offending party can set the wrong aright and only the offended party can forgo the debt of the sin. This means that, if I offend someone, it is my responsibility to do whatever it takes to set matters aright and, conversely, if someone has offended me, it is my responsibility to allow the offender to do teshuva, that is, to correct the wrong done to me. Teshuva is part of the structure of God's creation; hence, the sinner is obligated to do teshuva and the offended person is obligated to permit teshuva by the offender.

The most basic kind of forgiveness is "forgoing the other's indebtedness" (mechilá). If the offender has done teshuva, and is sincere in his or her repentance, the offended person should offer mechila; that is, the offended person should forgo the debt of the offender, relinquish his or her claim against the offender. This is not a reconciliation of heart or an embracing of the offender; it is simply reaching the conclusion that the offender no longer owes me anything for whatever it was that he or she did. Mechila is like a pardon granted to a criminal by the modern state. The crime remains; only the debt is forgiven.

The tradition, however, is quite clear that the offended person is not obliged to offer mechila if the offender is not sincere in his or her repentance and has not taken concrete steps to correct the wrong done. Maimonides is decisive on this subject: "The offended person is prohibited from being cruel in not offering mechila, for this is not the way of the seed of Israel. Rather, if the offender has [resolved all material claims and has] asked and begged for forgiveness once, even twice, and if the offended person knows that the other has done repentance for sin and feels remorse for what was done, the offended person should offer the sinner mechila" (Mishne Torah, "Hilchot Chovel u-Mazzik," 5:10). Mechila is, thus, an expectation of the offended person but only if the sinner is actually repentant. For example, a woman who has been battered by her husband, or abused by her father, is not obliged to grant such a person mechila unless he has, first, desisted from all abusive activity; second, reformed his character through analysis of sin, remorse, restitution, and confession; and third, actually asked for forgiveness several times. Only then, after ascertaining that he is sincere in his repentance, would a woman in such a situation be morally bound, though not legally obligated, to offer the offender mechila.

The principle that mechila ought to be granted only if deserved is the great Jewish "No" to easy forgiveness. It is core to the Jewish view of forgiveness, just as desisting from sin is core to the Jewish view of repentance. Without good grounds, the offended person should not forgo the indebtedness of the sinner; otherwise, the sinner may never truly repent and evil will be perpetuated. And, conversely, if there are good grounds to waive the debt or relinquish the claim, the offended person is morally bound to do so. This is the great Jewish "Yes" to the possibility of repentance for every sinner." “

Two Perspectives on Forgiveness

There is much confusion in the Church about what is and what is not forgiveness, and what is the proper course to apply in various situations.

Examining the Greek texts, we discover that the word for forgive comes from ‘apheimi’ a compound word from 1. from and 2. to send or to go. Apheimi is used in Mark 1:18 where the fishermen left

their nets (apheimi) to follow Jesus. Luke 17:3, which as the NIV translates, "...If your brother sins, rebuke him, if he repents, forgive (aphiemi) him" can equally be rendered as 'let go of him' or even 'go away from him.' So, how does this fit to the Justice model? We conclude that, regarding forgiveness, we should let go of our personal sentiment of anger or bitterness, but it is another matter to remove someone else's responsibility in an injury. That expression of forgiveness can only be in response to the actions and attitudes of the offender.

Let's look at these definitions a little more closely in two parts, then with some deeper discussion.

1. **Personal Forgiveness** (letting go) is the process of removing negative emotions and attitudes from one's own heart when injured, offended or sinned against by another. We use the word 'forgiveness' only because of its common usage in the Church. This action is limited to one's own self and has nothing to do with the offender except to prepare the way for reconciliation. It is extremely important to understand that to fulfill the commandment to '*Love your neighbor as yourself*' means that we must not react or respond to injury in anything but a Godly way. No revenge, no punishment, no grudge can remain in our heart to pay back an offender. This would make us like them, evil.

1 Peter 3:8- 12 explains it well, *"To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit, not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, "The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. "He must turn away from evil and do good, he must seek peace and pursue it. "For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." NAS*

This passage does not mean that the offender should be released from his obligations toward you, or that he should be free from penalty if he does not reconcile with you. It does mean that you will be like your Father in Heaven, not repaying evil with evil, but rather with righteousness. This is the only way I know of where anyone can find the ability to 'love your enemies and do good to them that persecute you'. It may be that an enemy will have no desire to repair an injury with you, and he can only look forward to God's retribution.

Guarding one's heart is to recognize and disallow any contamination to one's own spirit by retention and accumulation of emotional toxins that might be expressed toward the offender or anyone else. Self maintenance of this sort does not accomplish, however, any repentance by an offender, it does not uphold righteousness beyond ourselves; it does not address injustice of others; nor does it restore any relationship. It is localized to the injured person and is an incomplete, although necessary, aspect of

righteousness. This view of forgiveness holds no benefit of absolution or restoration for an offender who must answer for his sin at another time, to God who might be more severe with him. We use the term 'forgiveness' here when referring to a person's obedience and submission to the ideas of NOT having hatred or taking revenge on an offender.

These personal disciplines are in harmony with these scriptures:

“Guard Your Heart, for out of it are the issues of life” Proverbs 4:23

“Don’t keep hard feelings” Leviticus 19:18

“Do not make attempts to get even with one who has done you wrong, or keep hard feelings against the children of your people, but have love for your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.” The Bible in Basic English. Leviticus 19:18

Lastly, in no wise is a wronged member expected to give up their right to Justice by following these directives.

1. The **Gift of Forgiveness** may be granted to an offender where indebtedness is reduced or removed for the purposes of reconciliation by someone authorized in the church: By a victim, where repentance is evident and restoration is sought by the offender. This is the heart purpose of Luke 17:3, *“...If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.”* NIV

By an authorized minister, that is, authorized by Christ to judge and render solutions in the Church. Typically, this will include certain counselors, elders, pastors and judges. The scope of John 20:23 provides a wide application for the Church today while initially directed to those disciples/apostles present at the beginning.

“If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” NIV.

For men to be able to forgive sin as representatives of God was greatly disturbing to Jewish beliefs of Jesus’ day on earth. Indeed it can be viewed as a feature of the Kingdom age when the members of the Church will rule the nations and even the angels on behalf of King Jesus. Forgiveness is a judgment or a decision reached when all factors are weighed and it is the deserved course of action.

c. By Jesus Christ directly or by God the Father. This provision by the Lord is often taken for granted, but do not assume that God forgives when an offender is unrepentant, and makes little attempt to correct the offense directly with the person offended.

To be forgiven by God always requires a repentant heart (not just worldly sorrow, 2 Cor7:10), restitution which would usually include a sacrifice or repayment, and with a desire to be reconciled in relationship as an obedient worshipper.

Penalties may or may not be reduced or removed. Learning not to sin and learning to be obedient are fostered by enduring penalties. These lessons would be hindered if there were no pain for disobedience. Jesus learned obedience through the things he suffered! (Hebrews 5:8)

I can find no scripture to support the idea that forgiveness is granted, or should be granted, to an unrepentant offender. Mercy, grace and forgiveness are extended to the humble, the ignorant, the poor in spirit (v. prideful), and the repentant.

When narrowly defined, forgiving is canceling an indebtedness or liability or penalty someone else has incurred by doing wrong. It is broadly defined in the Church as including the processes that protect and maintain one's own heart, but the Church confuses the issues and prevents fulfilling justice so that reconciliation can happen.

Forgiving, as is mercy, is something you do for someone else. Purifying and keeping a good heart is something you do for yourself. If your heart has any content of resentment, bitterness, anger, hatred, or other spiritual poison, then get it out. Cast it onto the Lord who has already carried our sorrows. See 1 Peter 5:7. "*Cast all your care upon Him for He cares for you.*" You are responsible for purifying your own heart.

The heart is a storehouse of spirit and emotion. Guarding your own heart includes not retaining, embracing, holding, magnifying or believing incorrectly where injury has been done.

Not bearing a grudge is not forgiving in the sense of canceling a debt, but it is keeping the heart pure. Refusing to meditate on a wrong is not forgiving, but it is maintaining a clean heart. Cleansing resentment, bitterness, and all evil from ourselves is not forgiving anyone except perhaps ourselves.

I will go so far as to say that you can not set aside another's responsibility to be righteous by forgiving them if they are not present and have not sought your forgiveness. But you can have and keep a loving heart regardless of what others do to you. Godly love is not all sweet emotion, and warm feelings. Godly loves always treats everyone as God would treat them and not as they have treated us. Love (Agape) is righteousness in action.

In healing ministry, the offender is almost never present, so our counsel has been to 'forgive' when what we are actually after is a release of the negative emotions. This is 'apheimi,' forgiveness, in the exact same sense of laying down our own nets to follow Jesus. See Mark 1:18

Forgiving someone (canceling a debt of an offender) does not in itself prevent:

1. Wounding of the victim's heart
2. Bitterness of heart (emotional contamination)
3. Hardness of heart
4. Desire for revenge.

A person can be victimized and still choose to not dwell on the hurt with the intensity that would cause the heart to be imprinted with negative expectations. It is entirely possible with God's grace, to maintain a heart of love—free from poison—and not forgive an unrepentant offender in terms of removing his responsibility or indebtedness. Keeping a pure heart and doing justly is God's expectation of us where reconciliation is not wanted by the offender. God is love, yet He does not automatically forgive a person's sin, and this does not cause Him to be guilty of unforgiveness.

The presence of a wounded heart is not evidence of unforgiveness, nor is forgiving the offender sufficient to heal in the same way that releasing a grudge can. Releasing a grudge is cleansing and healing to the heart. A person can forgive, forgive, and try to forgive more, and still have a wounded heart and the pain associated with that.

Much of the emotional pain that people experience is really a grieving over the broken relationship and the loss of their own value rather than from holding unforgiveness. Also, there is the unanswered cry for Justice which would restore fairness and remove shame. We should not relegate feelings of injustice to being 'flesh' or as an unloving attitude by the injured person. We all have a basic mandate from God to discern good and evil.

“Purify your heart” is the admonition of James the brother of Jesus, in James 4:8. In Luke 6:45. The words of Jesus make clear the consequences of keeping our hearts pure, or not. *“The good man brings good things out of the good stored in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of the heart his mouth speaks.”* King David recognizes his need and calls on the Lord for help in Psalm 51:10 *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in me!”*

There is much broken heartedness in the Church which God has clearly promised to remedy by His own action. See Ezekiel 36:25-28. The promise of a 'spiritual heart transplant' includes removal of bitterness, anger, disappointments, grief, and all kinds of sorrows.

A larger problem is that any heart can become poisoned by a 'root of bitterness' or unresolved negative emotions while at the same time be declaring their forgiveness toward the offender and thinking that their declaration will cause God to set them free and heal their heart. In our view, a root of bitterness has many strands and branches representing years of not knowing how to cleanse and protect the heart while enduring abuse.

Remember relationships always have two or more persons. Each is assigned a distinct responsibility for the maintenance and repair of the relationship.

A Few Specifics on Forgiveness

No person may demand or coerce forgiveness from another person whom they have injured. Such a one is only self-justifying, unrepentant and a twister of God's words. Conversely, an injured member may not use the hope of forgiveness and reconciliation to manipulate someone who has wronged them. Just reconciliation does not permit gaining an advantage for one or a continued threat to the other person.

There are those who claim that forgiveness from one member to another is a 'right.' We can label this kind of claim as nothing more than spiritual extortion, and it is a perversion of justice. To dismiss another's righteous complaint and to use Matthew 18:35 (God will not forgive us if we do not forgive) as an argument to compel the victim to abandon that complaint is only moving to prevent personal loss. Such a one will attempt to prevent being proved wrong. He will not suffer loss if possible. He will not lose face, respect, or esteem.

Forgiveness must first be viewed as working toward and as a part of reconciliation with an offender rather than as a unilateral act and attitude performed by the injured person alone. If forgiveness were a requirement of the injured, (so, then to be granted forgiveness by God) then there would be no need for a greater system of Justice.

Forgiveness must never function to give one person advantage over another.

Forgiveness is never granted to justify unrighteousness. Forgiveness can never function without provision for restitution being offered and perhaps fulfilled at the option of the injured person.

If the Church gets the idea that they will have to make restitution when they injury another, there will be far less abuse.

Forgiveness, at the option of the injured, may:

1. Accept an apology in lieu of repayment.

2. Set aside repayments or penalties.
3. Expect to receive partial or reduced payment
4. Receive an “I’m sorry” gift, or
5. Expect and require total restitution,

Any of these options are possible and still move toward reconciliation. (See Mathew 18: for these elements.)

Obtaining forgiveness is a worthy objective for an offender. Being granted forgiveness from someone I have injured will settle the matter rather than my having to answer to Jesus for the wrong. What a wonderful provision and opportunity! Work the problem out with the one who has “the power of forgiveness” for you or they may appeal to God for justice and then He will deal more severely with you than you think. (Luke 18:1ff) Of course, every unsettled injury will be addressed at the Judgment of Christ. Justice will be effectively settled for everyone.

Forgiveness is an expression of authority.

“If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”
John 20:23 NCV (Compare to Matt 18:19)

Authority to forgive carries power with it, from God, to release a person from a spiritual and moral indebtedness.

Notice that ‘not forgiving’ is a legitimate option in the service of Justice. We may want everyone to be free from liability for their actions but this thought only lowers the importance of true reconciliation. If sin is made to not be sin, and forgiveness is a privilege for all, these concepts are simply another perversion of Biblical truth.

Authority to forgive or not to forgive is extended first to those having personal involvement, i.e., the person victimized. I do not see this authority as being given to all other members in general where they are permitted to forgive sin directly or to even say, “God forgives you.” The directive of Jesus toward a victim ‘to forgive’ carries with it an authority only for that situation and relationship and not to other sinners in general. *“...if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.”* Luke 17:3 NAS

Then, as God’s representatives, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers would be joined by local church elders, in the teaching of Paul, as having authority to forgive sin that they were not directly victimized by. The understanding of authority, and its limits, is not well developed in the modern Church. Therefore, I can only be certain that there are limits and general empowerment to forgive does not extend to all members unless personally involved.

Those wrongdoers who acknowledge their wrong, turn away from wrong actions, and seek to make restitution for wrongs will find good results in obtaining forgiveness.

There is no idea in this context to suggest that members or ministers should go about decreeing general amnesty and release for everyone and particularly not for unrepentant, hard hearted doers of evil.

For a 'forgiving authority' to release their power, that expression of authority must be sought 'in faith' as something not obtainable from any other source. If I wrong you, I must see the need to obtain your forgiveness which only you can give. Saying, "God forgives me", or "You must forgive me" or "It doesn't matter to me", etc. only harms me by binding my guilt to myself.

Releasing a grudge and forsaking revenge is right and just. Appealing to the church is also right and just because action is transferred from one's own power into the hands of God's appointed church authorities.

If a wounded person had confidence that the church that promises salvation could also promise some Justice, then they would have a healing hope, a confidence of heart concerning their own worth to God. One of the chief potentials for the healing of the hearts of the Church is to have a judicial system within churches across the world.

Unforgiveness

Unforgiveness is refusing to accept the efforts of another person, who has done wrong or has been the cause of injury, to make amends (make it right) and to be reconciled.

One is unforgiving if they set aside the efforts of the other person to be reconciled in order to get revenge or to take punishment of the wrong into their own hands. Some are unforgiving by using the offence done to them as a continuing reason to blackmail the offender. "My feelings are still hurt! So treat me right!" is a lever to gain advantage over and emotional control of the offender. The offender can never seem to do enough to make restitution or please the wronged member.

We can suspect unforgiveness if the victim is unwilling to be reconciled to the offender, or if the offender is hated, or if revenge, even socially acceptable revenge, is sought. The urge to give 'a little payback' is strong in American culture, but this is not allowed in the Kingdom of God. 'Getting even' is unforgiveness in action!

A hurt person needs to, while the pain is fresh, make the choice to refuse bitterness, or any poison, entering their heart to be stored there for the rest of their life or until heart healing can happen. The challenge for all of us is to know how to carry this out so that accumulations of toxic emotions do not accumulate. If sufficient contamination occurs then anointed ministry will be needed to help the victim find heart wholeness.

A Few Specifics On Unforgiveness

A person is not unforgiving when they ask a possible offender to give an account of their actions and words.

A person is not unforgiving when they confront another member with their sin.

A person is not unforgiving when they ask for Justice whether with the offending person or with the church.

A person is not unforgiving when they expect just restitution for an injury.

A person is not unforgiving if they are emotionally damaged and in emotional pain.

“Forgiving” the offender will not necessarily heal the heart. Not allowing the spiritual toxins to take root in the first place or working with the Holy Spirit to be rid of them afterwards is a better solution.

Chapter 11 Reconciliation

Warning!

“Do not be (unequally) yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God”

2 Corinthians 6:14-16 NIV

Everything I have written thus far is intended to provide orderly and progressive steps to facilitate reconciliation where there is an injury or a broken relationship, but I must caution those who follow these steps to not feel as if they must carry the burden of restoration by themselves. It take two, in cooperation, each doing and being what is needful for a Godly relationship to be born out of the ashes of the old, failed relationship.

There will be some, perhaps many, relationships that have failed that can not be restored and should not be restored because they can not be conducted in Godliness. It is incumbent on each of us to try and be reconciled, but this does not mean reconciliation at any price! Don't be reunited to someone, and in so doing, validate sinful activities or practices. Reconciliation must never support unrighteousness or sin on the part of one of the people. Re-establishing a covenant relationship with an unrepentant person will only lead to a repeat of their sin against you.

Finally, in considering whether to pursue reconciliation or not, think on these things. *“ But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”* 2 Timothy 3:1-5 NIV.

“God Hates Divorce”

This scripture haunts many people who are in the midst of marital problems, and all of the associated pains that both partners experience. I would suggest that 'divorce' is exactly what happens every time a relationship ends whether it occurs in marriage, or between two friends, or with an employer and an employee, or between a pastor and one of his members. God wants us to have knowledge of His ways

to guide us as we will certainly be faced with the prospects of 'divorce' if we have not already been involved in one.

While God hates divorce, He also hates evil and does not expect any one of His sons and daughters to be victimized by evil acts of other persons for the sake of avoiding a divorce, or a separation from that evil. Furthermore, as the Light of the World, the Church is commissioned to be the Righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Love always acts in Righteousness and never tolerates evil for the sake of an unequal yoke with unbelievers, those who do not obey the law of Christ. Do not take on a yoke with unrighteousness for the sake of reconciliation alone or to prevent a divorce.

Right Motives for Reconciling Relationships

Many relationships never develop beyond the 'acquaintance' stage. Many acquaintance level relationships seem to 'flame out' because of incompatibilities between the two. This can be especially difficult if one or the other has hopes of the relationship really being close and powerful and full of promise for the future. We all have been, and will be, disappointed when our hopes for a more meaningful relationship does not happen. When anyone discovers that they are rejected, or at least, it is not the desire of the other person to come closer, it should be a time to evaluate our motives for wanting the relationship. Ask yourself, "What do I want in the relationship?" "Am I looking for an agape relationship where I consider the good of the other person equal with myself and am willing to commit to serving them in righteousness? Am I looking for an eros relationship where the other person will fulfill my sexual desires? Am I looking for a storge relationship like one would have with a close family member, a brother or sister? Am I looking for a phileo or affectionate relationship because I really admire and respect the other person and want to be around them. Am I looking for a relationship where the power and strength of love is flowing from me to them or from them to me?"

To avoid being injured in any relationship, always see the other person as someone you can give agape which is committed, selfless, action and involvement, without receiving unrighteousness in return. All other kinds of love will disappoint you when the injuries come.

It seems strange and upside down to the natural mind, but in the mind of the Spirit, you will never be hurt or disappointed in a relationship where you are not dependant on the other person for their emotional power and personality to sustain you and fill you with satisfaction. And, conversely, you will never be satisfied in a relationship that is constantly out of balance from the demands of the other person on you that are unrighteous.

Consider again the priorities given in the two great commandments where we should, first and above all others, love God and be dependent on Him for satisfaction, and as that condition is secure, love our neighbor as equal with ourselves. Keeping this set of priorities straight will yield the greatest rewards and also the greatest protection for our hearts.

Establish a Covenant of Peace

The Bible mentions a "Covenant of Peace" four times, Numbers 25:12-13, Isaiah 54:9-10, Ezekiel 34:25, and in Ezekiel 37:26. In the later verse, Ezekiel gives this word an eternal character,

“Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.”

NIV

I think this final and climactic "Covenant of Peace" is still prophetic in nature. A covenant for the millennium and beyond, but that is not fulfilled in fullness as yet. There are many changes that will take place in the world before we can that God is at peace with all men and His men in particular. We have peace with God through Jesus Christ, but this is not the final and most beneficial covenant level of peace that we should expect in a future day.

Having said all that, we can move ahead to what would be reasonable for today in establishing a covenant of peace among ourselves, one relationship at a time. This seems to me to be a very Godly thing to pursue and to maintain.

Dream A Covenant

In society, the term 'peace' is often used as an opposite to 'war.' In reconciliation ministry, we often hear and view conflict that seems to be a very real war with each person struggling as hard as they can to win and defeat the other person. Our covenant of peace could be defined as an absence of war and hostilities! This would call for a determination by both person that they are not going to add to the conflict and do everything they can to settle the conflict. The absence of 'war' could be a helpful benchmark in measuring whether the covenant is being observed by our partner and by ourselves too.

Let us envision what such a covenant would mean. This covenant would be bilateral. There would be two persons in a relationship where both know and agree to the terms and limitations incumbent on both. So, the first component would be agreement.

Agreement “*Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?*” Amos 3:3 NAS

In simplest terms, this agreement would be an agreement to treat each other with righteousness. Of course, the more specifically the two can agree on what ‘righteous’ means then the more likely the agreement is to be effective. Perhaps, just as importantly, would be an understanding of how righteous behavior would be defined, by some third, objective person, when there is a disagreement. Calling on a trusted member of the church to be an umpire can be a very effective means of settling disputes if the two persons will give up their struggle to come out on top and 'be in agreement' with the other.

A covenant of peace would have these targets of relationship:

1. A covenant of peace must be flexible enough to make adjustments that maintain equitable standing for both persons.
2. Hot and hostile emotions will be controlled by the one who has them.
3. The overall objective for both persons is to find the will and mind of God and do it.
4. Both agree to be reconciled in righteousness and all Godliness when a dispute comes along.
5. Both persons must seek to be trustworthy in the eyes of the other person. The more involved and deeper the relationship, the more trust must be deserved, earned and given by both persons.
6. Both agree to respond to conflict in accordance with who they are in Christ, and not what the other person has done. This does not remove responsibility from the other person, nor does it mean that the offended person needs to be a 'doormat'.
7. If resolution of conflict cannot be accomplished quickly, then both agree to call on a designated and objective member to be the umpire. This would be someone who fears God above all, understands the principles of righteousness relationship, and is trusted by both.

Peace would be the continuing state of mind and emotion to which both persons would commit.

Shalom!

Part II

Chapter 12 Secular Justice or Church Justice?

More and more, the civil judicial system of the United States is being secularized by nonbelievers who seek to do what is right in their own minds without the knowledge and purpose that can only come by studying the Scriptures and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We hope that as Justice is restored in the Church, it will spill over into secular life and government for the benefit of the peoples of the world. Some will doubtless argue that the United States judicial system is based on Christian and Jewish law and that, therefore, a Church system for addressing wrongs is not necessary. A competing system, it might be argued, would cause conflicts in judgments, and the Church would not have any binding authority compared to the state.

Recently, Pope Benedict XVI noted in his 2006 Encyclical Letter of the love of God that the state should be the source of societal justice rather than the Church. "The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper. A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply."

[Link to the complete letter: http://tol.org/Essay/encyclical_letter_deus_caritas_e.htm](http://tol.org/Essay/encyclical_letter_deus_caritas_e.htm)

Of course, our view is looking to the soon coming millennial Kingdom where the Church will be the government of the Lord Jesus Christ and not to the kingdoms of this present age. The Pope is certainly in touch with the current power of the State and the futility of challenging it with the view to bringing God's justice to the world. At this time, from a spiritual view, the kingdom of darkness rages against the Kingdom of Light, and would remove every link that remains to true Justice. Only God is the lawgiver and judge, and His Church will be the only source of true Justice in the earth.

As Americans, we are so immersed in what our judicial system, the product of the State that Pope Benedict XVI refers to, has become that we fail to recognize how unlike it is when compared to Biblical, Kingdom Justice. Howard Zehr in his book "Changing Lenses" goes to great lengths to show

the evolution of secular justice and what its primary methods and objectives actually are. We summarize drawing on Zehr's ideas.

1. The State is the focus of legal considerations replacing the interests of those who are victimized. Crimes are committed against the State rather than individuals. In fact the state intrudes itself into an otherwise personal issue, between two parties, and becomes at the same time the victim, the lawgiver, the enforcer, the prosecutor, the judge and the punisher. Each of these rolls is conducted in such a way as to limit the responsibility of each and to shield them from too much reproach, but it is the State in a collective sense that defines and controls the whole process.
2. By making more and more laws, the State advances in establishing its power over the citizens by identifying every possible way a citizen might oppose the State and its objectives and preparing for that. (Think about the potential abuses of the Patriot Act.) As Righteousness is adequately described in Scripture and is only in need of proper application to be just, then new secular laws tend to hinder and negate the freedoms of citizens.
3. Retributive State justice separates offender and victim inserting itself between them with an intent of establishing blame for 'crimes against the State' and then to inflict pain instead of fostering a redemptive and reconciliatory process. There is little or no objective of recognizing and repairing the relationship that might exist between offender and victim before the offense occurred.
4. Confiscation of assets or incarceration of lawbreakers generally inhibits or prevents true Godly repentance for the offender and will, all too often, lead from one imprisonment to another with no true rehabilitation. Prisons have proven that they do not restore offenders to righteous behavior in the community, but only strengthen bad conduct.

"Changing Lenses", Howard Zehr, Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA, 1990. Pages 1 thru 94

Church Justice

Our purpose is not to start a rebellion against the governments of men, but rather to provide solutions for Christians that will preclude their appearing in public courts by settling disputes within the context of the local church. The Church should be able to give the children of God a court of 'first resort' so they don't have to go to unbelievers seeking Justice. It is even forbidden by the Apostle Paul for members to take each other to law before nonbelievers.

1 Cor 6:1, NLT *"When you have something against another Christian, why do you file a lawsuit and ask a secular court to decide the matter, instead of taking it to other Christians to decide who is*

right?" (New Living Translation)

While some would argue that it is unloving or unforgiving to take another Christian before the church in search of Justice, but this is the way of love and of Justice in the Kingdom of God and is the means of maintaining righteousness.

The Kingdom of God overarches all nations and all judicial systems. God is the Chief Judge of the Kingdom's courts. The Father has given authority for all judgment and Justice into the hands of our Lord, Jesus. Jesus authorizes and empowers whom He will to administer Justice as his agents. If the Church is to judge the angels, then God will have no trouble preparing it to judge in the affairs of all nations as well. Where this restoration is headed is clearly spelled out in New Testament prophecy.

1 Cor 6:2-3, AMP ²“ *Do you not know that the saints (the believers) will [one day] judge and govern the world? And if the world [itself] is to be judged and ruled by you, are you unworthy and incompetent to try [such petty matters] of the smallest courts of justice?*

³*Do you not know also that we [Christians] are to judge the [very] angels and pronounce opinions between right and wrong [for them]? How much more then [as to] matters pertaining to this world and of this life only!”*

I am convinced that the Holy Spirit is preparing the Church for a judicial renovation that will precede the second coming of Jesus Christ. Isaiah makes it certain for us what Jesus' objectives are, and will be, until they are fully accomplished.

IS 42, NCV ¹*Here is my servant, the one I support. He is the one I chose, and I am pleased with him. I have put my Spirit upon him, and he will bring justice to all nations. ²He will not cry out or yell or speak loudly in the streets. ³He will not break a crushed blade of grass or put out even a weak flame. He will truly bring justice; ⁴he will not lose hope or give up until he brings justice to the world. And people far away will trust his teachings.”* (New Century Version)

Since there is no recognizable Christian Judicial system at present, there is a great lacking in the peace and unity among us. Member versus member, group versus group, faction versus faction, there are more disputes that end in separation than those that are resolved and end in reunion. Local churches in American cities have little to do with each other, and are more known for their differences than for their commonalities or unity. One must have noticed a church split or two where a set of differences could not be resolved. If this is the condition of the Church worldwide, then how can the world respect the Church or have any desire to come to us to find Jesus? If the Church can not offer fair and

equitable solutions for our conflicts in this life, why would anyone think the Church can offer any genuine help for eternity?

Justice is Good!

Justice is foundational to the Kingdom of God and has positive implications for all who love God and obey His commands. Members need to begin to think of Justice as something to embrace rather than something to be avoided or escaped. For example, the death of Jesus satisfies the penalty of Justice for all those who repent, confess their specific sins, believe in Him, and submit to Him. This is a good thing and it is the very essence of reconciliatory Justice.

On Sunday June 26, 2005 ("In Touch Ministries" the TV cable ministry of Dr. Charles Stanley) Dr. Charles Stanley asked the audience, "Do you want justice when you get to heaven?" I could see no hands raised except my own. When he asked, "How many want mercy?" there seemed to be a unanimous response of raised hands in the congregation. The message was clear that the congregation, and Dr. Stanley, associated the idea of Justice with a conclusion that it would be negative and punitive rather than beneficial and therapeutic. This conclusion is almost universal as we ask other members and ministers the same questions. Therefore, I conclude that there must be a changed and renewed understanding of the central role of Justice delivered to the Church. God's people must come to know that His purpose and design is for Justice to maintain righteousness in all relationships and restore damaged relationships in righteousness. Therefore, a church judicial system is desirable and needed.

The first objective of Justice is reconciliation whether with the Father, through Jesus, or with other members or even strangers to the Kingdom. Few see salvation as a benefit of Justice, but when Jesus redeemed us, it was by satisfying the righteous requirements and penalties of Kingdom Justice. Jesus died to pay the restitution price for our sins and to give us a new beginning point from which to be righteous, with each other and before God.

While authority to govern and administer justice is given to the Church leaders, appeal to the Father is a privilege of all members. God will grant justice to all those who persistently call on Him. Luke 18:1-8 NASV *"Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, 'In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. 'There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' 'For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal*

protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.' " And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; 7 now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

A brief review of this passage teaches that Justice is a continuously available function of God's Kingdom, but actually calling on God for it is out of fashion in the Church. Jesus, who taught this as a motive to not give up on prayer, did not seem to think that at his return, there would be any or many who practice it in faith. Whether as a final appeal or a first action in response to injustice, calling directly on God should be the counsel and practice of every member and minister were there is injustice by an outsider. This passage does not negate the obligation of local congregations to directly move to settle conflicts among members who are not, hopefully, 'enemies'. This passage underscores the idea of Justice as a Kingdom privilege and obligation, particularly when we remember that the first objectives of Justice are to restore and to maintain fairness and equity, not punishment.

At his return, Jesus will have Justice for all nations on the top of His list of objectives. There can only be peace and order in the earth, for all people, with a functioning Judicial system. Kingdom Justice will be administered through the Church. The Church's learning and development program is now being announced and has begun.

Eternal Judgments

In Hebrews 6:1-3, eternal judgment is sited as an elementary teaching of the faith in this oft quoted passage. My conviction is that we have opportunity to settle wrongs now with all those who pass through our life or be in an unanswerable position when "... the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds." Rev 20:12, NAS.

Jesus certainly teaches this idea in Luke 12 where He admonishes, v.57 *"And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right? 58 "For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. 59 "I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent."*

Luke 12 is all about life in the present day leading to eternal consequences, and so, we should know that His warnings and teachings also contain the concept that wrongs that we do to others can be settled directly with that person. In so doing, we will not have to face a more strict Judge for those wrongs in the final judgment.

More than Salvation

God has made an enormous investment in man to give us an escape from punishment and the promise of an eternal reward of riches and bliss in a future life. His overarching purpose is not just salvation, however wonderful and fanciful that might be, but to reconcile us to Himself in a continuing relationship. That relationship is to be characterized by obedience to righteousness and, as God's representatives, to maintain and enforce that righteousness in the earth. This has been His plan from the beginning, it continues today, and is our eternal destiny. (See Gen 1:28, Romans 5:10-11, Eph 2:16, Col 1:20-22.)

We were reconciled to God through the death of Jesus. The death of Jesus was necessary to satisfy Justice so that reconciliation would then be possible. Without satisfying the righteous requirements of Justice, reconciliation would not be possible. This is true of our relationship with God and it is also true of our relationships with each other. We could extend this truth and speculate that we can be reconciled to God in the same manner and degree that we satisfy justice and are reconciled to one another. This idea is supported by Matthew 7:1 where we are told that we will receive from the same measure that we use with others.

Many scholars and preachers contend that through receiving Christ and confessing Him as Lord, that salvation is a complete and indestructible condition. My view is that initial faith in Jesus is an opportunity to be reconciled to God and not the completion of reconciliation. Jesus paid the price for our sins therefore fulfilling the law calling for death and separation from God to result from, and as the penalty for, sin. Our participation is then required, through faith and obedience, to have a fully reconciled relationship with the Father. 2 Cor 5:18-20 establishes that God has reconciled us to Himself, and then the apostle implores us to "*be reconciled to God.*"

Relationship with the Father can be viewed as a continuum of reconciliation completed when one is transformed from the heart out, and is a new creature in fact, not just in promise. Therefore, we are reconciled to the Father by the death of Jesus, but also the life of Jesus which transforms us to be the same as He in values, motivations, and actions. Read Romans 6, 7, & 8 for further confirmation of these ideas.

Did Jesus die so that we could continue to sin against God? No! Did Jesus die so that we could continue to sin against each other, or rather, that we might be reconciled when sin does occur? The answer is obvious. Sin happens, but the consequences of it have a remedy. Then we should embrace the principles and processes of justice in order to have failed relationships restored within the local church, family, and friends alike. Now, there is the excuse that, since there is no justice system in the

Church, then the divisions that exist are unavoidable conditions. I think God will put an end to these excuses by making the way of Kingdom reconciliation known and practiced

I am convinced by scripture that we have an obligation before God to not be against or hostile toward one another, but to be in harmony, agreement and unity. One people, God's people, functioning in righteousness, peace and joy is the promise of the day. (Romans 14:17) Let us also consider that by seeking Justice we will make relationships better, and that we will be doing the will of God.

The Church: Agents Of Divine Justice

We are not trying to propel the Church into the criminal justice business. It is only realistic in our society to encourage disposition of personal relational issues contained within local churches. At this point of time, no one is ready to attempt going across denominational boundaries or bringing the heathen into the church for settlements. Let's only look at helping our flocks be strong and healed. The results, I am convinced, will be like a beacon in the night drawing those who know no help in society at large. Lastly, as a tide of born again believers leave the local churches to "find God," perhaps injustices are one of the primary reasons for their departure. Perhaps the tide could be turned with the proper preparatory teachings of righteousness, and settlement of even simple disputes within our own church societies.

My presumptions are that God's Word presents Him as one who uses the same standards with us as He expects us to use with one another. He does not hold us to higher or different methods or attitudes than He displays Himself. For example, when God tells us not to lie, He will not lie to us. When He says that we should be holy, it is because He is Holy. He tells us to love because He is love demonstrated even in wrath or punishment of those who do not obey him. He tells us that we determine our own rewards in this life and in the next— We will reap what we sow and will not reap where we do not sow.

He will judge us as we exercise judgments in our personal lives. Here, in making judgments, He refers to prioritizing values as much as to determining right and wrong. He tells us to repent so that we can be righteous as He is righteous. He offers to lead us as we have proven that we can do nothing or go anywhere on our own and without His leadership. If we desire to do our own thing we might be happy and free for a while, but the end thereof is bad, bad, bad!

As we give, it shall be given to us. If we judge, that is reach conclusions of others, in a condemning fashion, and without authority, we will receive a condemning judgment ourselves.

If we are willing to forgive those who repent of sin against us, we will be forgiven. If we are unwilling to forgive those who repent of their sins against us, we will not be forgiven.

Sowing any kind of seed will produce a fruit of the same species. Bitter seed yields bitter fruit. Righteous seed yields blessed and sweet fruit. The seed sown by peacemakers yields the fruit of reconciliation.

Chapter 13 Church Justice in Philemon

1 “Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, 2 to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, 5 hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, 6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.

8 Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, 9 yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you--being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ-- 10 I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, 11 who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me. 12 I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, 13 whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. 14 But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary. 15 For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, 16 no longer as a slave but more than a slave--a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. 17 If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. 18 But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. 19 I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay-- not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides. 20 Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord. 21 Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. 22 But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you. 23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, 24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers. 25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.” Philemon, NKJV

The Apostle Paul gives us a look into Justice in action for the first century Church in his short letter to the church at Colosse. While principally addressed to the leader, Philemon, the message also is sent to a woman, Apphia, a member, and to the church as an homogenous group. This letter show how Justice can function in all levels of Church structure.

Clearly, this letter includes several degrees of relationship that we might encounter today. First there is the Apostle to Pastor level, assuming Philemon is the pastor of the church that meets in his home. Then there is Apostle to member degree, Paul with Onesimus, next, a minister-leader, Philemon, with a member, Onesimus. Also, there is the inclusion of men and women as members whose influence would be felt in the society of the church.

Since Philemon is personally involved, there is the need for his overseer, Paul, to be involved with an objective point of view and reconciliation in mind. Perhaps Philemon was angry, hurt and even embittered toward this lowly slave who had done him wrong. Perhaps, Onesimus had made other attempts on his own to be reconciled that were rejected. We do not know and see only the apostolic solution and authority without knowing all the details in the background. It will not be difficult to find similar situations in the modern Church with the same results of broken relationships and wounded hearts. If Justice is not restored by presence of an overseer's wisdom and authority, there is little hope that many local church's divisions will be healed.

Paul is functioning as a New Testament Judge at the level of an appeals court.

His decision delivered to Philemon supports the ideas that Justice serves to accomplish reconciliation by fulfilling righteousness.

Paul's letter is not 'nice.' It is a firm directive to the leader of a local church. Paul makes it clear that Philemon owes him a debt, at least one of gratitude, and that he expects nothing but obedience in response. In stating that the response of Philemon should be 'spontaneous rather than forced,' Paul is implying that it will be forced if it is not spontaneous. This is a judgment by Paul that shows impartiality and makes it known that a leader is not to be given extraordinary, preferential consideration within Biblical concepts of Justice. It is also noteworthy that Paul includes love functioning in righteousness as the correct motive force.

By addressing the letter to the whole church, Paul includes the social pressures arising from the expectations of the group for a single course of action by Philemon. There are no private discussions, or negotiations of other options that Philemon might adopt. Time, distance, and righteousness did not permit those actions. We see no conspiracy among the leaders to protect the ministry or the ego of the local minister from 'bad' members. We do see the right course and suppose that Philemon was submissive to it while setting aside personal feelings.

Thankfully, Paul moves also into the positive argument for reconciliation by presenting the ideas that, while Onesimus was worthless as an unbeliever, he would be of great value to Philemon as a brother and should be received as such. Consider two factors: 1. Philemon had a significant investment of time and money in the slave who performed continuing functions that had value too. This investment and economic benefit was lost. Think what it would cost to acquire, if legal, train, and maintain a human slave today. 2. Onesimus could no longer, as a free brother, be dependent upon Philemon for support in any way. No pay, no room and board, no health care insurance. We do not know from the letter, but perhaps poor circumstances in Rome had forced Onesimus to seek out Paul in prison or maybe Onesimus was also inside the walls. Difficult circumstances promote repentance, do they not? Christian Justice will always have a cost for both sides of a conflict. The hope is, however, that the end will be better than the beginning, and that righteousness will be the means.

Paul indicates that Onesimus could now and in the future be of service to him in the ministry. The importance of resolving the wrong with Philemon was foremost and, I believe, of necessity to any future work of the ministry by Onesimus. It will be a good policy for any of us who desire to be in ministry today to first go back and make all of our wrongs right as best we can. Can we expect to find a father in the faith like Paul to guide and help? Will the leadership of the Church today see what is needed to support the reconciliatory process? Would a modern Philemon be generous and forgiving to a repentant Onesimus? Would a place in ministry be afforded to such a young rebel in this century?

We might expect Paul to mention the need for forgiveness by Philemon, but he does not. Modern theologians might suggest that Philemon should write off the debt and pretend that the run away had never happened. It is not clear from the letter, but there may have been stolen money or property involved as well. Note that forgiveness is an issue but it is hidden within the concepts of repentance and restitution. Paul demonstrates mercy in his direction to charge all debts to himself. It is unlikely that Paul or Onesimus had cash resources, but Paul is willing to assume any outstanding sums. He also says there is more than enough in the spiritual indebtedness that Philemon has to Paul to cover everything. Paul states, "I'll pay it all for Onesimus." The option to collect, or not, is Philemon's, but it seems doubtful that he would attempt recovery from Paul. It would be just if he did.

Repentance is demonstrated in the letter, and also by the physical return of the slave. Repentance, a change of mind, will doubtless be necessary for all the members at Colosse. Will it be easy for them? I wonder what it took to convince Onesimus, the fugitive, to accept and follow through with the return to Colosse? He would be compelled to admit his wrong and possibly suffer humiliation in the process. Sometimes humility is proved in humiliation. Going back to Colosse could not have been

easy for him or them. Restitution is underwritten by the apostle, so the way is made possible for forgiveness that accompanies reconciliation. Forgiveness and reconciliation are the fruits of these humble actions by someone who has done wrong.

There had been a relationship that was broken by the wrong of the run away. A senior minister of the Church prevailed on him to return and make it right with Philemon. Onesimus repented, and with Paul's help, offered restitution. Onesimus returned to admit his fault, to pay back the debt, and to seek to be united in a new way with his former owner. The apostolic office sets the course for a complete model of how Justice should operate, even today. These just patterns of restoration include threads of communication, leader support, responsibility, confession, repentance, restitution, and reunion all woven together by the Holy Spirit.

We assume that the letter was delivered, Onesimus was forgiven, Philemon was healed, and everyone was happy again. That's what Justice is all about.

Chapter 14 A Sinner In Corinth

Paul writes to the Corinthian church in a second letter to give them apostolic confirmation, direction and instruction concerning completion of the judicial process for one of the members who had been involved in sexual immorality. It is implied that Paul's directed excommunication of this brother had been complied with and that this dissociation was implemented by most if not all of the Corinthian membership. It is also implied here and explicit elsewhere that the sinner had experienced enough Godly sorrow coupled with a change of mind and actions to permit his being reinstated in the church. Now it is time to bring back into fellowship the sinful but repentant Christian.

The Corinthian church, we believe, was composed mostly of gentile people who would likely be ignorant of the well established Jewish (and Godly) protocols for dealing with sin in the house. While sexual immorality could have been punished by stoning under the law of Moses, mercy, a concept as old as God, was also granted to the ignorant and to the repentant. Which would be worse: stoning? or being turned over to Satan for the long haul? A lesson for us is that sin in the local church can not be ignored, and even though a punishment is given, restoration through repentance is the hope and objective. A little yeast will leaven the whole loaf and must be excised.

Paul leads them and instructs them from one move to the next. It should be noted that, as with Justice today, the next step by the church is dependent of the sinner's responses to confrontation and punishment. It could have worked out differently. If the sinner was defiant or belligerent, he would not have been reinstated. I use the word 'reinstate' rather than 'forgiven' for reasons that will become clear later on. A very remarkable thing is that the believers, the whole lot of them, were actually obedient when Paul purposefully tested their obedience. How far would that go in any local church today?

Let's read these two passages as though there were no seam or time lapse. Then look for a complete understanding of several points. I have used the King James Version on the left because it is easily tracked with Strong's numbers and will help our study. On the right side is the Kingdom Seeker Transliteration (my own) version to give us a more contemporary understanding.

Thanks to <http://www.crosswalk.com> for the handy tools!

The KJV Strong's Version	The Kingdom Seeker Transliteration
1 Corinthians 5	1 Corinthians 5
5:1 It is <u>reported commonly</u> that there is <u>fornication among you, and such fornication as is</u> not so <u>much</u> as <u>named among</u> the <u>Gentiles, that one</u> should <u>have his father's wife.</u>	5:1 It is rumored all over that there is sexual immorality in the church, and the gentiles don't even have a name for it, that a man should have his step-mother.
5:2 <u>And ye are</u> puffed <u>up, and have not rather mourned, that</u> he that hath <u>done this deed</u> might be taken <u>away from among you.</u>	5:2 and you guys are oblivious to it and pumped up when you should really be ashamed and sorrowful. Move this sinning Christian out of the fellowship.
5:3 <u>For I verily, as absent</u> in <u>body, but present</u> in <u>spirit,</u> have <u>judged already, as</u> though I were <u>present,</u> concerning him that <u>hath so done</u> this <u>deed.</u>	5:3 Even though I am not physically present with you, my spiritual authority is at work. I have reached a decision on what to do with this sinner, and it is just as binding on you as if I

<p>5:4</p> <p><u>In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.</u></p>	<p>were present.</p> <p>5:4 As the administrative authorities of Jesus Christ, when you are gathered as a group and have my mind and spirit and the anointing presence of the Lord Jesus, then,</p>
<p>5:5</p> <p>To <u>deliver</u> such an <u>one</u> unto <u>Satan for</u> the <u>destruction</u> of the <u>flesh, that</u> the <u>spirit</u> may be <u>saved in</u> the <u>day</u> of the <u>Lord Jesus.</u></p>	<p>5:5 remove the protective covering of the church. Release this one to Satan so that his carnal mind may be tormented, and thus produce repentance that will bring him salvation for his spirit in the day of the Lord.</p>
<p>--</p> <p>2:5</p> <p><u>But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.</u></p>	<p>--</p>
<p>2:6</p> <p><u>Sufficient</u> to such a <u>man</u> is <u>this punishment, which</u> was inflicted <u>of many.</u></p>	<p>2:5 This one has caused you grief and trouble, but not as much to me or else I would have been too hard on you.</p>
<p>2:7</p> <p><u>So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps</u> such a <u>one</u> should be swallowed <u>up</u> with <u>overmuch sorrow.</u></p>	<p>2:6 (since he has stopped his sin) The punishment that most of you imposed on him of disfellowship and loss of covering has been sufficient to turn him around.</p>
<p>2:8</p> <p><u>Wherefore I beseech you</u> that ye would <u>confirm</u> your <u>love toward him.</u></p>	<p>2:7</p> <p>So now, you ought to do something nice and comforting for him to reinstate him in the fellowship. Otherwise, the punishment might work more sorrow than is necessary to bring him to repentance.</p>
<p>2:9</p> <p><u>For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.</u></p>	<p>2:8 Be nice to him socially and confirm your love for him so that he will know that he has not been totally rejected by any.</p>

<p>2:10</p> <p><u>To whom</u> ye <u>forgive</u> any <u>thing</u>, I forgive <u>also: for if I forgave</u> any <u>thing</u>, to <u>whom</u> I <u>forgave</u> it, for your <u>sakes</u> <u>forgave</u> I it <u>in</u> the <u>person</u> of <u>Christ</u>:</p>	<p>2:9 In part, I wrote you the first directive to see if you would be obedient in everything, even the things you don't want to do but that are right.</p>
<p>2:11</p> <p><u>Lest Satan should</u> get an advantage of <u>us: for</u> we are <u>not ignorant</u> of <u>his devices</u>.</p>	<p>2:10 Understand the chain of command in the church: If you give someone the gift of reconciliation, I also give it to reinstate them, and will back you up with the apostolic authority that I have in Jesus Christ.</p> <p>2:11</p> <p>We will not allow Satan to keep this sinner and gain a victory over us. We know he schemes to divide us and defeat us.</p>

The simple key to understanding this passage is found by looking at the Greek language in 2 Cor 2:10. In the KJV and many other versions, the word rendered 'forgive' is 'Charizomai'. This is an atypical use. The most common NT word for 'forgive' is the verb 'Apheimi', 'to let go' or 'to leave'

Charizomai is the verb form of the noun, Charis, 'grace' or 'a gift' or 'loving-kindness,' being the most common and well known translational uses.

Strong's definition of Charizomai reads:

1. to do something pleasant or agreeable (to one), to do a favor to, gratify
 - a. to show one's self gracious, kind, benevolent
 - b. to grant forgiveness, to pardon
 - c. to give graciously, give freely, bestow
 1. to forgive
 2. graciously to restore one to another
 3. to preserve for one a person in peril

In my mind, Charizomai has the tone of loving confirmation, reinstatement, and reconciliation which are the first objectives of Justice proceedings. If Paul had used Apheimi, then we might get the idea

of a more cool, legalistic and therefore, uninvolved cancellation of a debt or penalty for this repentant brother.

I recently heard a minister say that ‘forgiving’ is a weapon against Satan, and he used 2 Cor 2:10 as his proof text. His overall message was about spiritual warfare basics, and that if we would just be ‘forgiving’ that it would give us an immediate victory over Satan. I may be wrong, but I think he was saying that we should be ‘forgiving’ within the church or in families where we have been wronged and with few exceptions. Perhaps he was using ‘forgive’ as a synonym for forbearance, tolerance, or even unconditionally acceptance. I don’t know.

I am sure that he has a hope that divisions can be prevented which would defeat some demonic schemes. The caveat for all of us is to not think of ‘forgiveness’ as the silver bullet that brings healing to the heart specifically and to relationships generally. The questions are much more complex than this one answer can solve. Additionally, it would be a mistake to think that decreeing ‘forgiveness,’ without substantive repentance, would do anything but destroy the integrity of the church relationships which only thrive in righteousness.

As a weapon of warfare, the true application of Justice is a real weapon. The fulfillment of the righteous requirements of Justice at the cross is the foundation of victorious overcoming described in Rev. 12:11, “They overcame by the Blood of the Lamb..!” True forgiveness, the absolution of sin or the penalties of sin, is a possibility within the greater concept of Justice, but does not and can not be a spiritual shortcut that spares everybody from facing responsibility for their wrong actions and words. The sinner in Corinth was found guilty and punished. As a result of losing his place in the church he came to a place of genuine repentance which led to his reinstatement. The righteous requirements of Justice were functioning in his punishment, his repentance, and by his reinstatement to the fellowship. Now that is a real weapon of warfare.

Before, I move away from this discussion, allow me to offer a few ways that Satan might attempt to gain an advantage in this situation.

- Dividing the congregation with debates over Paul’s demanded ‘harsh’ judgment of sin and coming to a stalemate.
- Sponsoring an ‘appeasement to sin’ by bringing the sinner back too soon and without repentance as an ‘act of love’.
- Planting the idea that no formal closure was necessary in reinstating the sinner.
- Convincing us today that shortcuts or avoidance of Godly judicial actions will provide satisfactory outcomes.

Appendix

Supporting Scriptures

Authority Matt 9:1-8, 1 Cor 6:1-6, Titus 1:5-9, Eph 4:11, Luke 5:24, Mark 2:10

Confronting Sin Lev 19:15-18, Matt 18:15, Matt 5:23-24, 1Cor 5, Acts 5:1

Communication Luke 6:41, Matt 18:15-17, Lev 19

Forgiving Luke 17:3, Numbers 14:11-23, Col 3:12-14, Matt 6:14, Matt 18:35, John 20:21-23, Mark 2:10

Injury-Sin Matt 18:15-17, Luke 17:1-4, 1 Cor 5:1-7, Lev 19:17, Ex 20-23

Mercy Luke 10:30-37, Matt 18:33, Matt 9:12, Matt 17:15-18, Matt 23:23.

Relationship – Love Luke 10:27, Matthew 5:23, Gen 2:18, Luke 10:27

Repentance Rev 3:19, Acts 26:20, Luke 13:3, 2 Cor 7:10, Luke 15:7, Heb 6:4-6, Jer 15:19, Heb 12:16

Restitution Nu 5:5-7, Luke 19:8-10, Acts 26:20, Ex 22-23,

Revenge Matthew 5:38, Lev 19:15-18

Righteousness 1 John 3:7-10, Matthew 6:33, Is 42:1-4, Ps 89:14-15, Luke 18:1-8, Matt 21:43, Matt 5:17-20, Luke 11:42, Matt 23:23

Unity John 17:22, Acts 2:1

Witness Lev 5:1, Ex 23:2,7, 1Tim 5:19, Matthew 18:15

Glossary

[Link to Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com) <http://dictionary.com>

[A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [O](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

We have used common definitions of words in the English language while seeking an understanding of meaning that can only come from the Holy Spirit. With the help of dictionary.com and other sources, we have attempted to clarify confused theological usage of terms like grace, forgiveness, judging, etc. The reader will already know that many words have multiple and distinctly different meanings depending on usage. Religion, multiple languages and the minds of men have confused understanding, and we desire to remove as much confusion as we are capable of.

Agape (Gk)

See the full article, with footnotes, by Wayne Jackson at <http://www.christiancourier.com/archives/threeDimensions.htm>

The Nature of Love

“But what did Christ mean when he suggested that we must exercise love in these dimensions? To answer this question, it will be helpful to consider the meaning of “love,” as that term is employed in the Greek Testament.

There are two common words in the Greek Testament, both of which are rendered “love” in the English translation. First, there is the verb agapao; then there is also phileo. These terms are the subject of some controversy among scholars. A few allege that these words have virtually the same meaning, and are mostly employed as “stylistic variations.” The vast majority of New Testament scholars, however, see a distinction between the terms.

Agapao has been described as the love of the intellect, a disposition that manifests itself in devotion to the object of its interest. By way of contrast, phileo is viewed as being a love of “the feelings, instinctive, warm affection” (Green, p. 377).

Barclay argued that agapao is the love of the mind, or the will; whereas phileo is the love of closeness and affection (1974, pp. 20-21).

Nigel Turner observed that phileo has to do with “warm and spontaneous affection,” but agapao connotes “a calculated disposition of regard and pious inclination” (p. 263).

Thayer suggested that agapao is grounded in admiration, veneration, and esteem, while phileo is prompted by sense and emotion (p. 653).

And another scholar says that agapao “often conveys the idea of showing love by action” (Richardson, p. 134).

Having noted this, we now observe that agapao is the word employed in the passage under consideration. We are to love God, our neighbor, and even ourselves with an agapao-type love.”

Acquiesce

To consent or comply passively or without protest. See Synonyms at [assent](#).

Amends

Heb. Shalam. Used 107 times. To be in a covenant of peace, to make peace with, to be complete, to be finished, be ended, to repay, to make whole or good, restore, make recompense. See Lev 5:16.

“He shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, he shall add one fifth to it.....” KJV.

Atonement

At-One-Ment is a good definition.

Heb. Kippur (re things like the altar) A covering of an offense by making a sacrifice.

Kaphar. Used 94 times. To cover, purge, make an atonement, make reconciliation, cover over with pitch.

Church - church

1. Church: The universal Church of Jesus Christ including all local churches, the members that have gone before and the members that remain.
2. church: The expression of the Church in a local society of two or more believers and including the elders and ministers responsible for the government and nurturing of that society.

Communicate

1. The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior.
2. Interpersonal rapport.

Conscience

1. The awareness of a moral or ethical aspect to one's conduct together with the urge to prefer right over wrong: Let your conscience be your guide.
2. A source of moral or ethical judgment or pronouncement: a document that serves as the nation's conscience.
3. Conformity to one's own sense of right conduct: a person of unflagging conscience.

Conscience

that faculty of the mind, or inborn sense of right and wrong, by which we judge of the moral character of human conduct. It is common to all men. Like all our other faculties, it has been perverted by the Fall (John 16:2; Acts 26:9; Rom. 2:15). It is spoken of as "defiled" (Titus 1:15), and "seared" (1 Tim. 4:2). A "conscience void of offence" is to be sought and cultivated (Acts 24:16; Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 1 Pet. 3:21).

[Source:](#) Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary

Condemn

1. To express strong disapproval of.
2. To pronounce judgment against; to sentence.

3. To lend credence to or provide evidence for an adverse judgment against: were condemned by their actions.

Conflict

1. A state of open, often prolonged fighting; a battle or war.
2. A state of disharmony between incompatible or antithetical persons, ideas, or interests; a clash.
3. Psychology. A psychic struggle, often unconscious, resulting from the opposition or simultaneous functioning of mutually exclusive impulses, desires, or tendencies.
4. Opposition between characters or forces in a work of drama or fiction, especially opposition that motivates or shapes the action of the plot.

Crime


1. An act committed or omitted in violation of a law forbidding or commanding it and for which punishment is imposed upon conviction.
2. A serious offense, especially one in violation of morality.
3. An unjust, senseless, or disgraceful act or condition.

Cruel

1. Disposed to inflict pain or suffering.
2. Causing suffering; painful.

Discernment

Used, with thanks, from <http://www.crosswalk.com>


The New Living Translation 

Hebrews 5 Read This Chapter

And a person who is living on milk isn't very far along in the Christian life and doesn't know much about doing what is right.

Solid food is for those who are mature, who have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong and then do what is right.

The phrase 'recognize the difference' or 'discern' in verse 14 is the following in Strong's.

Strong's Number: 1253		Browse Lexicon
Original Word	Word Origin	
diavkrisið	from (1252)	
Transliterated Word	TDNT Entry	
Diakrisis	3:949,469	
Phonetic Spelling	Parts of Speech	
dee-ak'-ree-sis 	Noun Feminine	

Definition

1. a distinguishing, discerning, judging

</TD< TR>

King James Word Usage - Total: 3

discerning 1, discern 1, disputation 1

Note the root word Krino, or judgment, is present in dia-krisis.

Strong's Number: 2919	Browse Lexicon
Original Word	Word Origin
krivnw	perhaps a primitive word
Transliterated Word	TDNT Entry
Krino	3:921,469

Phonetic Spelling

kree'-no

Parts of Speech

Verb

Definition

1. to separate, put asunder, to pick out, select, choose
2. to approve, esteem, to prefer
3. to be of opinion, deem, think, to be of opinion
4. to determine, resolve, decree
5. to judge
 - a. to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong
 1. to be judged, i.e. summoned to trial that one's case may be examined and judgment passed upon it
 - b. to pronounce judgment, to subject to censure
 1. of those who act the part of judges or arbiters in matters of common life, or pass judgment on the deeds and words of others
6. to rule, govern
 - a. to preside over with the power of giving judicial decisions, because it was the prerogative of kings and rulers to pass judgment
7. to contend together, of warriors and combatants
 - a. to dispute
 - b. in a forensic sense
 1. to go to law, have suit at law

</TD< TR>

Eros

'Erotic' or physical love. see [Agape](#) for a more complete study on love.

Evil

1. Any condition or act that is less than Godly.
2. Morally bad or wrong; wicked: an evil tyrant.
3. Causing ruin, injury, or pain; harmful: the evil effects of a poor diet.
4. Characterized by or indicating future misfortune; ominous: evil omens.

5. Bad or blameworthy by report; infamous: an evil reputation.
6. Characterized by anger or spite; malicious: an evil temper.

Existentialism

A philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe, regards human existence as unexplainable, and stresses freedom of choice and freedom from responsibility for the consequences of one's acts.

Extortion

Illegal use of one's official position or powers to obtain property, funds, or patronage.

Forgive

1. To remove or cancel, in total or in part, a debt of honor, relational abuse, or of property. Setting aside a just cause of action against a person for the sake of reconciliation, or mercy, or of righteousness.
2. Internal and personal maintenance of one's heart to properly process negative or potentially contaminating sentiments. i.e. bitterness, revenge or hatred. To repent of an attitude of resentment or revenge toward a repentant offender.
3. Hebrew. Calach. Strong's 05545. Used 45 times

to forgive, pardon

4. Greek. Aphiemí, Strong's 863, Used 863 (138 as forgive)
From + to go

1. to send away
 - a. to bid going away or depart
 1. of a husband divorcing his wife
 - b. to send forth, yield up, to expire
 - c. to let go, let alone, let be
 1. to disregard
 2. to leave, not to discuss now, (a topic) 1c
2. of teachers, writers and speakers
 1. to omit, neglect

1. to let go, give up a debt, forgive, to remit
2. to give up, keep no longer
3. to permit, allow, not to hinder, to give up a thing to a person
4. to leave, go way from one
 - . in order to go to another place
 - a. to depart from any one
 - b. to depart from one and leave him to himself so that all mutual claims are abandoned
 - c. to desert wrongfully
 - d. to go away leaving something behind
 - e. to leave one by not taking him as a companion
 - f. to leave on dying, leave behind one
 - g. to leave so that what is left may remain, leave remaining
 - h. abandon, leave destitute

Foreigner

1. One who is from a foreign country or place.
2. One who is from outside a particular group or community; an outsider.

Grace

1. God's power and ability functioning in and through us to do a certain thing. A gift of supernatural power and action.

2. A favor rendered by one who need not do so; indulgence.
3. A temporary immunity or exemption; a reprieve.
4. The state of being protected or sanctified by the favor of God.
5. An excellence or power granted by God.
6. God's favor and kind attitude toward the humble.

Iniquity

1. Gross immorality or injustice; wickedness.
2. A grossly immoral act; a sin.

Injury

1. Damage or harm done to or suffered by a person or thing: escaped from the accident without injury; a scandal that did considerable injury to the campaign.
2. A particular form of hurt, damage, or loss: a leg injury.
3. Law. Violation of the rights of another party for which legal redress is available.
4. Obsolete. An insult.

Injustice

1. Violation of another's rights or of what is right; lack of justice.
2. A specific unjust act; a wrong.

Innocent

1. Uncorrupted by evil, malice, or wrongdoing; sinless: an innocent child.

2. Not guilty of a specific crime or offense; legally blameless.
3. Within, allowed by, or sanctioned by the law; lawful.
4. Not dangerous or harmful; innocuous
5. Candid; straightforward
6. Uncorrupted by evil, malice, or wrongdoing; sinless.
7. Not guilty of a specific crime or offense; legally blameless: was innocent of all charges.

Judge

1. To form an opinion or estimation of after careful consideration
2. Law. To hear and decide on in a court of law; try
3. Obsolete. To pass sentence on; condemn.
4. To act as one appointed to decide the winners of.
5. To determine or declare after consideration or deliberation.
6. To have as an opinion or assumption; suppose
7. To form an opinion or evaluation.
8. To act or decide as a judge.

Justice

1. The quality of being just; fairness.
2. The principle of moral rightness; equity.
3. Conformity to moral rightness in action or attitude; righteousness.
4. The upholding of what is just, especially fair treatment and due reward in accordance with honor, standards, or law.

5. Law. The administration and procedure of law.

Love

([Agape](http://www.christiancourier.com/archives/threeDimensions.htm) See the full article, with footnotes, by Wayne Jackson at <http://www.christiancourier.com/archives/threeDimensions.htm>)

1. Love is always righteous, as God tells us what righteousness is.
2. Love is always Just. One cannot violate Righteousness and Justice and be Loving.
3. To be Agape Love, love must be developed (fruit), controlled or 'led' by the Spirit of God rather than human spirit or emotion.
4. The love of God is discovered and made manifest In Christ Jesus by the member.
5. Love may be defined from God's point of view, from man's and also from Satan's.
6. Love hates evil.. This shows us that Love has positive and negative aspects which are extremely difficult to reconcile into an understandable model or concept.
7. Love is a function of value. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. "Peter, do you agape me?"
8. Love is the method and manner of relationships with God first and then with all others of differing values, in terms of relationship.
9. The Methods and Actions of love are always righteous. God himself is the example of righteous love.
10. Justice is love's system for restoring relationships in righteousness. (Love for God and the Lord Jesus is demonstrated by commitment and by obedience)
11. Love is always a choice.. An election of free will. This proves the genuineness of Love.
12. Love as phileo, is over run with natural, unconverted, even copycat (looks like Godly love) carnal emotions which must be fed to be sustained. Some women are 'emotional' and need to feel 'loved'. This drains the spirit of others and overwhelms true Godly love.

Member

1. Any individual who has a continuing relationship with God, the Father, through Jesus Christ.
2. An individual who is a part of the Body of Christ.
3. A saint.
4. One for whom Christ died.

Mercy

1. Devine mercy is God's power, ability, authority and resources working outside of us but for our benefit in a particular situation. The examples of Mercy in scripture usually show the personal involvement of a benefactor when someone cannot help themselves. See the story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37 for a clear example of mercy.
2. Also, Mercy means compassionate treatment, leniency or forgiveness by one with authority to grant them, often when an unintentional or ignorant sin has been committed. Mercy, scripturally, is limited toward or withheld from those who are not humble or repentant. See James 4:6.
3. We may grant mercy in the same ways as God given our limitations as humans.
4. Something for which to be thankful; a blessing: It was a mercy that no one was hurt.
5. Alleviation of distress; relief.

Offence

1. The act of causing anger, resentment, displeasure, or affront.
2. The state of being offended.
3. A violation or infraction of a moral or social code; a transgression or sin.
4. A transgression of law; a crime.
5. Something that outrages moral sensibilities.

Penalty

1. A punishment established by law or authority for a crime or offense.
2. Something, especially a sum of money, required as a forfeit for an offense.
3. The disadvantage or painful consequences resulting from an action or condition: neglected his health and paid the penalty.

Perpetrator

Someone who perpetrates wrongdoing, a culprit.

Phileo (Gk) See [Agape](#) for definition by comparison

Affectionate, brotherly love.

Pride

1. A sense of one's own proper dignity or value; self-respect.
2. Pleasure or satisfaction taken in an achievement, possession, or association: parental pride.
3. A cause or source of pleasure or satisfaction; the best of a group or class.
4. The most successful or thriving condition; prime: the pride of youth.
5. An excessively high opinion of oneself; conceit.
6. Arrogant or disdainful conduct or treatment; haughtiness.

Rancor

Bitter, long-lasting resentment; deep-seated ill will. See Synonyms at [enmity](#).

Reconciliation

1. The reestablishing of cordial relations.
2. A process employed to reestablish a close relationship.
3. To settle or resolve.
4. To bring (oneself) to accept.

5. To make compatible or consistent.

Rectitude

1. Moral uprightness; righteousness.
2. The quality or condition of being correct in judgment.
3. The quality of being straight

Relationship

1. All aspects of interaction between two or more individuals.
2. Horizontal relationships exist between persons of equal status in a society. i.e., husband and wife, brother and sister.
3. Vertical relationships exist between persons of unequal status in society where one has more power and authority than another. i.e., God over all, apostles over churches, ministers over members, parents over children.

Reparation

1. The act or process of repairing or the condition of being repaired.
2. The act or process of making amends; expiation.
3. Something done or paid to compensate or make amends.
4. Compensation or remuneration required from a defeated nation as indemnity for damage or injury during a war.

Repentance

There are three Greek words used in the New Testament to denote repentance.

(1.)The verb _metamelomai_ is used of a change of mind, such as to produce regret or even remorse on account of sin, but not necessarily a change of heart. This word

is used with reference to the repentance of Judas (Matt. 27:3).

(2.) *Metanoeo*,

meaning to change one's mind and purpose, as the result of after knowledge.

This verb, with (3) the cognate noun *_metanoia_*, is used of true repentance, a change of mind and purpose and life, to which remission of sin is promised.

Evangelical repentance consists of (1) a true sense of one's own guilt and sinfulness; (2) an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ; (3) an actual hatred of sin (Ps. 119:128; Job 42:5, 6; 2 Cor. 7:10) and turning from it to God; and (4) a persistent endeavor after a holy life in a walking with God in the way of his commandments. The true penitent is conscious of guilt (Ps. 51:4, 9), of pollution (51:5, 7, 10), and of helplessness (51:11; 109:21, 22). Thus he apprehends himself to be just what God has always seen him to be and declares him to be. But repentance comprehends not only such a sense of sin, but also an apprehension of mercy, without which there can be no true repentance (Ps. 51:1; 130:4).

Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary & Dictionary.com

Resentment

1. Indignation or ill will felt as a result of a real or imagined grievance.
2. The deep sense that one has been wronged or has suffered injustice.

Restitution

1 a : a restoration of something to its rightful owner b : a making good of or giving an equivalent for some injury

2 a : the equitable remedy of restoring to an aggrieved party that which was obtained in unjust enrichment b : a remedy for breach of contract that consists of restoring the aggrieved party to the status quo that existed before the contract was made

3 : an amount to be paid for the purpose of restitution <ordered to pay restitution to the victim of his crime> —compare [FINE](#) —

[Source](#): Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law, © 1996 Merriam-Webster, Inc.

Restoration

1. To bring back into existence or use; reestablish: restore law and order.
2. To bring back to an original condition: restore a building.
3. To put (someone) back in a former position: restore the emperor to the throne.
4. To make restitution of; give back: restore the stolen funds.
5. An act of restoring: damage too great for restoration.

Revenge

1. The act of doing hurt or harm to another in return for wrong or injury suffered; satisfaction obtained by repayment of injuries.
2. A desire to repay injuries by inflicting hurt in return.

Righteousness, Righteous, Right

1. Those who do what is right, as defined by God, are identified as the righteous.
2. The righteous ones are those who have been justified by God through the sacrifice of Jesus, and who remain in Him, doing what is right.
3. Morally upright; without guilt or sin: a righteous parishioner.
4. In accordance with virtue or morality: a righteous judgment.
5. Morally justifiable: righteous anger.

Shame

The belief and sense that there is something so wrong with one's self and personhood that no one can fully accept them, and even God can not fix it. A state of hopeless self rejection and emotional pain demonically inspired.

Sin

1. A transgression of a religious or moral law, especially when deliberate.
2. Deliberate disobedience to the known will of God.
3. Something regarded as being shameful, deplorable, or utterly wrong.
4. A crime against the Kingdom of God.

Stalement

A situation in which no progress can be made or no advancement is possible. Syn., deadlock, impasse, standstill.

Storge (Gk)

Family love.

Treachery

1. Willful betrayal of fidelity, confidence, or trust; perfidy.
2. The act or an instance of such betrayal.

Trivial

1. Of little significance or value.
2. Ordinary; commonplace.
3. Concerned with or involving trivia.

Unforgiveness

1. A condition of attitudes and actions where a victim is unwilling and resistant to entering the reconciliation process with another person who has sinned against them but who is now repentant and seeking reconciliation.

2. Unforgiveness does not exist where the offender has not admitted responsibility for his actions nor sought to be worthy of forgiveness through repentance and restitution.

Victim

1. One who is harmed by another.
2. One who is harmed by or made to suffer from an act, circumstance, agency, or condition: victims of war.
3. A person who suffers injury, loss, or death as a result of a voluntary undertaking: You are a victim of your own scheming.
4. A person who is tricked, swindled, or taken advantage of: the victim of a cruel hoax.

Wicked

1. Evil by nature and in practice: “this wicked man Hitler, the repository and embodiment of many forms of soul-destroying hatred” (Winston S. Churchill).
2. Playfully malicious or mischievous: a wicked prank; a critic's wicked wit.
3. Severe and distressing: a wicked cough; a wicked gash; wicked driving conditions.
4. Highly offensive; obnoxious: a wicked stench.
5. Slang. Strikingly good, effective, or skillful: a wicked curve ball; a wicked imitation.

Witness

1. One who can give a firsthand account of something seen, heard, or experienced.
2. One who furnishes evidence.
3. One who is called on to testify before a court.

4. One who is called on to be present at a transaction in order to attest to what takes place.
5. An attestation to a fact, statement, or event; testimony.

Wrong

1. Not in conformity with fact or truth; incorrect or erroneous.
2. Contrary to conscience, morality, or law; immoral or wicked.
3. Unfair; unjust.
4. Not fitting or suitable; inappropriate or improper.
5. An unjust or injurious act.
6. Something contrary to ethics or morality.
7. An invasion or a violation of another's legal rights.

Appendix

Supporting Scriptures

Confronting Sin

Lev 19:15-18, Luke 17:3, Matt 18:15, 1 Cor 5, Acts 5:1

Communication

Luke 6:41, Matt 18:15-17, Lev 19

Forgiving

Luke 17:3, Numbers 14:11-23, Col 3:12-14, Matt 6:14, Matt 18:35, John 20:21-23, Mark 2:10

Injury

Matt 18:15-17, Luke 17:1-4, 1 Cor 5:1-7, Lev 19:17, Ex 20-23

Mercy

Luke 10:30-37, Matt 18:33, Matt 9:12, Matt 17:15-18, Matt 23:23.

Relationship

Matthew 5:23, Gen 2:18, Luke 10:27

Restitution

Nu 5:5-7, Luke 19:8-10, Acts 26:20, Ex 22-23, Prov 14:9

Righteousness

1 John 3:7-10, Matthew 6:33, Is 42:1-4, Ps 89:14-15, Luke 18:1-8, Matt 21:43, Matt 5:17-20, Luke 11:42, Matt 23:23

Repentance

Jesus said, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."* Mark 1:14

"...unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Luke 13:3, 5

"...there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." Luke 15:7

"...that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things." Luke 24:47

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:38

" Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."

2 Corinthians 7:9

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...." Acts 3:19

" Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

Acts 8:22

"Jesus... said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.'" Mark 2:17

"...if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will." 2 Ti 2:25

"...afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears." Hebrews 12:17

"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent."

Revelation 2:5

"When they sin against You (for there is no one who does not sin), and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy... yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You... saying, 'We have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness'; and when they return to You

with all their heart and with all their soul... then hear in heaven... and forgive Your people who have sinned against You." 1 Kings 8:46

"They refuse to return. I listened and heard, but they do not speak aright. No man repented of his wickedness, saying, 'What have I done?' Everyone turned to his own course as the horse rushes into the battle." Jeremiah 8:5

"And the Lord has sent to you all His servants the prophets... but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear. They said, 'Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings... and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands; and I will not harm you.' Yet you have not listened to Me," says the Lord, 'that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.'" Jeremiah 25:4

"...unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Luke 13:3, 5

"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord God. 'Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.'

Ezekiel 18:30

"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'" Matthew 3:1

"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

Mark 1:4

"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance." Matthew 3:7-8

"From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Matthew 4:17

"[Jesus] said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.'" Matthew 9:12

"Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago.'" Matthew 11:20

"He said to them, 'In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. 'And 'whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, 'shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. 'Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!' So they went out and preached that people should repent.'" Mark 6:10

"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:10

" When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.'" Acts 11:18

" ...these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness..." Acts 17:30

" Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" Romans 2:4

"... lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced." 2 Corinthians 12:21

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

"Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth."

Revelation 2:16

"I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds." Revelation 2:21

"But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands.... And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts." Revelation 9:20-21

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." Revelation 3:19