

Reconciling The Past

The Bible exhorts the believer to live according to the truth. When we fail to do so we suffer spiritual loss. We are told to confess and reject all sinful patterns of past behavior and not allow these to influence us today (Titus 2:12; I Peter 1:14,18). All neglect of such responsibility will cause repercussions in other areas of life -- emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual. The apostle Paul could say "forgetting those things which are behind" (Philippians 3:13) only because he had reconciled his past (Vs 4-12).

We have all been taught error. For most of us we were taught in how we were treated in those early years of our life. It is vitally important that we find and reconcile these errors because sin, with its bondage, almost always find its source and power in error. Because of this relationship of sin to error, many believers seek to confess their sin, according to I John 1:9, only to find that nothing really happens. The reason such confession does not work is that we are only confessing the fruit of our sin (the act with its bondage) and not its root (the error that produced it).

Some of the patterns of thought and action we may have received from our past may be due to errors about God (A), or ourselves (B), or about some event in our life (C). Or, perhaps we were given responsibilities beyond our ability (D), or taught wrong values (E). Many of us have adopted patterns of life that made us passive, or defensive, or negative. Some of us have developed incorrect relationships, or self-defeating ways of responding to people or life itself (F). One of the most serious errors is to accept injustice, false guilt, and hurts without putting the blame where it belongs and dealing with it.

It is helpful to go back into one's life and deal with the past on the basis of the truth. When we do so we are seeking to honor God and obey His Word. Follow these suggestions carefully.

Ask the Lord to turn His searchlight on you and on your past. Trust Him to bring to your remembrance all those times which you need to reconcile. Make a choice -- before God -- to be honest.

1. Start with your earliest memories as a child. Write out (reject the temptation to just think about it or talk it out) write out every time you accepted error, sinned, or were hurt. Be complete, name the people involved, state what happened, be truthful and honest, do not protect yourself or other people, and do not fantasize.

2. Evaluate the past event on the basis of the truth. If you sinned then confess it to God truthfully and receive His forgiveness and cleansing (I John 1:9). If you were incorrectly taught or hurt by someone, and it was their fault, then write at the end of your account, ". . . they should not have done that to me."

3. For those times in which injustice was involved -- it is right, even necessary, to become angry about it. God commands us to be angry at such times (Ephesians 4:26). Find some way of expressing your anger without striking out impulsively and hurting someone or yourself. Perhaps you need to become emotional in "telling someone off" as you describe the injustice and pound something with a club. Don't look upon yourself as though you are "above" such activity. You may need to do so -- if you are going to be free. This may take a good deal of time.

4. When you have finished writing out the event, and have been able to express yourself emotionally so you are "cleaned out" and can look back on the event without deep stirrings within, then stop and completely forgive the person (Mark 11:25,26). If you were at fault in some way then confess that to God. This again will take time. Keep at it even though you may not feel any different toward the person who hurt you. Forgiveness is an act of the will -- not the emotions.

5. When you have finished each event, understood the error you have accepted and know how to deal with it, have confessed your own sins, and forgiven those who have sinned against you -- then carefully do two things.

a. Make an affirmation that Satan, the Accuser, may no longer use what you have written out against you. State audibly with firmness, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I take this event away from Satan and declare that he may not use it against me anymore" (Ephesians 4:27; 5:11; 6:14).

b. Choose to receive the healing the Lord Jesus died to provide for those who believe in Him and live according to His Word (Isaiah 53:5). State audibly the following: "Now that I have made this right with You, Heavenly Father, I receive the healing You have provided for me."

6. When you have finished your work (do not overlook the grudges you may have against God) then count it finished. When you think of a bad event in your past, then state: "I have dealt with that truthfully and it is settled." When you sin today -- confess, forgive, and make the affirmations.

- (A). Errors that God is not good, or faithful, or that He is like our parents, or that He is not wise, loving, and powerful enough to understand and care for us and our problems.
- (B). Errors that indicate we are inferior, or worthless, or ugly, or always guilty, or a loser, or have been abandoned by God.
- (C). Errors that we were guilty about some event when we were not, or that something happened when it didn't.
- (D). Errors that caused one to have obligations too soon, and caused loss of childhood, or deep scars between family members.
- (E). Errors that made one into a workaholic, or rageaholic, or a drug addict, or an alcoholic, or a recluse, or a legalist, or frigid.
- (F). Errors related to retreating from life, or manipulating people, or allowing people to manipulate us, or protecting ourselves, or overly aggressive and dominant.