

MBC WOMEN'S STUDY

RELATIONSHIPS: A MESS WORTH MAKING

WINTER/SPRING 2025/26

Class 7: Chapters 8b-9

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMESTER

- This year is going to be about relationships and how God desires His people to come along side one another for more than just surface level conversations and relationships.
- Specifically, we are going to be talking about biblical relationships and friendships that Christians have with one another.

CONTINUATION FROM LAST MONTH'S CLASS CHAPTER 8

- Chapter 8 was *Obstacles* and was based upon **Romans 12:21** "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

THE CAUSE AND CURE OF UNGODLY CONFLICT

Question 1: Why do we fight with one another? (75)

- Tripp focuses his answer to this question by looking at **James 4:1-3**.
- In verses 1-3, Tripp focuses on our motives or desires first in the relationship.
- When we have been wronged or act out sinfully, it is common to say "I did that because you..."
- When we have conflict with someone else, it can be easy to point the finger at our opponent.
- But, Tripp writes, "He [James] makes clear that even if someone has sinned against us, the reason we fight is because there is something wrong going on inside us!"
- I will be the first to admit that this is a very hard concept to understand and holdfast to.
- *If I am sinned against, the outward fighting is because of my response which is because of what is taking place from within me?*
- James would give a resounding YES!
- What is taking place on the inside is coming out in relationships with others in the fellowship of believers.

- “...deformed desire is shown to engender conflict wherever active faith is not exercised.”¹
- Just as Tripp points out, “All desires are not wrong. But selfish desire is.”
- When we have deformed or selfish desire, there is going to be conflict...either with us or about us in the people around us.
- When believers are not willfully submissive to the God’s Word, they end up looking like and acting like the unsaved world around them.
- Arguments are inevitable, but we must look to our own motives desires as we respond to others.
- He asks the question, *what tends to produce conflict in your life?*
 - **Comfort.** I want, must have, and deserve comfort and you’d better not get in the way of me getting it! I fear hard work.
 - **Pleasure.** I want, must have, and deserve pleasure and you’d better give it to me! I fear pain.
 - **Recognition.** I want, must have, and deserve recognition or I will be devastated. I fear being overlooked.
 - **Power.** I want, must have, and deserve power and you’d better do what I say! I fear being told what to do.
 - **Control.** I want, must have, and deserve control and you will feel the brunt of my disappointment if you mess up my tidy little universe! I fear unpredictability.
 - **Acceptance.** I want, must have, and deserve acceptance and you are responsible to give it to me. I fear rejection.
 - What are some early warning signs in your life that you can pay attention to so you’re your conflict can be minimized?

Question 2: What has become more important to me than my relationship with God? (77)

- His answer is from **James 4:4** and what it looks like when believers become friends with the world.
- When we make something in our life as more important than God, it is spiritual adultery.
- Make sure to understand the point, it is not as if we have no other important things in our life.

¹ Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, vol. 36, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 174.

- Tripp’s point is when we make the other, lesser important things, the main thing, is when we have effectively made an idol.
- We cannot, at the same time, seek to serve the Lord, please Him, live for Him, **and** seek out our own self-pleasure and satisfaction.
- If we are looking for recognition from others, for a “job well done,” we are no longer seeking to please the Lord with our work.
 - Our focus has moved from pleasing the Lord and His glory, to wanting others to not just see my good works, but then to glorify me for doing them.
- In the context of a relationship, when we seek this from others, the relationship is not going to work out very well.
- To be fair, a relationship is built upon one person recognizing the other person.
- It must be mutual and reciprocal in nature. But it must not be the main point nor focus.

Question 3: What does God do with people who forsake him for something else? (78-79)

- “When we wander from God, the Spirit he has poured out on us and who now lives in us becomes very concerned and jealous. A better way to translate the word “jealous” is “zealous.” The word “jealousy” has negative connotations, but it can actually be a very positive word. Like the person whose spouse has been unfaithful, God is zealous to do whatever it takes to regain the affection of our hearts. He doesn’t do this because he needs us; he does it because he loves us. When he pursues us and we humble ourselves and return to him, he then pours out even more grace!”
- As Tripp says, this section of James is notoriously hard to interpret and there are no shortages of varying interpretations out there.
- Listen to what Tripp further writes, “What do you think God typically uses to regain our affection? Ironically, he uses other people! That is one of the blessings of conflict. He uses the difficult seasons in our relationships to allow us to see what we typically live for besides him.”
- This is true of all of our relationships. God uses other people to mysteriously and counterintuitively rescue us from self-glory and self-love. Why does he do that? Because he loves us more than we love ourselves!”
- This section in James is astounding. The correction for sin is not more law...but more grace.
- “God wills the correction of his people through the continuing application of his favor. James conspicuously used the inclusive “us” here, hearkening back to the earlier expression, “We all stumble in many ways” (3:2). These many ways may even include deep descent into worldliness. But God remains generous with

his gifts (cf. 1:5, 17). Unlike envy with its rivalry toward all, God maintains a favorable disposition toward believing sinners.”²

- The point he makes is that God does not turn His back on us when we put people or things above Him. He shows us more grace, a favorable disposition towards His children when they sin.
- How counter is this to our own thinking when we deal with people? How quick are we to either remind someone of the rules or to give more rules?
- While sin is **never** acceptable, as James says...we all stumble in many ways...therefore we all need to have more grace.

Question 4: Once we are rescued, what should we do? (79-80)

- His focus is on the final section, **James 4:7-10**.
- “James calls the person in conflict to engage in spiritual warfare.”
- “No doubt James understood repentance to be a lifelong practice for every believer. All fall into sins that undermine faith and relationship to God; all must return to him for the restoration of whole-hearted commitment.”³
- Looking at these verses, notice the focus of the relationship...it is not between you and the person you are having a conflict with; but between you and God.
- **On a side note**, I have, at times, when dealing with friends or family members who are having conflict, pointed them to studies about who God is.
 - Once we learn more about our relationship with God, we are then better suited to handle our relationships with others.
 - James’ point is that when our relationship with God is off, our relationship with others is going to be off as well.
- In just these 4 verses, there are “The series of plural imperative verbs is stunning for its cumulative effect toward purifying faith.”⁴
 - Submit yourself to God...Resist the devil...Come near to God...Wash your hands...Purify your hearts...Grieve...Mourn...Wail...Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom...Humble yourself before the Lord...
- When we put ourselves in this place before God, we are better suited to then respond and interact with people around us.

² Richardson, *James*, 181.

³ Richardson, *James*, 183.

⁴ Ibid.

- When we focus on who we are before God and what our desires are for Him, we know better how we are grow into His likeness.
- It is a spiritual battle. Our enemy does not want us to be unified as one body under Christ. He does not want us to have fellowship with one another or grow more into the image of our Savior.
- Our battle is not against flesh and blood...it is against spiritual darkness.

LET'S GET PRACTICAL (81-84)

- “Within those relationships you can start to form habits that can be practiced later in tougher moments of conflict.” **I love the habit language in the Bible.**

- Here are some of the ways we can start to train or retrain how we engage in godly conflict:

Understand that conflict is one way God works in our lives.

- God wants us to be more like Christ and when others are in our lives, it exposes areas we were unaware of.

Identify what drives ungodly conflict in your life.

- What ungodly desires or hidden fears do you have? What do you want more than God’s glory?

Recognize your default strategy in conflict.

- How do we engage with people so that our desired ends are met?

Engage in specific and intelligent spiritual warfare.

- Realize that your battles are within you...provoked by people outside of you...you need more grace!

Consider the other person.

- Once your mind is right with God, what does your conflict look like through your new eyes?

Make a plan to approach the person.

- “If you think that patience has run its course and you need to address an issue, approach the person in this way”:
 - Own whatever person sin you have brought to the situation.
 - Name the problem.
 - Explore possible solutions.
 - Implement the agreed-upon solution.
 - Evaluate your implementation.
 - If you get stuck and things don’t improve, be willing to get outside help.
- “He [God] will settle for nothing less in his creation than to see that all things ultimately bring him glory.”

CONCLUSION

- I like this C.S. Lewis quote from Mere Christianity, “The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of – throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself!”

CHAPTER 9: FORGIVENESS

- Tripp starts with **Psalm 88:8-9** “You have removed my acquaintances far from me; You have made me an object of loathing to them; I am shut up and cannot go out. {9} My eye has wasted away because of affliction; I have called upon You every day, O LORD; I have spread out my hands to You.”
- He never discloses why; but it is easy to infer what his thoughts were in choosing this Psalm.
- From his website⁵, “Psalm 88 also reminds me that the God in whom I hope really does understand the most profound suffering in life. He hears with patience and mercy the most desperate cries of the human heart. He never minimizes, mischaracterizes, misunderstands, or mocks my struggle.”
- God knows that in our relationships we are going to suffer. We are going to strive to be enough for someone just for us to be “an object of loathing to them.”
- But this Psalm also points out that we can do all that we are “supposed” to be doing as Christians.
- We can trust God for our salvation, we can pray to the Lord, but we still find ourselves in seasons of darkness where suffering seems to be our constant companion.
- It is in these long seasons that our minds can begin to entertain doubts and fears.
- This is when we should be honest and open before the Lord.
- If our relationships suffer, if our interactions with others seem to bring more hardship and pain, go before the Lord and call out to Him.
- As we think about our chapter, we know that we have been sinned against. We know that forgiveness needs to happen, but we also know that it is going to be costly.
- Forgiveness is not something that, *if we were really honest*, we truly want to do in all circumstances.
- Some sins are so great that the thought of forgiveness makes our stomach turn.
 - *Forgiveness*. Even the word can make us bristle. Past wounds instinctively spring to mind, making forgiveness feel impossible (or at least unnatural). What feels natural is dwelling on the horrible

⁵ <https://www.paultripp.com/wednesdays-word/posts/a-psalm-that-has-no-hope>

things that others have done to us, rehearsing their wrongs and plotting our retaliation, if only in our imagination.⁶

- But as Tripp will say a few times, when we remember what we have been forgiven of by God, it is not as hard to forgive those who have sinned against us.
- Our hope and desire should be to have a clean heart and conscience before the Lord.

Familiar Territory? (86-89)

- “But so often in these situations, we choose to get even or pretend to ignore offenses. When we reject the opportunity to forgive or ask for forgiveness, the relationship suffers. When we choose to practice true forgiveness, the relationship is not just brought back to where it was before the offense; it actually moves further down the road to maturity.”
- This is obviously an ideal situation or relationship.
- Yes, when we choose to forgive the relationship *now has the opportunity to* not just be brought back to where it was...but also move further down the road to maturity.
- This will never happen if we *choose to get even or pretend to ignore offenses*.
- We must work through what has happened to us so that we know how we must respond.
- If we are not able or willing to *overlook an offense*, then we must go to the person and work out with them whatever has taken place.

How can we make sure that we are either **overlooking** an offense or that we need to go and confront the one who has offended us?

- **Proverbs 19:11** “A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression.”
- No matter what, we want to be people of God who have discretion so that we are slow to anger. When we are offended, we usually start off by being angry.
- First, our focus should always be towards God so that we do not, **by habit**, get angry when we have been offended.
 - **1 Peter 2:19** “For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.”

⁶ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/we-cannot-cling-to-bitterness-and-god#:~:text=And%20it%20does%20not%20require,forgiveness%20and%20to%20truly%20forgive.>

- “[Peter] thinks of the conscience as directed toward God...the difference from ‘consciousness’ is not great; the translation ‘conscience’ *would stress ingrained and habitual reference to the will of God in the midst of patient suffering for his sake.*”⁷
- In other words, when we have our minds heavenward (Col. 3:2), when offenses come upon us we are then able to respond and act in a way that glorifies God and blesses the offending party.
- “Offenses have a way of turning us into momentary atheists. In our tunnel vision, we can think and feel and act as if there were no God in the world — much less in the room. Being *mindful of God* means, first, remembering that God is here, and he sees: “If when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing *in the sight of God*” (1 Peter 2:20).”⁸
- In these two verses, Peter is telling his readers (and all those who would suffer) that their focus should not be on their individual suffering or the person who is causing the suffering.
- In fact, their focus should be on God Himself.
- How do we really overlook an offense? It is by keeping our mind on God.
 - “In other words, we don’t focus on the offense itself. We don’t stare at something that merely distracts us from what’s really important. We certainly don’t look within ourselves. Rather, we overlook offenses by looking up to *God*, by becoming mindful of who he is for us in this very moment — in the office, at the dinner table, on the phone call, during the meeting.”⁹
- This is why it is so important to study and know who God is *from what He has revealed to us in the Bible*.
- We know that God sees every offense that happens to us. We know that nothing takes place outside of His loving and caring prevue.
- We also know that God uses offenses against us to conform us more into the image of Christ.
 - “Imitating the man of sorrows cannot happen apart from trouble, distress, and offense...The daggers others throw your way will become in God’s hand chisels to fashion you into the image of Christ.”¹⁰
- We also know that God will judge (both now and in the future) all offenses against us.
 - Even if we don’t have true justice right now, “God’s judgment frees us to exchange bitterness for patience, retribution for mercy.”¹¹
- What happens when we decide to keep our minds fixed on God? We “trust that God himself can *satisfy* [us] in the midst of an offense.”

⁷ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 115.

⁸ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-to-overlook-an-offense>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

- Instead of looking for satisfaction from what think is right or even repaying someone for their wrong committed against us, we know that God is the only one who can both judge the wrong and satisfy our own longing for righteousness.
 - “If we repay offense for offense, we will have our reward. But if we learn to overlook offenses, we will lean into fellowship with “the Shepherd and Overseer of [our] souls” (1 Peter 2:25). We will hear his whispers of “Well done” here and now. We will find that God is able to invade our tunnel vision, enthrall us with his beauty and worth, and free us to overlook the offense.”¹²
 - As Tripp points out, “No one lives a day without needing to ask these questions, and yet forgiveness is one of the most poorly practiced activities in the Christian community—if it is practiced at all. I know this from pastoral and personal experience. I had been a Christian for nearly twenty years and married for nearly ten before I understood what it meant to practice forgiveness with my wife! And yet the Bible talks about practicing forgiveness as though it were a daily thing.”
 - If someone were to say to you, *I can’t overlook these offenses, but I don’t know how to forgive. Can you help me to work through forgiveness?*
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- “The Bible is a book about a God who forgives; it calls those who have been forgiven to be forgiving people. Yet so little of the forgiveness that has been received translates into forgiveness being offered. We need help!”

Guidance along the Path of Forgiveness (87-89)

- “Why don’t we forgive? Why isn’t forgiveness practiced more in Christian churches, families, and relationships? Forgiveness is not practiced because we fail to understand what it is, but Scripture does not leave us in the dark about this vital practice.”
- If someone were to ask you about the topic of forgiveness; where would you take them in the Bible?
- Do you know where the Bible speaks to the topic of forgiveness?
- Tripp goes to **Matthew 18:21-35**
- “This story reveals explosive truths about the nature of forgiveness, but it also gives us a glimpse of the motive that should drive our desire to forgive. As we look deeper into this parable, we will start to see what forgiveness is and why it is so important.”

¹² Ibid.

Forgiveness Involves Cancelling a Debt (list on p. 89)

- When you forgive someone, you also cancel a debt. But, more specifically, you make a conscious choice to absorb the cost yourself. You choose not to make the offender pay for the offense. By forfeiting your right to collect, you make at least three promises.
 - **You promise** that you will not bring up the debt to use it as leverage. When you forgive, you are saying that you will not make the offender pay by reminding him of what he has done in an effort to control him. This does not mean that you can't discuss it and seek to deal with the offense in a redemptive way.
 - **You promise** that you will not bring up the offense to others and slander the person who sinned against you. This does not mean that you cannot seek the advice and counsel of others as you work through the issue, but it does mean that you will not slander the person under the guise of getting outside advice.
 - Finally, **you promise** not to dwell on the offense yourself. One of the biggest challenges when someone sins against you is to not replay the offense over and over again in your mind.
- The challenge that people have in overlooking a transgression against them, is not being able to follow through on these three promises.
- As Tripp is going to point out later in the chapter, this is not a once-off experience. This is a lifelong commitment to the process of *continually reminding yourself that you have either overlooked or that you have chosen to forgive the person*.
- We must not allow our minds nor our emotions to win the battle of truth.

Forgiveness Is Costly, But Not Forgiving Is More Costly (89-94)

- “Regardless of how big or small the offense, canceling a debt and absorbing the cost is going to hurt.”
- “This is where we must let the truth override our feelings since it often feels good to hold onto an offense. That good feeling, contrasted with the pain of forgiving, blinds us to the bill we’re running up spiritually. Jesus clearly says that an abiding unwillingness to forgive will cost you eternally!”
- In a world that demands justice, payback, and equality...forgiveness is not something that is valued.
 - “The first factor is the therapeutic culture¹³. As Philip Rieff and Charles Taylor have both shown, our culture has taken a strongly inward turn. While all other cultures have stressed the importance of community and the need to forge a personal identity that negotiates and aligns with the common

¹³ In a nutshell, this means a focus on self at the expense of others. Validation over morality with regards to feelings, introspection which leads to a victim mentality and emotional vulnerability.

good, modernity stresses looking inward to forge one's own identity based on our desires, and then moving outward to demand that society honour our individual identity and interests."¹⁴

- "In such a therapeutic culture, forgiveness is seen as self-hating, and revenge and anger will be seen as more authentic, as long as you do not let the anger become too unpleasant for your inner psychological well-being."¹⁵
- "Forgiveness is seen now as radically unjust and impractical, as short-circuiting the ability of victims to gain honour and virtue as others rise to defend them."¹⁶
- Unlike the world, Christians are not just given the option to forgive, but the command, the case, and the consequences for not doing so.
 - "An **entrenched refusal** to forgive is a sign that you have not known God's amazing forgiveness yourself. Your ugly behavior reveals the ugly condition of your heart. In addition, holding onto an offense will make you a bitter and unloving person, and you will inevitably damage all your relationships. No matter which way you choose, you will pay a price. Which price are you willing to pay?"

A Failure To Forgive Someone Will Change You (90)

- Before the king, he was the victim of his own negligence, but his unwarranted bitterness and anger turned him into a victimizer.
- We must keep short accounts, or they will all pile up on one another.
- There may not be any physical harm (as in the parable), but we start to keep people at arm's length or even start to stay away from them.
- The important caveat to remember, as Tripp pointed out a couple of times, is that when there is physical hurt or even deep, non-physical hurt, it may be best to stay separate.
- This is not a sign of unforgiveness, but rather one of wisdom. (we'll discuss more later)

Forgiveness is an event and a process (90-91)

- "We're tempted to think that once we have forgiven someone, we're done. But forgiving someone is not just a past event. *It's something we must continue to practice, even when we are dealing with an offense we have already forgiven.* Even if I have forgiven you for something you have done in the past, I need to be careful that I don't slip into bitterness some time in the future. I need to keep practicing forgiveness every time I see you or think of you."

¹⁴ <https://comment.org/the-fading-of-forgiveness/>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

- Our minds are going to bring things back to the service when we see someone, when we hear something, when we visit a certain place, and many other times.
- We bring false and hurtful guilt upon ourselves when we think that just because someone came to mind or an incident came back to our memory, we must not have forgiven them enough/rightly/with sincerity, or any other label.
- As Tripp says, and I think it is vitally important, this must become a pattern of our lives. It must become so habitual that we start to automatically cast off those thoughts when they come into our minds.

Forgiveness is not forgetting (91-92)

- Ranking in the worst advice and direction I have heard about forgiveness is this...forgiveness is forgetting.
- I have heard and read well-meaning authors and pastors who say *since God's does not remember our trespass against Him, we must do the same with others.*
- I like the two points that Tripp brings up:
 - **This mantra is not realistic.**
 - “Our minds don’t function this way, and our ability to remember is powerful. Trying to forget a sin someone has committed against you will only encourage you to remember it.”
 - To his point, the more we try to forget a sin, the more we are thinking about that sin.
 - **This mantra is not biblical.**
 - “The passage in Jeremiah does not say that God has amnesia when he looks at you. Our omniscient God does not forget anything! The word remember is not a “memory” word, but a “promise” word, a covenant word. God is promising that when we confess our sins, ‘I will not treat you as your sins deserve. Instead, I will forgive you.’”
- Instead of trying not to remember and inadvertently keeping our focus on the sin, believers are commanded to keep their focus in specific areas:
 - **Focus on things above:**
 - **Colossians 3:2** “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”
 - **Focus on what is good:**
 - **Philippians 4:8** “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”
 - **Focus on Jesus:**
 - **Hebrews 12:2-3** “...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand

of the throne of God. {3} For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

○ **Focus on Growing and Guarding our Mind:**

- **Romans 12:2** “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”
- **2 Corinthians 10:5** “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...”
- “This is why forgiveness is both a past event and an ongoing process into the future. It is a past promise you keep in the future. When this is done, the memory of small offenses usually dissipates. Larger offenses probably will not.”
- If we do not understand these “dimensions of forgiveness,” there is a possibility that you will plague yourself with unwarranted and unhelpful thoughts.
- “(1) You will be plagued with doubts about whether or not you have forgiven someone because you think that forgiving equals forgetting. Or (2) you will give in to bitterness without realizing it because you think that, since you have forgiven someone in the past, you are allowed to hold onto the vestiges of hurt in the present.”

Forgiveness has a vertical and a horizontal dimension (92-93)

- Two passages which seem to contradict one another:
 - **Mark 11:25** “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.”
 - **Luke 17:3** “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.”
 - “Mark 11:25 seems to say that we are to forgive someone no matter what, while Luke 17:3 seems to say that you only forgive someone if he repents. Which one of these verses is right? They’re both right!”
- “The verses are talking about two different aspects of forgiveness. Mark 11:25 is talking about forgiveness as a heart attitude before God. The context is worship. When I consider someone’s sin as I stand before the Lord, I am called to have an attitude of forgiveness toward the person who sinned against me. This is non-negotiable. I do not have the right to withhold forgiveness and harbor bitterness in my heart.”
- “Luke 17:3, on the other hand, is talking about forgiveness as a horizontal transaction between me and the offender. This is often referred to as reconciliation. The point Luke 17:3 makes is that, while I am to have an attitude of forgiveness before the Lord, I can only grant forgiveness to the other person if he repents and

admits he has sinned against me. Even if he never does this, I am called to maintain an attitude of forgiveness toward the offender.”

- You have two *aspects* of forgiveness...the heart’s attitude and the mouth’s words.
- What Tripp is saying is that we always strive for an attitude of forgiveness in our hearts. This means that we are ready to **verbalize** our **inward forgiveness** when the offender comes and **verbally repents** to us.
- Our verbalizing forgiveness is done when someone comes and repents to us; or we go and confront them and they repent.
- We do not offer verbal repentance without the person repenting.
- While this may seem easier, it is shortchanging the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the offender.

Forgiveness does not mean peace at all costs (93-94)

- “The Bible never says, “Make it easy for others to sin against you.” Instead, it provides a way to deal with sin in redemptive ways. Romans 12:18 says, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” Paul calls us to strive for peace, but he knows there are limits involved when you pursue someone in love. When you have reached those limits, there are other redemptive options available to you. Your attempt to love a habitually abusive, unrepentant person sometimes involves confrontation and possibly separation. Sometimes church leaders may need to be involved. Sometimes the state intervenes on the offended party’s behalf.”

FORGIVENESS, RECONCILIATION AND RESTORATION

- While Tripp mentioned reconciliation here, he does not go into great detail.
- I believe that there has been much confusion about these three areas in people’s relationships.
- Forgiveness¹⁷: The **vertical commitment** aspect of forgiveness with God clears your heart of the baggage of bitterness and condemnation so that when you eventually **horizontally transact** with the person who wronged you, you are in a spiritual position to do it in a way that is kind, patient, loving, humble, and encouraging.
- Reconciliation¹⁸: a **joint venture** that requires mutual participation. Unlike forgiveness, reconciliation is **conditional** upon the offender's repentance and willingness to change. It involves removing the obstacles and walls built during the conflict to bring two parties back into unity.

¹⁷ <https://www.paultripp.com/wednesdays-word/posts/forgiveness-goes-up-then-out#:~:text=To%20begin%2C%20let's%20first%20understand,act%20as%20though%20nothing%20happened.>

¹⁸ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-to-move-from-forgiveness-to-reconciliation/#:~:text=Jesus%20clearly%20warned%20that%20God,caused%20takes%20time%20to%20heal.>

- Restoration: the *long-term process* of rebuilding what was broken, specifically *trust*. Tripp clarifies that while forgiveness can be immediate, restoration of a relationship takes time and consistent evidence of heart-change. It is an "improvement and expansion" of the relationship beyond just clearing the initial conflict.
- When there are repentance and forgiveness, the relationship has been reconciled so that it may now begin the process of restoration.
- “Forgiveness doesn’t always mean reconciliation or restoration. And it does not require restoring trust or inviting the people who hurt us back into a relationship. Forgiveness is unconditional, but meaningful reconciliation and restoration are conditional (in the gospel and in human relationships) on the offender’s genuine repentance, humble willingness to accept the consequences of his actions, and a desire by both parties to work on the relationship. Forgiving people also doesn’t mean they won’t experience consequences for their sin. When we forgive them, however, we leave those consequences to God, who says, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay” (Romans 12:19). This doesn’t mean we may not pursue legal action, if warranted, against someone who has hurt us. In certain circumstances, that may be vital for the rehabilitation of the offender or for protecting other potential victims.”¹⁹

Asking For and Granting Forgiveness (94-95)

- “I have nursed my anger as I have lingered over the ways people have hurt me. A close friend who ended our long-standing relationship over a misunderstanding. A woman whom I mentored for years who slandered me to others. My husband who unexpectedly left me for someone else. The doctor whose careless mistake ended my son’s life. I remember sitting in a counselor’s office, talking about a deep betrayal. When the counselor mentioned forgiveness, I was furious. It felt like he was suggesting I offer that person a “get out of jail free” card, which was unthinkable after all I had suffered. Just hearing the word made me angry. Why should I forgive? Especially when the person didn’t even seem sorry. “We cannot hold on to bitterness and hold on to God.”²⁰
- When asking for and granting forgiveness, be specific about the sin which was committed. Then, the person who was offended must be specific about the forgiveness which is being granted.
- True repentance and forgiveness takes humility, honesty and grace.
- This must take place when there is sin involved, not just when an “honest mistake” has been done.

¹⁹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/we-cannot-cling-to-bitterness-and-god#:~:text=And%20it%20does%20not%20require,forgiveness%20and%20to%20truly%20forgive.>

²⁰ Ibid.

- We can be sorry for what we have done by accident, but when we have intentionally sinned against someone, we must be repentant.

Forgiving by Grace (95-97)

- It is one thing to gain clarity on what forgiveness is and isn't; it is quite another to actually practice it.
- Jesus came and shed his blood for you. The Father emptied heaven of its greatest treasure so that you could be forgiven. Read 1 Peter 1:1—9:
 - “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **who are chosen** {2} according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, **to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: *May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.*** {3} Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy *has caused us to be born again to a living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, {4} **to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,** {5} **who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation** ready to be revealed in the last time. {6} **In this you greatly rejoice**, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, {7} **so that the proof of your faith**, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, **may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;** {8} and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, **you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,** {9} obtaining as the outcome of your faith **the salvation of your souls.”**
- “As you ponder your true identity in Christ, do you recognize how wealthy you are? This is the only foundation for the kind of radical forgiveness Jesus calls you to practice. Only by grace can you do this. You can't read and reread 1 Peter 1 and Matthew 18 and still want to rip someone apart. If you are a beneficiary of God's costly grace, you will practice costly grace with others.”