

9. Apology

Matthew 5:23-25a

23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. 25 “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court.

One of the main keys for sustainable relationships is settling issues quickly. Righting wrongs. The emphasis of this verse above is the speed.

Apology is crucial in relationship building. In scripture we see examples of faint apologies and fake apologies and non-apologies. A lot of relationships are dying today because people struggle to give genuine apologies. The reason why people complain saying this person apologised or always says sorry but continues to do the thing again and again is because **the apology was not genuine. It was not mixed with repentance before God.**

Non-apology

Then Saul admitted to Samuel, “Yes, I have sinned. I have disobeyed your instructions and the LORD’s command, for I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded. But now, please forgive my sin and come back with me so that I may worship the LORD.” But Samuel replied, “I will not go back with you! Since you have rejected the LORD’s command, he has rejected you as king of Israel.” (1 Samuel 15:24-26)

David’s genuine apology

Then David confessed to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan replied, “Yes, but the LORD has forgiven you, and you won’t die for this sin. Nevertheless, because you have shown utter contempt for the LORD by doing this, your child will die.” (2 Samuel 12:13-14)

Despite his apology he still experienced some consequences. A true apology begins with genuine repentance before the Lord. This means a change of thinking with regards to the practice and also a U-Turn in behaviour. Sadly, many people apologize because they value the relationship but there is no true repentance before the Lord. They end up harming others in the same way e.g. people who say they struggle with porn but are fine with people they know well. This is true of people who say stealing is ok if you steal from a particular people group.

A psalm of David, regarding the time Nathan the prophet came to him after David had committed adultery with BathSheba.

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just. (Psalm 51:1-4)

2 Cor 7:10

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

Godly relationships are built on Godly sorrow. There is a difference between worldly sorrow and Godly sorrow.

The Process of Apology

1. Admission of guilt/Confession

It's important to do this before God and the other person concerned. "This is what I did."

Understanding that you have done something wrong and being able to accurately acknowledge what you did. Call the wrong by name, don't dilute it by referring to it indirectly with a euphemism.

A non-apology may express sympathy for misfortune without accepting the blame. **Admission of guilt means you are taking responsibility. You are not passing the buck.**

Galatians 6:7 - Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

Part of admission of guilt is that you, like King David, are willing to face the consequences.

2. Acknowledgement of the impact

This is important otherwise someone can forgive you but still wonder whether you really understand the depth of how you wronged them.

What's the impact on them? What's the impact on your relationship? What's the impact with regards to consequences? Don't shift the blame.

3. Remorse

"I am sorry. I regret what I did. I wish I had not done it. I never want to do this again." This is moral anguish for what you did.

A fake apology is sorry for getting caught, or sorry that she is now pregnant. Or sadness that your lives are now inconvenienced. A non-apology will not have regret or remorse for the wrong, but may have sympathy and concern for the wronged person without apologizing for the wrong.

4. Restitution

Restitution involves restoration.

Luke 19:8

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

"This is what I am going to do in an attempt to make up for it." "This is my action plan to hopefully regain your trust in this area."

In the restoration you are also making a commitment that it won't happen again. You are rebuilding trust.

5. Reconciliation

"Will you please forgive me for this? I can't demand your forgiveness but I would like this relationship to be restored."

6. Request

In the process it's also good to end with a request for some kind of support. It could sound something like this:

“This has been an area of weakness for a long time; please pray for me that I will overcome it.”

“As I endeavour to work on this, please hold me accountable by asking me about it from time to time.”

10. Letting Go

Letting go requires both forgiveness and patience. Love is patient and love covers a multitude of sins.

Luke 17:4

"And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him.

Ephesians 4:2

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Patience = makrothumos

Col 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

If you don't have a revelation of how much the Lord forgave you and still forgives you then you will struggle to pass that on to others. If you don't have a revelation of your own sin then you won't be aware of your need for forgiveness.

Has God not been patient with you? How long did it take for you to commit your life to Christ? How long has it taken you to step into the fullness of your calling? Yet you are impatient with others when they don't respond quick enough to your needs, your barks and screams. **Our impatience is often hypocritical.**

Eph 4:26-27

In your anger do not sin"[a]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

Often we remain angry because we are not willing to suspend judgment.

Often we get angry because of conceit; we overestimate our own righteousness

Often we get angry because we entertain and agree with the enemy's thoughts

Anger makes us do things that we are likely to regret later. It leads us to sin. **"An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression", (Proverbs 29:22).** This shows that there is a link between being hot tempered and sinning. Benjamin Franklin once said, "Whatever is begun in anger ends in shame."

How do you use anger in your relationships? One of the positives for people is that their hot tempered nature causes people to be afraid of them and not try to take advantage of them. Unfortunately, the long term impact is that the relationship is destroyed because people avoid that which they fear.

Stages of anger:

1. Frustration (mild irritation to taking it out on inanimate objects)
2. Blame 3. They deserve to be punished
4. I will punish them (wrath, fury and rage - you can step into a realm where you are no longer in control).