

Making Amendsⁱ

Praise:

Begin to prepare your heart and mind for the study by listening to and/or singing the worship songs from the services. Choose two or three songs from the following list:

Holding Nothing Back – Kim Walker
You Have Won Me – Bethel Live
White Flag – Chris Tomlin
King of Heaven – Hillsong United
Cornerstone – Hillsong

We Give You Glory – Jeremy Camp
Your Love Never Fails – Jesus Culture
Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) – Chris Tomlin
Let Me Rediscover You – Downhere

Prayer:

Following the praise music, pray for understanding of the scripture, enlightenment that the Holy Spirit may guide your understanding, discernment that you may see how this lesson applies to you, and courage to surrender those things that hinder your spiritual growth.

Preparation:

(5-10 min)

1. Write on a piece of paper three sentences that describe or summarize the message, “Making Amends.”
2. Take turns reading aloud the summaries. After all have shared, discuss the descriptions/summaries for the remaining few minutes (of the 10 total).

Breaking it Down

(30 min)

Break into smaller groups of three or four people. Read the key segments of today’s message, and answer together the questions related thereto.

The Healing Power of Christ

Throughout this study, we have been gaining insights from a supplemental resource called, *Life’s Healing Choices*, by John Baker. Each week, the messages have been related to a corresponding chapter in the book. This lesson, however, is actually the second part of a chapter we’ve already studied, the chapter Baker calls, “Repairing Relationships.”

Two lessons ago, we explored the reasons and “how tos” of forgiving those who have hurt us (recall “Forgiving Others” study guide). In the same way, we need to set things right and make amends to those whom we have wronged due to our own hurts, hang-ups, and habits.

Making Amends

Making amends, sincerely apologizing for a wrongdoing...who welcomes *that* kind of step? We might welcome being on the receiving end of that step, not so much as the giving side. Most of us are eager to receive an apology from those who have hurt us, but we’re not even half as excited about reciprocating. More than likely, the only way most of us are going to make amends is if we’re forced to do so. As children, our parents may have taken or withheld some of our allowance to repay a neighbor for a broken window; other times, they may have required us to write a note of apology for misbehaving in school or for lying to someone. As children, we were at the mercy of our parents when it came to making amends; as adults, it’s easier to absolve

ourselves of wrongdoings and hope they go away. But, unresolved relationships prohibit our healing. “As painful as making amends may seem, it is absolutely essential.” (p. 176)

When we consider the works necessary for repairing relationships, we can look at forgiving others as one bookend and making amends as the other. Each depends on the other, and both are necessary for us to experience the healing power of Christ.

1. What comes to mind when you hear the phrase, “making amends?”
2. Recall a time that you felt forced or coerced into making amends. Share what happened and what you had to do. What was the outcome?

What? (is making amends)

Making amends is **more than offering an apology**, although it may include saying, “I’m sorry.” According to one definition on Dictionary.com, to make amends is “to compensate, as for an injury, loss, or insult.” Accordingly, making amends may require us to do something in order to set things straight or to make things right. For those of us who’ve been in the doghouse, we know what making amends is all about: keeping the florists and jewelers in business. In other words, it’s the use of tangible “compensation” (often à la flowers and bling) to make amends and atone for wrongs committed against another. Making amends is more than offering an apology.

1. Describe some simple ways in which we make amends to one another.
2. Describe some elaborate ways in which we make amends to one another.
3. Have you ever felt that “I’m sorry” wasn’t enough? What *would* have been enough?

Why? (should we make amends)

Making amends is **God’s way of repairing (or restoring) broken relationships**. It is a biblically-based notion for setting things right between individuals found in both the Old and New Testaments. In Leviticus, one of the law books for the ancient people of God, a variety of offerings or sacrifices is outlined for wrongs committed (e.g., burnt, grain, peace, sin, guilt). Following is a portion of what is said about the guilt, or compensation, offering that is associated with violating one of God’s commands, even unintentionally:

You will make amends for the way you have sinned against the holy thing: you will add one-fifth to its value and give it to the priest. Then the priest will make reconciliation for you with the ram for the compensation offering, and you will be forgiven. (Leviticus 5:16 CEB)

Making amends is required for reconciliation with God and to receive His forgiveness. Making amends is also necessary to repair broken human relationships, as well. In another chapter of Leviticus, it is mandated that misdeeds such as cheating someone, committing fraud, or lying are also to be atoned for by a guilt offering:

You must make restitution by paying the full price plus an additional 20 percent to the person you have harmed. On the same day you must present a guilt offering. Through this process, the priest will purify you before the Lord, making you right with him, and you will be forgiven for the sins you have committed.” (Leviticus 6:5, 7 NLT)

Notice that in both examples, compensation or restitution is made (with a penalty added), and making amends is the only pathway to restoration and forgiveness. We can be sure that things won’t get better until we decide to deal decisively with the wrongs we’ve committed

against other people. We should make amends because God commands it, and it serves as His way of restoring or repairing broken relationships.

1. How do you feel about God's mandate of making amends (with penalty)? What is the significance of the penalty?
2. Describe a relationship you've seen repaired or restored as a result of making amends between the parties.
3. What are some of the reasons we don't apologize or make amends to those we have wronged?

How? (do we make amends)

Let's look at ways that we can make amends to the people we've hurt.

1) Make a list of people you have harmed and what you did. (p. 177)

This is one of those steps that cannot be accomplished without pen and paper. When you write down the names of people you've wronged, it's common to become overwhelmed. Don't worry about the details yet. Trust God to show you the way. Remind yourself, "I can't, but God can!" If you're struggling with remembering people you've hurt, review the list of offenses mentioned in Leviticus and those in Matthew 5:21-48 that require making amends. See if any names come to mind as you review the following questions:

- Have you ever been disloyal to an associate?—to your employer?
- Have you ever cheated someone, stolen from someone, or defrauded anyone?
- Have you ever found lost property and didn't return it to the owner?
- Have you ever lied to anybody or been less than truthful?
- Has someone been the recipient of your wrath or anger?
- Have you called someone a name, shouted an insult?
- Have you ever cursed somebody or directed profanity at them?
- Husbands, have you jeopardized your marital vows by lusting after someone?
- Wives, have you wished somebody else were your husband?
- If you're divorced, have you done anything to take ownership for your part in the break up?
- Have you ever broken a promise to anyone, including a spouse or child?
- Have you ever retaliated rather than "turning your cheek?"
- Have you wanted harm to come to your enemies rather than praying for them?

If you still can't think of anybody you've wronged, consider the questions Baker asks on pages 184-185:

- Is there anyone to whom you owe a debt that you haven't repaid?
- Is there anyone you are guilty of trying to control or manipulate?
- Have you been (or are you) hypercritical of anyone?
- Have you verbally, emotionally, or physically abused anyone?
- Is there anyone to whom you have not shown appreciation or paid attention?

These questions should provide you a start to your list. Remember not to get overwhelmed with details at this point, but do get started on your list.

1. Why do you think it's worth taking time to make a list of people you have harmed?
2. What might be some dangers associated with doing so?

2) Do it at the right time.

Prayerfully consider the appropriate time to address the subject and set things right. Timing is everything. Consider what the best timing is for the person with whom you're making amends, not when the timing is convenient for you. For example, don't try to open a conversation with someone who's rushing out the door to school or to work. But, do make sure not to delay any more than you have to...you've already done that enough.

Jesus gives this formula in His Sermon on the Mount: "So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God." (Matthew 5:23-24 NLT) Taking action is important, but timing is critical.

1. When have you received (or offered) a poorly timed apology? What happened?
2. Describe a time when you owned up to a misdeed right away, and it paid dividends.

3) Do it with the right attitude.

Carefully choose the time and place to get together, and then, just as carefully, choose the right words to use when you make amends. While Paul reminds us to, "speak the truth in love," (ref. Ephesians 4:15 NLT), we should also consider what the writer of Proverbs 12:18 (GNT) says, "Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can heal."

Remember, this section is about learning how to make amends and doing it with the right attitude. We don't want to make matters worse with thoughtless, ill-timed words. We should speak with love, but also in humility and without *any* expectations of the other person. The other party may "rise up and call you blessed" or they may "rise up and punch you in the face." It doesn't matter whether they acknowledge their responsibility in the matter and apologize to us. What matters is that we do what God requires of us, with the right attitude.

1. Have you ever received an apology from someone (or made an apology to someone) that ended up making matters worse? What was said, and how?
2. What struggles do you have with keeping a proper attitude?

4) Do it in the right way.

Always keep in mind what would be best for the other person when you choose to make amends with him/her. Imagine the golden rule in flashing neon lights: "Do to others as you would like them to do to you." (Luke 6:31 NLT) In other words, when you're making amends with someone, choose to do what you would want someone else to do if they were making amends to you.

With this consideration, there are three types of amends to acknowledge.

Direct

If you've taken something, return it; if you owe somebody, pay him back (with interest). In other words, make restitution whenever and wherever possible. Remember, it's not just an apology; it's making amends. For example, don't tell someone, "Hey, I stole \$20 when we were roommates. My bad!" Instead, give him back the money (+ 20% to meet biblical standard). At the same time, don't underestimate the supreme value of a sincere apology, and be sure to say, "I'm sorry," even if you can't make restitution.

Indirect

Sometimes making direct amends is inappropriate or impossible. Instead, your amends can be indirect. “Consider the situation [an extramarital affair/abuse], consider the person [remarried/deceased], and try to make amends in the way that’s best for him or her.” (p. 179).

Living

This simply means you show that you’re truly sorry by living differently. Make positive changes in your speech and conduct so that you don’t accumulate new offenses (i.e., stop the bleeding). One of the best ways you can right wrongs is to do things right. For example, if you’ve lied to your parents, tell the truth; if you’ve been unfaithful, be faithful, or, if you’ve said hurtful things, speak words of encouragement. This type of amend is about being intentional.

1. Where have you made restitution or received restitution? What were the circumstances and outcome?
2. Describe a time when someone (who had wronged you) made amends in a way that communicated s/he was sincere. What convinced you of that sincerity?

In Closing:

There are rooms in our lives that have become storage places—closed off by our hurts, hang-ups, and habits. The doors remain locked because we avoid making amends to other people, ignore the darkness of unforgiveness, and hide the feelings of shame or embarrassment about our circumstances. The only way to open those doors again is by making amends and setting things right. Then, we won’t have to be ashamed anymore or avoid people any longer. Making amends works for those in recovery. It will work for each of us, too, if we’ll give it a try, and we need to because, after all, we’re all “recovering sinners.”

Close in Prayer:

Father, thank you for all of the people you’ve put in our lives. We confess that we have committed wrongs against some of them, and we know we need to make amends. But, Lord, this is going to be hard!—not to mention daunting! As we prepare to take this next step, we invite Your Spirit into our planning, and we pray that You will reveal Yourself to us. Calm our hearts and minds, comfort us as we face the ugliness and guilt of our wrongdoings, and counsel us through this process of making amends. We can’t, but You can, God. Help us, we pray...in Jesus’ name. Amen.

The Blessing (say this as a group):

“For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood....” Romans 3:25 (NLT)

Action Items for the Week Ahead:

Review the key points of today’s message and the scriptures related thereto. In the week ahead, reflect upon those scriptures, and consider the following:

1. PRAY about it: Ask God to reveal to you any wrongs you’ve committed that have harmed other people.
2. WRITE about it: Make a list of people you have harmed, what you said or did to hurt each person, how you think it affected them, and why you are sorry for your misconduct.

3. SHARE about it: Get with a trusted believer, share your list, and brainstorm ways in which you can make amends to each person. Determine what you will do, and make yourself accountable to carry out the plan of action.

ⁱThis sermon series, “The Healing Power of Christ,” is based on the book, *Life’s Healing Choices*, by John Baker. ©2007 by Richard D. Warren and John E. Baker. All quotes used in this discussion guide are taken from this book and annotated accordingly.