

Repent,
Forgive,
and
Reconcile

By Rev. Tyler Rasmussen

Wisdom pulled from :

Lee Taft, J.D., M.Div.

Desmund Tutu (“No Future Without Forgiveness” and “The Book of Forgiving”)

L. Gregory Jones (“Embodying Forgiveness” and “Forgiving as We’ve Been Forgiven”)

Scripture quotes from the NRSV translation.

Basics on Sin

Define "Sin": _____

My Default Response When Someone Sins Against Me:

My Default Response When Someone Catches Me Sinning:

Christianity on Sin

God's Response to Sin: _____

Definitions and Metaphors for "Sin"

Miss the Mark

(Greek)



Debt

(Lord's Prayer, Matthew)



Do Bad or Evil

(Knowledge of Good & Evil)



Break a Promise / Relationship

(Splitting a Covenant)

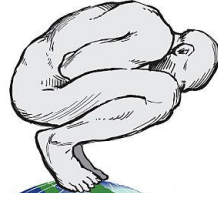


Not Believing

(John 16:9, etc.)

Self curved in on Self

(Martin Luther)



Trespassing

(Lord's Pr, Matt's Explanation)



Break the Law / Commands

(10 Commandments)



Darkness

(John 3, 1 John 1:5-10)



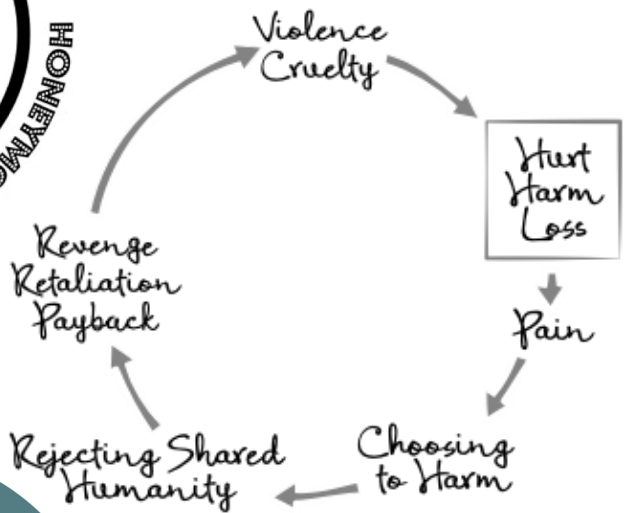
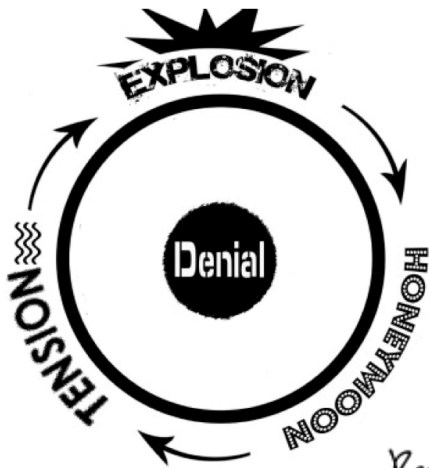
Not Love

(Based on Jesus' Commands)

Violence Begets Violence: The Cycle of Sin

Once we are caught in sin, either by sinning or being sinned against, without someone or something somehow freeing us from that sin, we tend to get caught in a cycle of sin.

It's not enough for the violence to stop. We have to find a new way to live or the violence will return again and again.



Even God's chosen people, without somehow being changed, continue to get caught in sin again and again, no matter how often God delivers them from oppression.

The oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors. ~Paulo Freire

Sin in Scripture and Liturgy

We are in bondage to **sin** and cannot free ourselves. We have **sinned** against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have *not loved* you with our whole hearts; we have *not loved* our neighbors as ourselves (classic liturgical confession).

Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits **sin** is a slave to **sin** (John 8:34).

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8).

Everyone who commits **sin** is guilty of lawlessness; **sin** is lawlessness. Everyone who commits **sin** is a child of the devil; for the devil has been **sinning** from the beginning (1 John 3:4,8).

By one man's disobedience the many were made **sinner**s (Romans 5:19).

Sin came into the world through one man, and death came through **sin**, and so death spread to all because all have **sinned** (Romans 5:12)

With my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of **sin** (Romans 7:25).

The sting of death is **sin**, and the power of **sin** is the law (1 Corinthians 15:56).

When you realize your guilt in any of these, you shall confess the **sin** that you have committed (Leviticus 5:5).

One is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to **sin**, and that **sin**, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death (James 1:14-15).

Basics on Grace and Peace

My Definition of Grace: _____

My Definition of Peace: _____

Signs Peace is True: _____

Christianity on Grace and Peace

Describe the Peace of God:

How does God's grace overcome sin?

Sin: A Communicable Disease

Sin has the uncanny ability to spread...

*By the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners
(Romans 5:19a)*

The boss decides to keep you late, upsetting you
In your anger, you forget to call home, missing dinner
and upsetting your spouse
Your spouse, in anger at you, yells at the kids
The kids, not knowing how to handle it, take out their
frustration on some kid at school
That kid goes home and takes it out on their dog
And on and on...

*One man's trespass led to condemnation for all (Romans
5:18a).*

Sin: The Cause of Death

*Sin came into the world through one man, and death came
through sin, and so death spread to all because all have
sinned (Romans 5:12).*

Death means not only physical death, but the when anything
good ends: The death of dream, joys, hopes, happiness.

Death: We Think It's the Final Word

Sin and Death are clearly powerful...

*Because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion
through that one (Romans 5:17a).*

Grace: A Communicable Gift

Grace has the uncanny ability to spread as well...

By the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:19b).

The boss lets you go home early, making you smile
You surprise your spouse and have dinner ready when
they get home from work
The both of you play with the kids all evening
The kids, feeling loved, make a new friend at school
That friend comes home happy for the first time since
moving to their new school
And on and on...

One man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all (Romans 5:18b).

Grace: The Creator of Life

The free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many (Romans 5:15).

Life isn't just restoring what was, but creating something new.

Life: On Easter, We Discovered It's The Real Last Word

...But Scripture says grace is more powerful than both.

Much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17b).

Types of Peace

False, Fake, or Temporary Peace

Definition: Absence of Hostility or Tension

Example: When kids fight, in order to restore peace, a parent might separate them, making them play in different room.

This creates peace in the moment, but does not address any of the reasons peace was broken in the first place.

Such peace is called “false” because there is still hostility and fear present in both parties, even if it is not being expressed.

Example: A teenager is being bullied at school. In order to solve the situation, the teenager intentionally avoids the bully. Now the teen is living in fear (literally changing what they do on the basis of fear) and, should they cross paths, the bully is likely to continue to be hostile.

Such peace can serve good purposes, but is not the end goal.

Example: A person is in an abusive relationship. Leaving the abuser creates peace by stopping the abuse. Arresting the abuser also creates peace. But the fear and anger remain. What happens next time they meet, on earth or in heaven?

True, Real, or Lasting Peace

Definition: Absence of Fear and Presence of Justice

“True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.” (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

True peace is much harder, and many times it only comes through repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Basics on Repentance

Define “repentance”: _____

When you sin, what keeps you from repenting?

Describe a time you repented to another person:

Christianity on Repentance

How does baptism help us repent? _____

Definitions and Metaphors for “Repentance”

Turn Around 180° / Turn Back to God
(Hebrew & Greek)

Feel Sorrow
(Hebrew)

Conversion from Self to God
 (“Return to the Lord”)

Changing One’s Heart

Walking in New Life
(Romans 6:4)

Coming to the Light
(John 3 & 1 John 1)

Unlearning Sin



Xhosa language (South Africa)
for “Forgive Me” is
“I ask for peace”

Bearing Good Fruit
(Matthew 3:8)

Elements of “Repentance”

- Realizing you’re wrong / Admit to wrongdoing
- Expressing Regret / Remorse / Sorrow
- Contrition / Feeling guilty / Fear because of sin
- Accepting Responsibility
- Confession / Admittance / Explanation
- Apology
- Requesting forgiveness
- Making restitution / paying for ones crimes
- Changing one’s way of life / Change one’s mind
- Lessons Learned / How to keep it from happening again
- Avoiding or acting differently in similar situations

Types of Apologies

Partial vs. Full

- Partial: "I'm sorry you got hurt"
Express remorse but do not claim responsibility
- Full: "I'm sorry I hurt you"
Express remorse and claim responsibility

Inauthentic vs. Authentic

- Inauthentic: "Say 'I'm Sorry'" "Ugh, OK... I'm sorry"
- Authentic: Actually meaning what you say.

What Keeps Us From Repenting?

FEAR Could it do more harm than good? FEAR

Not realizing you've sinned Arrogance

They sinned first! FEAR Denial

Embarrassment FEAR Resentment FEAR

Shame FEAR Self-Deception

FEAR

It happened so long ago... What if it brings other problems to the surface?

FEAR Guilt FEAR Pride

Lack of Humility

Anger FEAR Self-Justification Distrust

(I didn't do anything wrong) FEAR

Excuses Blaming others

Repentance in Scripture

Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin (Ezekiel 18:30b).

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near (Matthew 3:2).

Repent, and believe in the good news (Mark 1:15b).

Proclaiming a baptism of **repentance** for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3).

I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to **repentance** (Luke 5:32).

Repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations (Luke 24:47).

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38).

Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out (Acts 3:19).

God has given the **repentance** leads to life (Acts 11:18b).

If we **confess** our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

They went out and proclaimed that all should **repent** (Mark 6:12).

Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to **repentance**? (Romans 2:4).

Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who **repent**, by righteousness (Isaiah 1:27)

There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who **repents** than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance (Luke 15:7).

Basics on Repentance

Why is repentance important? _____

List steps or actions you could take in order to repent:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Christianity on Repentance

What does faith have to do with repentance?

Benefits of Repentance

A major step towards healing

Makes us face the fact that we've done something wrong

Makes us realize how we hurt someone else

Invites us to ask, "What would it take to heal the harm I've done?"

The good emotions that go with addressing the wrong
Relieves our guilt / shame

Changes the past and reforms the future

Imagine a family forever divided as opposed to one that can laugh over that time those two got into a fight

Repentance in Worship

A) Most merciful God, we have **sinned** against you in *thought, word, and deed*, by what we have *done* and by what we have *left undone*. We have **not loved you** with our whole heart; we have **not loved our neighbors** as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, **so that** we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.

B) Gracious God, have mercy on us. We *confess* that we have **turned from you** and given ourselves into the **power of sin**. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our **sins**, *known and unknown*, things we have *done* and things we have *failed to do*. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, **so that** we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

A whole world can be build on the very foundation laid out in these three simple words: “I am sorry”. (Desmond Tutu)

Models of Repentance

Alcoholics Anonymous (semi-Christian model)

1. Admit we are powerless over Sin
2. Believe in a Power greater than ourselves can restore us
3. Turn our will and lives over to the care of God
4. Make a moral inventory of ourselves
5. Admit to God, ourselves, and another human the exact nature of our wrongs
6. Be entirely ready to have God remove all character defects
7. Humbly ask God to remove shortcomings
8. Make list of all persons harmed and become willing to make amends
9. Make direct amends wherever possible (without additional injury)
10. Continue to take personal inventory and promptly admit wrongs
11. Through pray and meditation seek improved contact with God, praying for knowledge of God’s will for us and power to carry it out
12. Carry this message to other sinners and practice these principles in all life

Show me that you care.

Don’t just tell me that you’re sorry.

Tell me that you’re gonna do better.

**One of the primary acts of repentance
is simply telling the truth.**

Models of Repentance

Teshuvah (Jewish model)

1. Acknowledging that one has done something wrong
2. Public confession of one's wrongdoing
3. Public expression of remorse
4. Public announcement of offender's resolve not to repeat offense
5. Compensation to party harmed
6. Sincere request for forgiveness
7. Avoidance of conditions that caused offense
8. Acting differently when confronted with similar circumstances

We don't know if someone has truly repented until they are faced with a similar circumstance, yet we must remove ourselves from circumstances that invite sin. (Maimonides)

Fourfold Path (Christian model by Desmond Tutu)

1. Telling the Truth and Admitting the Wrong
2. Witnessing the Anguish and Apologizing
3. Asking for Forgiveness and Making Amends
4. Renewing or Releasing the Relationship

Jesus' Addition to the Fourfold Path

5. Rejoicing and Celebrating (Luke 15)

Basics on Repentance

When should you repent? _____

When shouldn't you repent? _____

Must you repent directly to the person you offended?

Christianity on Repentance

How does God respond to repentance?

When Should We Repent?

- Any time we do anything we know is wrong.
No matter how small the offense!
- Any time someone else thinks we did something wrong.
Even if we feel we didn't do anything wrong.
Even if we feel we were justified in what we did.

Signs we may need to repent include feeling regret or anguish, replaying the moment over and over in our minds, or wishing we could change what we did.

The Hardest Part: Witnessing the Anguish

Watching someone else's grief or anger isn't easy. We either become defensive (fight) or we try to find a way to get out of the situation (flight).

However, for real repentance, witnessing the anguish means:

- Do not argue.
- Do not cross-examine.
- Listen and acknowledge the harm you have caused.
- Do not justify your actions or your motivations.
- Answer all questions honestly and thoroughly.

Unless you seek forgiveness from those you have harmed, you will find that you are bound inside [a prison built] around your heart. It is never too late to repair the harm you have caused. No one [but you] can lock away your goodness or your humanity. (Eugene de Kock)

To Whom Do We Repent?

Whenever possible and safe to do so, repent directly to the person(s) you wronged.

- In order to not escalate the situation, it could be advisable to practice repenting with a trusted friend first.
- Safety may require bringing in an outside trusted party.

There are times direct repentance may not be possible:

- The person you offended is no longer alive or otherwise inaccessible.
- It may not be safe to do so

Safety is not about personal loss (repenting to a boss could result in being fired, but does not put someone in harms way) but about avoiding bodily harm and other types of abuse.

When you cannot repent directly, write a journal entry, reach out to a trusted counselor or confessor, or use an anonymous outlet, such as repentance websites and phone numbers.

What if Repentance Will Cause More Harm?

There are times repentance will harm the person we from whom we're seeking forgiveness, particularly if the offense is unknown to them. If direct repentance might be harmful, the indirect options above may be used. But before choosing this path, ask yourself:

- Am I avoid direct repentance for the sake of the well-being of the person I harmed, or is it to protect myself from the consequences of my own sin?

Have **mercy** on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy **blot out** my offenses.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and **cleanse** me from my sin (Psalm 51:1-2).

Gratitude

Maybe the most overlooked task of repentance is expression of gratitude, either saying thanks to someone else or giving praise to God. After confessing but before asking for forgiveness, consider thanking the other person for putting up with your evil or not seeking vengeance. Praise God for caring for those you haven't and loving you even when you failed.

Individual Confession and Forgiveness (Part 1)

In the Lutheran tradition, there is a liturgy for individual confession and forgiveness. This liturgy was regularly practiced in Lutheran congregations for most of our history. Only in recent history has it become largely ignored.

It is true that we are a priesthood of all believers and Christians are free to repent directly to God, but just like God used the prophets of the Old Testament to embody God's words and sent Christ as an embodiment of God on earth, we often need to hear the words of God spoken to us by a real person.

As any sin is a sin against God, we need to repent to God daily. When personal prayer is not enough to calm our hearts and comfort our spirits, seek out your pastor. The pastor is here to help us hear the voice of God and experience the fullness of the gifts of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Basics on Forgiveness

Define “forgiveness”: _____

Why is forgiveness important? _____

What keeps us from offering or gets in the way of forgiveness?

Christianity on Forgiveness

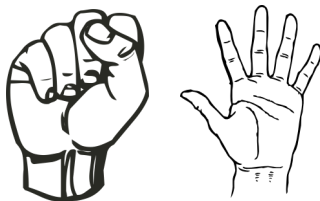
What does faith have to do with forgiveness?

Definitions and Metaphors for “Forgiveness”

Release a Debt
(Lord’s Prayer)

Letting Go / Setting Free
(John 20:23)

To Bear the Sin of Another
(Jesus bore the cost of our sins)



To Cover / Hide / Conceal
(Hebrew)

Retaining Sins Forgiving Sins

To Carry Away
(Hebrew)

To Permit / Allow / Tolerate
(Greek)

Pardon
(Legal Term)

Also: To Dismiss / Send Away
(Greek, e.g. divorce)

Elements of “Forgiveness”

- Naming the sin
- Telling the story of the offense and its effects
- Working through grief or anger
- Recalling our own experiences of sinning
- Listening to the offender
- Accepting repentance
- Offering forgiveness
- Asking the offender to stop sinning
- Holding onto forgiveness in the future

Possible Additional Elements of “Forgiveness”

- Will damages be fixed?
- Must justice be served?
- Should safeguards be put in place to prevent future sin?

Forgiveness is not...

Condoning Sin

Allowing Others to Take

Returning to
Unsafe Realities

Advantage of You

Denying Sin Happened

Staying in Bad Situations

Ignoring the
Results of Sin

Removing Consequences

What Keeps Us From Forgiving?

Desire for retribution

Grief

FEAR

FEAR

Pride

Continual / repeated offense

Fear of the oppressor

Fear of change

Cowardice

TRAUMA

Fear of more harm

Anger

Unwilling to let go of the past

Unwilling to let go of the
hope the past could change

Offense causes
lifelong suffering

No perception of an
offense / misunderstanding

No desire for
reconciliation / healing

Standing in society

Desire for justice

Lack of repentance

Inauthentic repentance

Benefits of Forgiveness

Along with repentance, a major step towards healing

Act of love toward the other person

Benefits for the Forgiver

Helps us address our hurt and other emotions

Frees us from being controlled by someone's sin against us

Frees us from participating in the cycle of violence

Benefits for the Forgiven

Helps address the other person's remorse and other emotions

Forgiveness in Worship

A) God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and **made us alive** together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of + Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may **live** in your hearts through faith.

B) By water and the Holy Spirit God gives you a **new birth**, and through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God for-gives you all your sins. Almighty God strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life.

Pastoral Care

If you need help repenting or forgiving, your pastor is your advocate and a trustworthy person who can listen to your story and aid you on this journey.

Basics on Forgiveness

What might you need before you are willing to forgive?

List steps or actions you could take in order to repent:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Christianity on Forgiveness

As Christians, when should we forgive? _____

What Might We Need In Order To Forgive?

Name the Sin	Work through Anger or Grief
Feeling of Safety	Sense of Expediency / Self-Benefit
Address Any Power Imbalance	Time
Evidence of Justice	Listen / Be Listened To
Evidence of Repentance	Reducing Expectations of Justice or Restitution

Secular Model of Forgiveness

Worthington REACH Model

1. Recall Event (yes it hurt; don't deny that)
2. Empathize (see the situation from their point-of-view)
3. Altruistic Gift (remember your own experiences of being forgiven)
4. Commit to Forgive (decide to do it and do it)
5. Hold onto Forgiveness (when the hurt or a similar situation returns)

Enright Model

1. Uncover your anger (honestly examine the unjust act and your feelings about it)
2. Decide to forgive (be willing to turn your back on the past and look toward the future)
3. Work on forgiveness (forgiving is a process that takes re-commitment and concrete actions)
4. Discovery and release (be open to discovering the meaning of suffering, the need for forgiveness, the fact that you are not alone, and a new purpose in life)

Christian Models of Forgiveness

Matthew 18:15-18 and Luke 17:3-4

1. Rebuke the offender individually
(inform them of sin and ask them to stop it)
2. If there's repentance, offer forgiveness
3. If there's no repentance, get the help of others
4. If there's still no repentance, treat them like a sinner
(but remember than Jesus was known for spending time with sinners)

The Fourfold Path (Desmond Tutu)

1. Tell the Story
2. Name the Hurt
3. Grant Forgiveness
4. Renew or Release the Relationship

The Dance of Forgiveness (L. Gregory Jones)

1. Tell the Truth: Speak truthfully and patiently about the conflict
2. Acknowledge Anger
3. Summon up Concern for the Other
4. Recognize (our own complicity), Remember (we've been forgiven), and Repent
5. Commitment to Change
6. Hope for the Future and the Possibility of Reconciliation

Forgiveness in Scripture

How often should I **forgive**? As many as seven times? — Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times (Matthew 18:21-22).

Whatever you **loose on earth** will be **loosed in heaven** (Matthew 18:18).

Parable of the Unforgiving Servant: So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not **forgive** your brother or sister from your heart (Matthew 18:35).

If there is repentance, you must **forgive**. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times, you must forgive (Luke 17:3-4).

Her sins, which were many, have been **forgiven**; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is **forgiven**, loves little (Luke 7:47).

If you **forgive** the sins of any, they are **forgiven** them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained (John 20:23).

Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, **forgive** each other; just as the Lord has **forgiven** you, so you also must **forgive**. (Colossians 3:13).

Forgive, and you will be **forgiven** (Luke 6:37).

Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves **forgive** everyone indebted to us. (Luke 11:4).

If you **forgive** others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also **forgive** you; but if you do not **forgive** others, neither will your Father **forgive** your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14-15).

Basics on Forgiveness

Who can forgive? _____

When should forgiveness be withheld? _____

What might keep someone from receiving forgiveness?

Christianity on Forgiveness

What does forgiveness have to do with our salvation?

Forgiveness Changes the Forgiven

Though not everyone will open receive the forgiveness you offer, Scripture says those who hear and believe that they are truly forgiven are changed. In fact, Jesus regularly tells those who are healed that it wasn't the physical healing that mattered. "Faith has made you well. Go and sin no more."

Jesus knows someone who's been forgiven by their actions. He says, "Those who have been forgiven much, love much." The wellspring of love itself is forgiveness.

How important is forgiveness to our life together?

In the Lord's Prayer, forgiveness is placed alongside the basic human necessity of daily nourishment.

Just as daily food sustains our bodies, daily forgiveness maintains the unity of the community. (Celéstin Musekura)

Individual Confession and Forgiveness (Part 2)

In the Lutheran tradition, forgiveness is a reminder of Holy Baptism. Luther calls us the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:4-5). All baptized believers may offer forgiveness.

You are the person your spouse or child is most likely to come to when needing to repent or when needing to forgive. This puts you in a unique place to remind them of what God declared to them at their baptisms: By the grace of God, you are forgiven.

When they are caught in Sin, tell them the joy that happened the day they were baptized. Help them believe and share the mercy God has given them.

Cooling Down

Addressing sin is hard to impossible when we're angry or grieving. How do you work through anger or grief?

Whatever your methods, it is always beneficial relieve your anger or grief as much as possible first. As long as your desire is retribution or vindication, true forgiveness will not happen.

Withholding Forgiveness

Christ gave us the power to retain sins as well as to forgive. When is OK not to forgive?

Some would say when there's no repentance. Christ's own command in Matthew 18 and Luke 17 say as much. But for those who walk this path, they must remember that Christ's final instruction in those texts is to treat them exactly like the ones Christ came to save and call to repentance. Withholding forgiveness, for Christ, does not mean condemning the person or severing the relationship, because for God the hope and desire to give mercy always remains. Withholding forgiveness is always meant to be a temporary measure.

Others would say once you are ready to forgive, forgive—regardless of the other person's repentance. Desmond Tutu points out that forgive someone else frees us. "When you forgive, you are free to move on in life, to grow, to no longer be a victim. When you forgive, you slip the yoke, and your future is unshackled from your past." Forgiveness is done for the sake of the forgiver. How often does Christ say that being forgiven and forgiving others is intimately linked?

The Cost of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is never free. Sin is often described as being in debt to someone else. Though repentance includes paying someone back, forgiveness is described as releasing someone's debt. Like the Parable of the Unjust Servant, when the king forgave the servant millions of dollars, that was a real cost. When preparing to forgive, a good question to ask is: What will this cost me?

- The right to revenge? The right to hate?
- The ability to hold this over the other person?
- The fantasy to believe what happened didn't happen? The hope of a future without the reality of this sin?
- The right to full compensation for the damages done?

Even for God, forgiveness cost a lot.

- Letting go of the judgment of condemnation. Instead judging people by grace (John 3:16-17, Romans 8:1-2).
- Letting go of rule of the Law. Instead implementing the rule of the Spirit/faith/love (Galatians 3:23-26, 6:13-26).
- Letting go of the divine right to be God. Instead choosing to serve (Philippians 2:5-8).
- Letting go of the "inalienable right to life". Instead choosing death (Mark 10:45).
- Letting go of innocence. Instead becoming sin for our sake (Isaiah 53:4-6, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:23-24).

Basics on Reconciliation

Define “reconciliation”: _____

How is reconciliation different from repentance and

forgiveness? _____

Why is reconciliation important? _____

Christianity on Reconciliation

How do we find reconciliation with God?

Definitions and Metaphors for “Reconciliation”

Healing a Relationship		Conflict Resolution
Restoring Communion		Turning Enemies into Friends
Reunification		Fixing What Was Broken
Peace (Shalom)	Catalyst (Greek)	Creating Something New Transformation
Coming to Terms Agreement		Enacting Righteousness Setting Things Right
Justification (establishing justice)		Atonement Becoming At-One
		Mercy and Truth Meeting Together

Examples of Reconciliation Projects

Affirmative Action: Simply freeing the slaves has not fixed the deeply broken system slavery created. Affirmative action is one way of trying to balance the system.

South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission: After years of apartheid, in order to bring the nation together, anyone who was willing to come and tell the truth of their sins was given a full pardon for all crimes, because the truth was more important for the victims than retribution.

The Movie “Invictus”: The black South Africans tried to eliminate the white rugby team in retribution for apartheid, but President Nelson Mandela used the team to end the cycle of violence and bring the country back together.

Benefits of Reconciliation

Restores trust and love between people

Brings healing to all sides

Restores power to the victim

Addresses any deep-seated pains

Reconciliation is Not

Returning to the way things were...

Remaining in bad relationships...

Pretending everything is OK...

Reconciliation creates a new normal that is better for all.
That might mean a whole different relationship than before.

Reconciliation Warnings

Reconciliation may not be possible if all parties are not willing or ready to reconcile.

Often all parties are in the wrong, especially by the time they are willing to address the problem.

More people and issues may be involved than the ones on the table, either because it was a chain of sins that resulted in this issue or because this was the sin that broke the camel's back.

Healing takes time and is rarely complete.

A facilitator or neutral party may be required.

Reconciliation is always risky because it demands everyone involved to change.

Signs or Markers of Reconciliation

Laughter Justice Eating Together Respect
Touch Feels Safe Real Peace
Liberation
Actions of Grace Memory Doesn't Create Anger
and Mercy toward Trust
One Another (Faith) Cessation of Violence

Model of Reconciliation

Liturgical Model

1. Repentance and forgiveness (Remembrance of Baptism)
2. Hear the Gospel
3. Share peace with one another
4. Eat together (Holy Communion)
5. Continue living together in the peace of Christ

Worthington FREE Model (Secular)

1. Decide whether, when, and how to reconcile
2. Communication Coaching (practice with someone, partly to express emotions and partly to avoid doing further damage)
3. Teach REACH model (repentance and forgiveness)
4. Create reparative steps (what will it take to heal?)
5. Reduce expectations (not everything we want/need for healing is possible; what can we reasonably expect to happen?)
6. Rebuild love through action

Basics on Reconciliation

What should you do when someone refuses to repent?

What should you do when someone refuses to forgive?

What do you do when reconciliation isn't possible?

Christianity on Reconciliation

What is God's pattern for healing humanity?

Repentance and Forgiveness: The Assumed Pattern

When someone does something wrong, what should happen in order for things to be fixed? What is the order of events needed in order for peace to be reestablished?

Option 1: Repent => Forgive => Reconcile

Most people assume that first the one in the wrong must repent (and that somehow justice must be served), then the person wronged may forgive, and eventually reconciliation may be possible.

What's the problem with this?

As long as repentance is required first, the person wrong remains trapped and controlled by the person who did the wrong. If you cannot forgive until the other person repents, your life is bound by their sin. By making forgiveness dependent upon their repentance, you are letting them have control over your life.

Option 2: Forgive => Repent => Reconcile

As a result, many recognize that either may happen first, repentance or forgiveness. We forgive not simply for the well-being of the sinner, but also to free ourselves from being controlled by their sin.

What's the problem with this?

Even when we're freed from the other person's sin, our lives remain broken as long as peace isn't established. If we have to wait on repentance for peace, how long will we have to wait?

God's Pattern: Forgive => Reconcile => Repent

God was always ready to forgive. But waiting on repentance was problematic. Adam and Eve didn't do it. It took major catastrophes every time before Israel was willing to do it. Something had to change. That's where Jesus came in.

To break the cycle, God sent Christ to reconcile the world. And Christ gave the world the Holy Spirit, empowering people to believe what was always true: God has forgiven you.

- God the Father is always ready to **forgive** (throughout OT).
- Jesus on the cross **reconciled** the world to God (next page).
- The Holy Spirit gives the gift of **repentance** (Acts 11:15-18).

Saved By Grace Through Faith

If forgiveness is already ours and reconciliation has already happened, what more do we need? Jesus always looked for signs of faith. Where he found faith, he declared the already-true reality of forgiveness and revealed the signs of reconciliation (Mark 2:5-11, Luke 7:47-48).

Someone can be fully forgiven and welcomed back, but until they are ready to accept this new reality, it will be true. Sadly, faith doesn't come naturally. It comes through repeatedly seeing the signs of forgiveness and reconciliation until we actually believe what has always been true is true for us.

Unrepentant people judge themselves (John 3:17-20). It is only through the judgment of grace that we are able to believe the truth and stand in the light of Christ.

Reconciliation in Scripture

When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift and go; first be **reconciled** to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23-24).

Christ Jesus created in himself **one new humanity** in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), thus **making peace**, and **reconciling** both groups to God **in one body** through the cross, thus putting to death hostility (Ephesians 2:14-16).

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a **new creation**: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who **reconciled** us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was **reconciling** the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

For if while we were enemies, we were **reconciled** to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been **reconciled**, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received **reconciliation** (Romans 5:10-11).

Through Christ God was pleased to **reconcile** to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross (Colossians 1:20).

Living in Faith

We have no guarantees that we are reconciled to one another – the issues may surface again years later – but that's where faith comes in. We are called to live in faith that reconciliation is real; disbelief will only cause reconciliation to fail in us.

Basics on Bonus Topics

What responsibility do you have for your ancestors' sins?

How do you forgive yourself? _____

How do you repent for sins against nature?

Christianity on Bonus Topics

What does justice look like in the context of grace?

The Sins of Our Ancestors

The Bible is contradictory on whether or not sin, guilt for sin, and the need for punishment is inherited. But for however one wants to think of such things, it is clear that the results and consequences of sin are inherited. Those who benefitted from sin passed those benefits onto their descendants. Those who were hurt by sin pass those hurts onto their descendants.

People argue about whether or not we can apology for our ancestors or whether we can forgive on behalf of our ancestors. But whatever you feel, it is clear we can repent of how we've benefitted from our ancestors sins and forgive those whose inheritance has continuing consequences in our lives.

Systemic Sin

When we say that we are "in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves," we are not only confessing individual sins, but sins that almost beyond our power to change.

Here's a simple example: Suppose you are opposed to nonrenewable energy such as oil. Can you live your life without benefitting from oil? Even without a vehicle, it is nearly impossible for anyone in the world to avoid benefitting from the shipping industry. The use of oil is systemic in the world today.

Systemic sins are issues with how humans have setup the world. Some systemic sins we can avoid. Many we cannot. But that does not free us from the call to repent, forgive, and reconcile. Rather, it forces us to realize even as we repent, forgive, and reconcile that we are completely dependent upon God's grace and mercy.

Self-Repentance and Self-Forgiveness

We do not just sin against others; we sin against ourselves.

We often need to repent to and to forgive ourselves.

Self-forgiveness often fails because we do not take the full journey into repentance and forgiveness.

To help you on the journey to repent and forgive yourself, ask:

- How do I truly feel about this?
- How will I change my behavior in the future?
- How will I make amends to myself?
- Who can help me deal with my guilt and shame?

Sinning Against Nature

Scripture describes Adam's sin as covering the whole earth, with creation subjected to futility and groaning in pain.

Though much of Christian history has ignored the connection between sin and the world, today it is very clear: We can sin against not only God and one another, but also the earth which humanity was charged to serve and protect.

When we fail to serve and protect the world, we are called to repent to the earth just as much as we are called to repent to one another. As witnessed by our pets, the world is clearly always ready to forgive, and reconciliation is possible. But real repentance will require the work of undoing the harm we have done, especially because the earth lacks the ability to do one key aspect of forgiveness: Renewing the relationship. That task is entirely upon us to do.

Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more.

(Romans 5:20b)

The Judgment of Grace

“The judgment of grace, a specification of God’s forgiveness, aims at transformation. [...] Christ’s forgiveness [is] a judgment on the destructiveness of our live. [...] God does not ‘overlook’ or ‘ignore’ our destructiveness. [...] God confronts sin and evil in all of its awfulness. In so doing, God exposes our wounds. [...] “However, God’s confrontation with sin and evil is *not* for the purpose of condemning us. Indeed, it is for the explicit purpose of forgiving us and healing our—and the world’s—wounds (see John 3:16-21).” L. Gregory Jones

The Grace of Exposure

“Coming to the light”, as John’s gospel puts it, does not mean that our bad parts are hidden. Rather, coming to the light means letting the truth of our mistakes be seen. That what repentance is. But God’s goal isn’t shaming us; it’s healing us. That’s the grace of forgiveness. God shines a light on our bad spots so that what’s wrong can be seen and forgiven.

Additional Scripture on Repentance and Forgiveness

You are a God ready to **forgive**, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and you did not forsake them (Nehemiah 9:17).

If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will **forgive** us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

If my people humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will **forgive** their sin (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Final Thoughts

Ultimately, forgiveness and reconciliation is God's work. It's through our baptisms into Christ's death and resurrection (the + cross) that we experience forgiveness and reconciliation with God, and it's that experience of love that is the grounds on which we are able to forgive and reconcile with others (check out Romans 5:1-11).

Forgiveness and reconciliation are baptismal experiences, moments when the Kingdom of God miraculously breaks into this world, acts of faith.

We received this forgiveness and reconciliation as a free gift – grace – even while we were still sinners. While we are still messed up. Even before we were willing to repent. Meaning repentance isn't a prerequisite of forgiveness. Repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation are declarations of the Gospel, acts of faith trusting that we have already received forgiveness and reconciliation from God and living into that grace.

Whether we need to repent, forgive, or seek reconciliation, we do it all as an act of faith in the one who forgave us and reconciled us to himself as a free gift of love. If there's anything we can learn about responding to Sin in our lives and ourselves, it's to trust God's promise made to us in Holy Baptism. That's living faith.

There will be more **joy** in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance (Luke 15:7).

Summary

Remember that repentance is more than “I’m sorry,”
forgiveness is more than “It’s OK,”
and reconciliation is more than “All better!”

Repenting: Turning your life around
Changing the way you live

Forgiving: Letting go of debt
Releasing someone from their sin

Reconciling: Changing the relationship
Both parties becoming a new creation

A New Reality

All three parts—repent, forgive, and reconcile—imply a change in the way things are, ending sin by sharing grace.

Repenting means changing in order to not repeat the sin

Forgiving also means getting out of a bad situation

Reconciling means creating a new reality of true peace

God’s Way

Normally people think one repents, then the other forgives, then they both can reconcile. God does things differently.

- 1. Forgive:** God the Father always already forgives, and is simply waiting for us to be ready to listen.
- 2. Reconcile:** Christ on the cross, death and resurrection, reconciled the world with God.
- 3. Repent:** The Holy Spirit gives us the gift of repentance.