

**Proverbs 20:22 (NIV)**

*Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you.*

**What should you do when you discover you have been judging and condemning someone?**

**1) Consider your relationship with God**

Understand that this is first of all an issue between you and God.

**What truths do we need to acknowledge about God that would set us free from the need to judge others?**

- God is Judge
- God is Just
- God will meet my needs

**How has your judging another person violated these truths?**

**How should you resolve these issues with God?**

- Confess and Repent
- Step down from the Judge's bench and let God do his job.
- Approach the relationship as Jesus wants you to through you.

**1 Peter 2:23-24 (NIV)**

*When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

**Why did Jesus act the way he did?**

**2) Consider your relationship with the other person****Luke 23:33-34 (NIV)**

*When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. <sup>34</sup> Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

**Why did Jesus not respond in anger to those killing him?**

**Why were they doing what they were doing?**

**What was their perspective and motivation?**

**Why is it important to understand the other person's perspective?**

When we start to view life through the eyes of the other person, we can begin to understand their behaviour toward us. This can accomplish several different effects:

- It may reveal how our behaviour has contributed to the problem
- It may reveal a misunderstanding that can be easily corrected
- It may evoke in us sympathy rather than anger
- It will convey respect and value to the other person

**Ephesians 4:2, 31-32 (NLT)**

*Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love... <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. <sup>32</sup> Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

**What role does humility play in forgiveness?**

**Matthew 18:35 (NIV)**

*"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."*

**What does it mean to forgive from the heart?**

**Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV)**

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

**What role should thankfulness play?**

**What role should mission play?**

**2 Corinthians 5:17-20 (NIV)**

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

**If we are free ourselves, what then is the motivation for offering forgiveness?**

**Offering forgiveness means we proactively look for ways to free a person from bondage to their past actions. Our interpersonal acts of forgiveness become living pictures of the forgiveness Christ offers everyone.**

**1 John 4:10 (NIV)**

*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

**Romans 5:8 (NIV)**

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

**What do the above verses teach us about how we should seek reconciliation with people who have wronged us?**

God took the first step is restoring our relationship with him, even though we were the ones to break the relationship. He took initiative, at his own expense, to remove any relational barriers and show how much he desired a restored relationship with us.

**Luke 15:11-24 (NIV)**

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons.

<sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup> "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

<sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

<sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

<sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!

<sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

<sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'

<sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>21</sup> "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

<sup>22</sup> "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

<sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

<sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

**In this case, why do you think the Father did not go chasing after the son when he left?**

There was no point in chasing after the son, because the son was not repentant and ready to return. Had the father chased the son, the son would have not have responded and would have continued to run away.

What determines when you should chase after someone versus waiting for them to come to you?

When the son did return, what was the significance of the gifts the father gave him?

**Robe:** reveals him to have a position of an honoured son

**Genesis 37:3 (NIV)**

*Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him.*

**Isaiah 61:10 (NIV)**

*I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

**Ring:** reveals him as having family authority. He could do sales, make purchases and take out loans, all because he carried his father's seal.

**Genesis 41:41-42 (NIV)**

<sup>41</sup> So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." <sup>42</sup> Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.

**Sandals:** revealed him as a son as opposed to a servant. Though the son was willing to return as a servant, the father forgave him and restored him to the full relationship he had before, even better.

What principles might we carry from this story into our own relational conflicts?

**CAUTION:** The above story is a parable and as such it is designed to only illustrate one key point and cannot be taken to extremes. In what ways do we need to be careful about using this as a sole model for forgiveness?

In this story, the Father represents God who willingly and lovingly forgives his son and raises him to restored status within the family. It is true that God will only forgive once we come to a point of repentance and return to him, however, we also know that in the big picture of eternity, our Father aggressively worked on our behalf to make salvation possible before we became repentant.

**John 21:15-17 (NIV)**

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

<sup>16</sup> Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

<sup>17</sup> The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

**Why do you think Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him?**

Jesus was giving Peter the opportunity to counter the words of denial he spoke when Jesus was arrested.

**How was this approach to restoring the relationship different than our typical approach?**

Jesus knew Peter was repentant and desired to be restored to relationship. In this moment, it did not need to be a direct conversation about the past betrayal, but merely a deep affirmation of love and a commitment to walk in that love in an ongoing way.

Instead of chastising or punishing Peter, he actually called him to a higher level of responsibility within Jesus' kingdom, he called him to assume responsibility to mentor and equip all of Jesus' disciples.

**What principles might we carry from this story into our own relational conflicts?****What are some practical ways one might initiate reconciliation with someone who has wounded them and does not seem repentant?****2 Corinthians 5:18 (NIV)**

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:*

**What does the above verse indicate about how we should approach life?**

The above verse says that our lives should be all about entering into damaged relationships and bringing about peace. First, between others and God, but then also on the horizontal plane in our earthly relationships: Love God and love others.

As scary as this sounds, it means we should always run to relational conflict, not away from it. We should always bring with us the hope of peace into every relationship we enter.

***Go and be a minister of reconciliation this week!***