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**God's Process For Life Change**  
**"Repairing Our Relationships"**  
(Part 5)

- Everything in this life eventually breaks down. Then, we're faced with the reality of having to make repairs. (The latest project for me is our deck. Explain stain peeling off.) I don't like repair work. It can be tedious, frustrating, and many times, expensive...but it's necessary. Relationships are like this too. Sometimes they require some repair work. Sometimes they break down. Sometimes it's a lot of work.

**Intro:** If God is going to transform our lives, then we must let Him transform our relationships! If our relationships are going to be transformed, then we have to commit ourselves to some relational repair work. They don't fix themselves. What does that mean?

- 2 Very important steps in repairing relationships.

**I. Offering Forgiveness**

*Col. 3:13 "You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."*

(NLT) Notice 3 truths in is verse

- Everyone has faults therefore offenses are a part of life. (Didn't say IF there are faults and offenses – This is reality!)
  - Because we live with imperfect people, we offer forgiveness in our relationships. Embrace a lifestyle of forgiveness.
  - The rationale for this behavior is in constantly remembering how much the Lord has unconditionally forgiven us. This is the mindset / model.
- 3 directions forgiveness must flow
    - A. Forgiveness must flow from God to us
      - Rom. 3:22 "We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this way, no matter who we are or what we have done."* (NLT)
      - 1. Until we embrace the forgiveness that is provided for us through Jesus, forgiving others just doesn't make much sense. There's really no good rationale for it. God sets the example for forgiveness with Jesus.
      - 2. How so? Our sin makes us guilty before a Holy and Just God. Because God is a Just God, He has to punish sin. Therefore, He sent Jesus to be a

- substitute for us and take the punishment that we deserved.
3. By Jesus dying on a cross, He was punished for us and God's justice was satisfied. **Imagine a courtroom scene:** You're on trial because of a car accident that was your fault and someone died. You are found guilty of vehicular homicide. You're going to jail for the rest of your life. Just then your lawyer approaches the judge and asks if he can take your place.
  4. This is what Jesus did for us on the cross. He made forgiveness an option "no matter who we are or what we've done." BUT, we must receive this forgiveness. Nothing we've done is beyond the realm of His forgiveness.
  5. This is the first step in learning how to forgive others. We must receive God's forgiveness that comes through Jesus. God's forgiveness is a gift that must be received. Have you received this amazing gift?
  6. HOW? Tell Him you receive it. Knowing about a gift and receiving a gift are 2 very different things. (**Illustrate with \$5.** I have a gift of \$5 to give to someone – Now, everyone KNOWS. Pick someone in crowd. "Will you receive this? ) Notice the difference?

#### B. Forgiveness must flow from us to others

*Eph. 4:32 "Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ Jesus has forgiven you." (NLT)*

1. Notice how we are to treat each other. Notice three descriptions...With kindness / with tenderness / with forgiveness. Then notice why...Because God has forgiven us through Jesus.
2. As believers, how can we accurately represent Christ to this world unless we practice forgiveness in our relationships? Is it possible that the world should first understand God's forgiveness by watching His us? YES!
3. I want you to see some of the negative results of choosing to NOT forgive
  - It ruins our testimony to the unchurched world
  - It makes us an emotional prisoner to the one who hurt us
  - It limits our ability to love because our heart is too full of resentment
  - It stunts us emotionally because we are emotionally trapped in the past
4. God tells us to forgive in order to transform our lives. Our lives will remain unchanged until we embrace forgiveness. We forgive not because it's fair to them, but because it's the only way to be fair to yourself.
5. Forgiveness releases the offender of any debt they owe you. Forgiveness is about "letting go". (**Illustrate:** Playing tug-a-war – as long as you keep hanging on to the rope of unforgiveness, there is a war going on. Let go of your end and the war is over!)

#### C. Forgiveness must flow to myself

*Rom. 8:1 “So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.” (NLT)*

1. Sometimes this is the forgotten piece of forgiveness. We have trouble forgiving ourselves for our past mistakes and failures, therefore we live under a cloud of guilt / shame / and condemnation.
2. We can never see our relationships repaired until we apply forgiveness to ourselves. The second greatest command is to love your neighbor...**AS YOURSELF.**
3. A healthy view of self precedes healthy relationships. We must think correctly about ourselves **FIRST** before we can think correctly about relationships.
4. How much time and energy do you spend regretting the past? How much negative self-talk are you doing? How many thoughts about yourself are negative and self-condemning? Be Honest! Maybe you are living under a cloud of condemnation.
5. We can't be free in relationships until this is gone. It will cloud everything you do. It will become a filter in which you will screen information and relationships and it will distort your perspective of the reality God wants you to embrace.

How are you doing with all three directions forgiveness needs to flow? Is the flow hindered in any direction? If so, this next step will help if you're willing to take it.

## **II. Making Amends**

Making amends has to do with being willing to repair whatever damage we have caused in relationships. Why should I want to make amends? If God has forgiven me isn't that enough? Why bring up the past? Let's move on!

Before we can have healthy relationships, we have to clean out the dead stuff so the new growth has a place to expand. (Guilt / pain / shame) It can be like gardening...cutting off the dead stuff. (Trimming my roses) The key word is **willingness!** We are willing to make amends however God directs us. Remember, this is a spiritual process.

\*\* Exception: When to do so would harm them / others / myself. – Abuse victims

\*\* Acronym: **A.M.E.N.D.S.** Let's answer the question. How do I make amends?

A. **A:** Admit the hurt and the harm

1. You will see that emotional honesty is very key to transformation. God is not going to transform what we refuse to admit honestly before Him. If we continue to remain in denial of those who have wounded us, we remain prisoners.
2. Can we also admit that because of the pain, we are hanging on to resentment? Some of you may say, “I have a right to resent these people. Look what they've done!”

3. God doesn't tell us to deny the pain, but resenting people only blocks God's work of transformation and makes us emotional prisoners to the ones who hurt us.

*Luke 6:37 "Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. Stop criticizing others, or it will all come back on you. If you forgive others you will be forgiven." (NLT)*

4. Resentment causes the pain to "come back on you". It sticks to you. You become the emotional prisoner to the one you resent. Resentment just creates negative results in our lives.

**B. M: Make a list**

1. Sometimes, because of our own pain and wounding, we lash out at others and wound them. Wounded people tend to wound people. This step is where we get very honest about how we have hurt others.
2. This is where we stop making excuses for our behavior and own up to the fact that we have inflicted some harm on others. This can be intentional or unintentional. Doesn't matter! (Caution: Don't beat yourself up!)
3. Ask God to give you clarity as you think through your past and present relationships.

*Matt. 5:23-24 "So if you are standing before the altar..., and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you...Go and be reconciled to that person..." (NLT)* This is the "remembering" part.

**C. E: Encourage one another**

1. This is not a step to do alone. We need the encouragement of another person in our life. When it comes to our emotional wounding, we're not always the most objective person. We need another's perspective.

*Gal. 6:2 "Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ." (NLT)*

2. God's work of transformation is NOT done in isolation, but in the context of loving relationships. I need to talk through my steps of making amends with another believer.
3. This is NOT Gossip / slander / but more accountability and encouragement. These are difficult things to do. We need the support of other believers to help us be objective and do the hard things.
4. Find someone who loves you enough to speak the truth to you.

**D. N: Not for them**

1. Here's the secret to effectively making amends: "Don't expect anything back!" You are not doing this for them / to receive any reward from them / but for you! To be obedient to Jesus and to experience His transformational

power in your life.

*Luke 6:35 “Love your enemies! Do good to them! Lend to them! Then your reward from heaven will be very great...” (NLT)*

2. Notice He didn't say that they will turn into your friends. He didn't say do this so they will apologize to you. He did say that God will reward you. God will work in your life.
3. We must have proper expectations in making amends. Please don't set yourself up for disappointment. Once you do whatever the Lord leads you to do in a relationship, you are released regardless of the response.
4. Don't use the response of the person your trying to make amends with as a gauge as to whether it was successful or not. Obedience to Jesus is success!

**E. D: Do it at the right time**

*Ecc. 3:1 “There is a right time for everything..” (NLT)*

1. We need to be asking the Lord Jesus to help us have the right timing to make amends. Timing is everything! What do you mean by timing?
2. There is a proper timing for you. Allowing God to work in your heart / not resisting how He prompts your heart / Waiting when He tells you to wait and moving when He tells you to move. Remember, it is a spiritual process.
3. Often, the Lord will give you “Divine appointments”. Once we open up our lives to be obedient, God creates scenarios / orchestrates events to help us be successful. We run into people at “just the right moment”.
4. Often we need to be sensitive to the timing in the life of the person we're trying to make amends with. They may be in a personal crisis / in the middle of a painful event / under tremendous stress / This takes discernment. ASK!
5. When the timing is right though, what do we do?
  - We admit our fault / our pieces of the damage done. Not all of it.
  - We acknowledge that it was wrong. We offer no excuses
  - We ask for their forgiveness

**F. S: Start living the promises of transformation**

*Gal. 5:1 “So Christ has really set us free. Now make sure you stay free...” (NLT)*

1. These people were tempted to go back and be slaves to religion / rules / legalism instead of the freedom of a relationship with Christ..
2. We can be tempted to go back to resentment / bitterness / unforgiveness and be slaves all over again instead of living the freedom that comes from the promises of God.
3. We can get trapped again in the bondage of resentment / unforgiveness / bitterness. WHY? Because everyone we relate to is flawed. This means everyone in our life will let us down / offend us / irritate us / anger us.

4. We have a choice every day to live out the promises of a transformed life or return to old life we left. We have the choice every day to return to bondage or live in freedom. What will your choice be?

Is there some repair work you need to do in some of your relationships? Remember, God's transformation; His work of life change will not be a reality until we allow Him to change our relationships as well. It's part of the package.

Is forgiveness flowing in all three directions? From God to you / You to others / to yourself? Who do you need to be making amends with? Are there some relationships you can trust God to repair?