



Ambassadors
of
Reconciliation™

Application Discussion Guide Election Season Edition

Conflict Resolution vs. Reconciliation

Self-paced Study (www.aorhope.org/aor-gift)

Case Studies and Application Questions

Use this guide for the following:

- For reconciling with someone:
 - Write down answers to the application questions for a conflict in your life.
- For Small group Bible study discussion:
 - Read the case studies. Discuss questions for the people identified in the case.
- For Pre-course work for *Coaching People through Conflict Practicum*:
 - Read the case studies. Answer questions from your Pre-Course Homework Worksheet.



Esther is the mother of three children and a grandmother to eight wonderful grandchildren. She loves them all dearly and has established a years-long tradition of hosting a family get together on Sunday afternoon once every other month. Esther's two daughters, Emily and Rachel, live in the same town as Esther and attend with their families quite regularly. Esther's son Robert lives in another state but manages to bring his family once or twice each year. They are a close-knit Christian family.

Emily's husband, Jeff works as an EMT whose parents were both teachers and were active in their local Democrat Party politics when he was growing up. Rachel's husband, Nick, on the other hand is an airline pilot and die-hard conservative.

At one of Esther's gatherings, her daughters and their families came together for a large meal. Nick arrived at Esther's house wearing a red MAGA hat. He made it obvious to all that he was proud to be wearing it as he flaunted it around, knowing it would get under Jeff's skin.

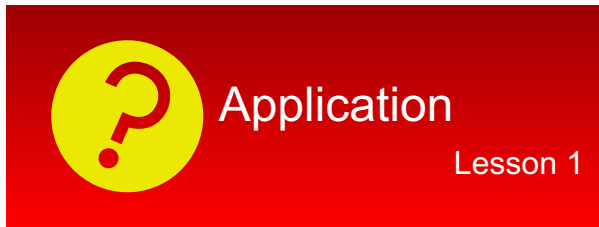
When the family sat down for the meal, Esther asked Jeff to ask God's blessing before the meal. Jeff, fumed a moment before blurting out "Not until Nick removes that ridiculous hat!" "What's the matter, Jeff? I'm sorry if you're more interested in hugging trees than creating jobs. I'll take off the ____ hat!"

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Jeff's youngest daughter asked him, "Is that true, daddy?"

Jeff was too angry to pray so he invited everyone to join him in the common table prayer.



These questions can apply to the above case study or to a current conflict from your personal life. For the case study, you can assume either Jeff's or Nick's role. For a conflict from your life, apply these questions to yourself, writing out your answers.

1. How have you contributed to this conflict?

Who has been affected by your sinful thoughts, words, or actions?

2. In spite of your sinful nature, how does your heavenly Father view:

a. you?

b. the person with whom you are in conflict?

3. In light of how your heavenly Father views you both:

a. What is your worth to God?

b. What is the other person's worth to God?

4. Review 1 John 3:1.

Whose are you?

What comfort does your relationship with God give you in the midst of this struggle?

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5. In Christ, we are called as new creatures to put away our “old self” and put on our “new self” in Christ.
 - a. How can you put away your old self in this conflict?

 - b. How can you put on your new self in Christ?

 - c. What would your contrition and repentance look like?

6. Describe what material or substantive issues need to be resolved in your conflict.

7. Identify what relational issues need to be reconciled in your conflict.

8. Write a prayer asking for God’s help in resolving the material issues and reconciling with the other person.

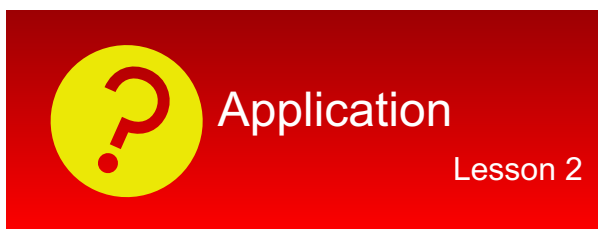


Emily, Rachel and their husbands all attend the same church along with Esther. At church, they are all active members. Jeff presently serves as trustee and Nick is on the church council, but they have both served in nearly every position over the years. They both enjoy discussing politics, even at church, but from polar opposite perspectives. Jeff is life-long democrat and proud of it. Nick is an enthusiastic and boisterous Trump supporter.

Jeff and Nick are known by most people at church to be dedicated servants. At the same time, they are also recognized as openly opposed, politically, and more than likely to cancel each other out at the ballot box. Their occasional politically charged comments are tolerated by most people while more than once people have openly wondered “what are their family gatherings like?”

With the election on the horizon, their political banter escalated. Jeff forwarded an email to a number of people at church he thought would appreciate it. The email showed President Trump in a very unflattering way with a silly quote beneath. Someone forwarded that email to Nick who found it terribly offensive. Nick responded by sending his own email to his own distribution list, including Jeff, depicting VP Biden in a similarly degrading way. The email tit for tat continued to escalate until the images were beyond degrading but also disgusting.

Some people receiving these emails didn’t see a problem with them because the emails were just like the garbage they received from friends and coworkers. Many receiving these emails recognized them as ungodly but were not sure what to do about them. Confronting the email author, it seems, would just cause more offense. Now, a church member asked about them while everyone was together for Sunday morning Bible study ...



For the Case Study, put yourself into either Jeff’s or Nick’s shoes, or even an email recipient. Use the questions below to understand his idols.

For personal application, consider a conflict where you may have felt one of the following: anger, bitterness, pride, fear, judgmental attitude, jealousy, or defensiveness. Reflect on the following questions to identify your underlying idols.

Consider the idols listed in this lesson. Ask yourself the following questions to identify the idols with which you were struggling:

2. Improper desires for physical pleasure

- a. What physical pleasure did you find yourself thinking about much of the time?

- b. When a certain desire or expectation was not met, did you feel frustration, resentment, bitterness, or anger?

- c. What was unsatisfying about the gifts God has given you?

- d. How did you get even with the other person when you did not get what you wanted from him/her?

3. Pride and arrogance

- a. How are your expectations of the other person magnifying your demands on him/her and your disappointment in his/her failure to meet your desires?

- b. How are you judging the other person when your desires are not met?

- c. How are you getting even with the other person when your desires are not met?

- d. How have you communicated to the other person what you feel he/she must do?

- e. How have you threatened the other person? (“Give me what I want or you will pay!”)

3. Love of money or material possessions

- a. What preoccupies your thoughts? (What is the first thing on your mind in the morning and/or the last thing at night?)

- b. Fill in this blank: “If only I had _____, then I would be happy, fulfilled, and secure.” What does this suggest to you about your trust in God for what you desire?

- c. Fill in this blank: “If only I had _____, then I would be happy, fulfilled, and secure.” What does this suggest to you about your trust in God for what you desire?

4. Fear of man

- a. Whose approval do you want most of all?

- b. Whom are you seeking to please at almost any cost?

- c. What do you want to preserve or avoid about your reputation?

- d. In this situation, what or whom do you fear most?

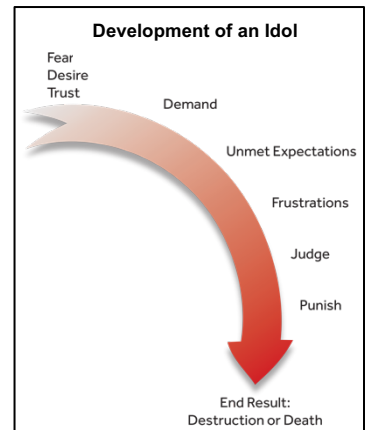
5. Good things that I want too much

- a. What do you find yourself thinking about much of the time?

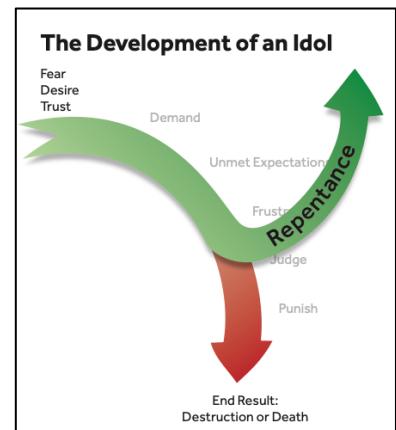
- b. What causes you the most worry? How has your anxiety replaced your trust in God?

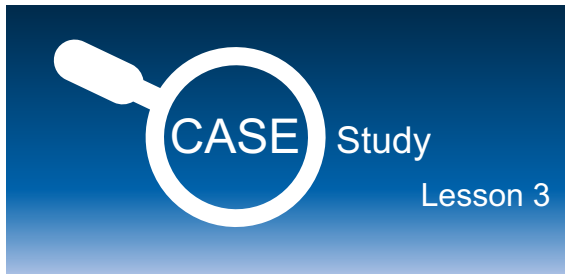
- c. Fill in this blank: “If only _____, then I would be happy, fulfilled, and secure.”
What does this suggest to you about your trust in God for what you desire?
- d. When a certain desire or expectation is not met, do you feel frustration, resentment, bitterness, or anger?

6. What or whom have you sacrificed to get what you wanted?
7. If you do not repent of this pattern, what will be the destructive results?
8. What are some of the Commandments you have broken in this conflict?
(Compare your thoughts, words, and actions to the explanations of the Ten Commandments.)



9. What hope is there for you?
(See 1 John 1:9; Romans 5:8, 15:13; Ephesians 1:7.)
10. Write a prayer that reflects your confession and your thanks to God for His forgiveness. Include a petition for strength to overcome these temptations in the future.





Robert lives in a part of the country where the pandemic hasn't been a big issue. It's largely a rural area and Robert's family lives outside of town. He is a builder and spends most of his time outdoors. To Robert, the news of the pandemic with its furloughs and layoffs, infections and deaths seem like another world. He not able to grasp the enormity of it. His work has hardly been impacted. In fact, his schedule is booked out for several months.

Robert doesn't understand all the hoopla at church over masks. When the pandemic started, his church suspended in-person services and streamed them over the internet. After about six weeks, they were able to restart in-person services again but with some changes required by the county health department. Everyone was expected to keep socially distant and always wear a mask in the building. Robert thought that was a ridiculous over reaction.

Robert lost his Dad to the virus, so he understood it was serious. But dad was overweight, diabetic, 83 years old, and lived in a hot-spot. Nobody here even knows someone sick with the virus. Why are masks necessary here? Why should everyone suffer? Robert went to talk to his pastor.

By the time Robert got to Pastor's office, he was already a little agitated. An elder greeted him as he entered the building and offered a mask to him. Robert waved off the gesture with a grunt and ambled into Pastor's office. The masked elder was right behind him. The elder said with a hint of muffled sarcasm "I'm sorry Pastor, but Robert has been one of those mask-less members for several weeks. He always refuses to put one on." To which Robert snaps "This is ridiculous! These masks are useless and unnecessary. If this church is going to require them, I'm outta here!" The argument continued ...



These questions can apply to the above case study or to a current conflict from your personal life. For the case study, assume Robert's role or the elder's role. For a conflict from your life, apply these questions to yourself, writing out your answers.

1. Which of the following idols are you guilty of in this situation? (Review the application questions at the end of Lesson 2 if you have not done so.)
 - a. Improper desires for physical pleasure
 - b. Pride and arrogance

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- c. Love of money or material possessions
 - d. Fear of man
 - e. Good things that I want too much
2. Besides the individuals with whom you are in conflict, which others are being affected by your thoughts, words, or actions?
3. What is keeping you from confessing your sins against God before one of the following:
- Your pastor?
 - A mature Christian with whom you are not related but whom you trust?
 - A mature Christian with whom you are related and who loves you?
- a. Pray that God will take away your fear of confessing before another person and give you courage.
 - b. If you continue to struggle with your guilt and yet are reluctant to confess to someone who will proclaim God's forgiveness to you, seek out your pastor or a mature Christian for advice and encouragement.
4. Application of confession and hearing God's forgiveness proclaimed to you:
- Make an appointment with your pastor or a mature Christian believer.
 - Explain that you desire to confess your sin to God before another person so that you might audibly hear God's forgiveness proclaimed to you by another Christian.
 - If the person is not your pastor, ask for his or her commitment to keep what you confess confidential (pastors vow to keep private confession confidential).
 - Tell the person that you have a simple form that will help guide you both.
 - When you meet, you may give some background of the situation if helpful for *you*. But such background is not necessary for the person hearing your confession.
 - Consider using the form *Proclaiming God's Forgiveness* (pages 22-26 in this guide). Using that form, you can confess your sins to God, and the person hearing your confession can proclaim God's forgiveness to you.

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- Your confession may be general or it may include specifics. God knows more about your sin than you do, and He does not need details in order for Him to forgive. However, if a specific sin is troubling you, confessing that particular sin aloud will help you to “own” your sin. More importantly, when God’s forgiveness is proclaimed to you, it will help you to “own” the forgiveness, providing you with special comfort and assurance.
 - Whether or not the form is used, be sure to request that the person hearing your confession specifically use Bible verses in proclaiming God’s forgiveness (e.g., see the verses listed on page 26 of this guide).
 - Ask the person to pray for you.
5. Write your reflections on confessing before another believer and hearing God’s forgiveness audibly proclaimed to you.



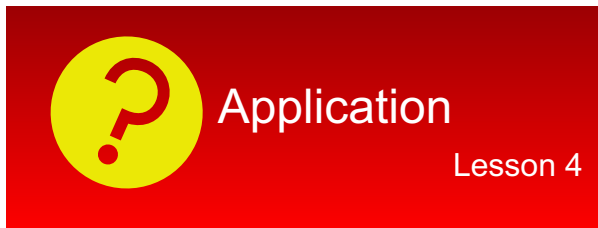
Note that this is a continuation of the case from Lesson 2.

One Sunday morning, a member asked “is anyone else getting all of these political emails? They are awful!” The discussion that followed surprised everyone. The room was immediately divided with vocal participants on both sides. “Trump is a racist!” “Biden is a socialist!” “Biden is going to kill the economy with taxes!” “Trump is ignoring the pandemic!” “Biden is hiding in the basement!” The anger in the room was palpable. Some in the room who hadn’t received the emails still joined in the tempest.

After twenty minutes of this cacophony, an elder spoke up. “Is anyone interested in what scripture says about this kind of talk?” He proceeded to read Ephesians 4:29 – 32:

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Upon hearing God's Word, both Jeff and Nick recognized their sin in sending these ungodly and unflattering emails. They also recognized how their actions tempted many others to sin in similar ways.



These questions can apply to the above case study or to a current conflict from your personal life. For the case study, assume either Jeff's or Nick's role. For a conflict from your life, apply these questions to yourself, writing out your answers.

1. If you could go back in time and do anything differently in your encounter with the other person, what would that be?

Reflecting on your answer, what have you failed to do as a child of God?

2. Consider whether you have any bitterness against the other person. Read Ephesians 4:26-27.
How long have you been angry?

How has your bitterness become a foothold for the devil?

3. Reflect on your words in your conflict with the other person. Compare them to Ephesians 4:29-32.
What words have you spoken to the other person that were not helpful for building up?

4. Think about others you have talked to about this situation. Comparing your speech to the Commandment on not bearing false witness, how have you sinned? (Note especially the *proactive* requirements of this Commandment, such as those in Proverbs 11:13; 1 Corinthians 13:7; and Philippians 4:8.)

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5. Read Philippians 2:14-15. Whether or not you talked to someone else, have you grumbled or complained about the other person?

6. What behaviors did you exhibit that failed to follow God's commands?

7. Compare your thoughts, words, and actions to what the Bible describes in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.
How have you failed to love the other people involved?

8. Prepare to express your confession to the other person. Use the Guidelines for Confession to write out the words you could use.

Guidelines for Confession

- Go as a beggar.
- Own your sin.
- Identify your sins according to God's Word.
- Express sorrow for hurt your sin has caused.
- Commit to changing your behavior with God's help.
- Be willing to bear the consequences.
- Ask for forgiveness.
- Trust in Christ's forgiveness.

9. Write a prayer for God’s help in confessing to the other person. Or, use the following:

Gentle Savior, I am often blind to my own faults. By nature I want to defend and protect myself. But you did not protect yourself when dying on the cross for my sins. Instead, you willingly laid down your life for me, taking on my punishment, that I may be restored to God and live eternally in heaven. Help me see my faults in conflict, especially my dispute with [name]. Grant me insight that I may see where I have failed you and others. Assure me of your love as you guide me in confession that I may hear your promise of forgiveness. Then, according to your will, grant my reconciliation with all those I have sinned against. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.



Same Case Study as Lesson 4, continuing the discussion with different application questions.

One Sunday morning, a member asked “is anyone else getting all of these political emails? They are awful!” The discussion that followed surprised everyone. The room was immediately divided with vocal participants on both sides. “Trump is a racist!” “Biden is a socialist!” “Biden is going to kill the economy with taxes!” “Trump is ignoring the pandemic!” “Biden is hiding in the basement!” The anger in the room was palpable. Some in the room who hadn’t received the emails still joined in the tempest.

After twenty minutes of this cacophony, an elder spoke up. “Is anyone interested in what scripture says about this kind of talk?” He proceeded to read Ephesians 4:29 – 32 as the room fell silent:

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Upon hearing God’s Word, both Jeff and Nick recognized their sin in sending these ungodly and unflattering emails. They also recognized how their actions tempted many others to sin in similar ways.



Application

Lesson 5

These questions can apply to the above case study or to a current conflict from your personal life. For the case study, assume either Jeff's or Nick's role or any member of the Sunday morning Bible study. For a conflict from your life, apply these questions to yourself, writing out your answers.

1. What has caused the hurt in your relationship:
 - For you personally?

 - For someone else you care about?

 - For the person who hurt you and others you care about?
2. How has your relationship with the other person changed?
3. What grieves you the most about what has happened?
4. What is keeping you from forgiving the other person?
5. How has your strained or broken relationship affected:
 - Your attitude toward the other person?

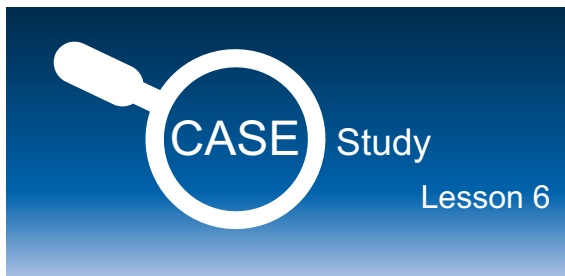
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- Your attitude toward yourself?
 - Your attitude toward others?
 - Your relationship with God?
6. What are some of the consequences of your unforgiveness?
7. You know that our heavenly Father commands that we forgive others as He forgives us. List at least ten sins from your life that God has forgiven through Christ.
- Does God offer forgiveness to you for your bitterness and unforgiveness?
 - Reviewing this lesson, what Scripture passages give you comfort and assurance of God's forgiveness for all your sins?
8. Has Christ died for the sins of the person who hurt you or others you care about?
- Reviewing this lesson, identify Scripture passages that support your answer.
9. For which sins of people did Christ not die?
10. Reflecting back on this lesson, what Scripture passages promise God's strength to forgive as He has forgiven you?

11. Write a prayer to God. You might include:

- Confessing your sins of unforgiveness, bitterness, grudges, hatred, or anger that you may have in your heart.
- Thanking Him for the forgiveness of all your sins.
- Seeking His help to forgive as He has forgiven you.
- Asking God to bless the person who has wronged you.
- Praying that God reconciles your relationship with the other person.



Note that this is a continuation of the case from Lesson 3.

Robert and the elder continued to escalate their argument about both the necessity and the uselessness of mask wearing. Each man enthusiastically citing various medical experts, news anchors and TV pundits to make their case. As the name-calling escalated, so did their blood pressure. Then during a lull, Pastor asked them, “would you mind if I shared words of scripture with you?” They were attentive as he read:

[Jesus said] “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

Pastor went on to say, “Since you arrived in this office, there have been a number of our church families walking by on their way to worship. In fact, one family I did not recognize, and assume to be visiting today. Do you think this passage applies to you right now? If so, how? If not, why not?”

Both men immediately felt guilty about the fight. While they knew they needed to address this issue, they realized that the manner in which they confronted one another was ungodly. They let their anger get out of control (Ephesians 4:26-27), called each other various names (Ephesians 4:29). They both failed to show the love and forgiveness of Christ (see Hebrews 12:7-11; 1 Peter 4:8; Ephesians 4:32).

Pastor took the form *Proclaiming God’s Forgiveness* (pages 22-26 of this guide) and gave a copy to each man. He then introduced them to the form and asked if they could try to confess their sins to God and one another using the pamphlet. They agreed. Robert confessed first, specifically naming his own sins, asking God and the elder for forgiveness. Using the words of the form, the elder proclaimed God’s forgiveness to Robert and then offered his personal forgiveness. The elder then confessed his sin to God and Robert, identifying some of his particular sins. Robert proclaimed God’s forgiveness to him and offered personal forgiveness. Then the Pastor had the privilege of absolving them both.

Robert then described to Pastor and the elder how this form is going to be useful with his mother and his sisters and brothers in law as they, too, have been getting under each others’ skin. He asked Pastor for a few of the pamphlets to share with his mom and sisters.



Application

Lesson 6

These questions can apply to the above case study or to a current conflict from your personal life. For the case study, assume Roberts's role. For a conflict from your life, apply these questions to yourself, writing out your answers.

1. How have you prepared to restore the other person with forgiveness? (If you need help with this, review the application questions from Lesson 5.)
2. Before seeking to restore the other person, what kinds of logs do you need to get out of your own eye first (Matthew 7:1-5)? (If you need help with this, see the application questions at the end of Lesson 4.)
3. Review 2 Timothy 2:24-26.
What are your responsibilities in helping the person with whom you are in conflict?

What are God's responsibilities and *not* yours?
4. How have you failed to restore the other person with gentleness?
5. Review Galatians 6:1. Identify the sins that you believe have ensnared the other person.
6. If these were your sins, describe what another person could do that would help free you from your entanglement.

7. Identify a time and place that will provide safety for both you and the other person to meet together.

8. Prepare your words by writing out your opening comments.

- Begin by assuring the other person of your care and Christian love.
- Acknowledge behaviors and motives of the other person that are godly.
- Confess your own sins that you have not yet addressed.
- Next, if you were personally affected, refer to the behavior that caused you personal hurt or harm. Using an “I statement,” indicate how you were personally hurt or affected:

“I feel _____ when you _____ because _____. As a result, I _____.”

9. Prepare yourself to listen. The other person will not likely hear anything you have to say until he or she feels that you have listened to him or her. Remember basic skills in active listening:

- Waiting – Be patient. Wait until the other person finishes speaking before responding. Don’t plan your response until the other person is finished speaking.
- Attending – Maintain eye contact and other body language that communicates your genuine interest. Nod occasionally or respond with short phrases that indicate you are paying attention (e.g., *I see, uh-huh, I understand*, etc.).
- Clarifying – Ask questions to test your understanding (e.g., *When you said _____, did you mean _____?*).
- Reflecting – Repeat short portions back to the person. This communicates that you are listening closely and allows for the other person to restate things if needed. It also helps the other person hear back what she has said, which may help her rethink her responses to the situation.
- Agreeing – Look for opportunities to agree. When you agree with some portions, the other person believes that you are open-minded and really listening. He will much more likely hear what you have to say if he believes you are balanced in your assessment.

10. Prepare open-ended questions to help the other person discover for himself the offensive behaviors and own them. For example:

- “When you [describe the behavior], what were you hoping would be the result?”
- “If you had the opportunity, what would you have done differently?”
- “If someone else had done the same thing to you, how would you have felt?”
- “Now that you have had time to reflect, what words or actions do you regret?”
- “What could you have done that would be more reflective of your faith in Christ?”

Write out some questions:

11. Anticipate the person’s reaction to your questions and plan your response.

- How will you respond if she immediately repents?
- How will you respond if he becomes angry?
- How will you respond if she tries to justify what she did?
- How will you respond if he tries to explain things away?

12. What will be your next steps if he is not yet repentant?

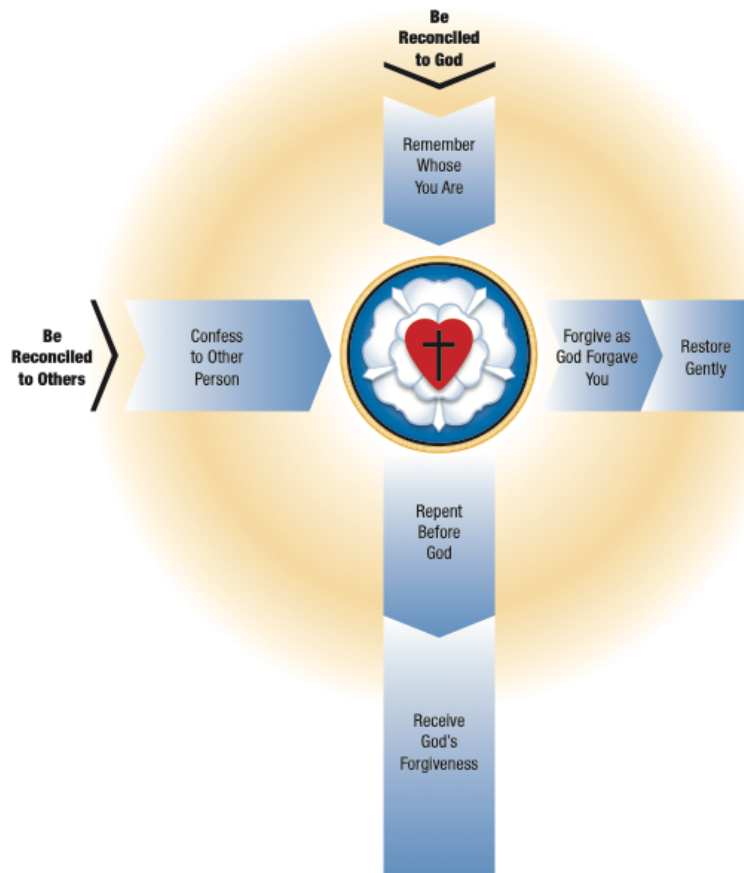
13. How will you proclaim God's forgiveness and then your own?

Consider using the form *Proclaiming God's Forgiveness* (pages 22-26 in this guide) in which you can both confess and receive forgiveness.

14. Write a prayer seeking God's guidance for both of you.

Proclaiming God's Forgiveness

Go and Be Reconciled: *What Does This Mean?*



Therefore, confess your sins to one another (James 5:16).

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,
as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32)*

**Ambassadors
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Cultivating Lifestyles of Reconciliation

Proclaiming God's Forgiveness

When someone confesses his sins, whether against God or us or other people, Christians have the privilege of proclaiming God's forgiveness.

Although the Bible does not require a specific form for confession and forgiveness, these forms provide simple ways to confess sin to our pastor, fellow Christian, or family member and receive the good news of God's forgiveness.

The Development of an Idol

We slide down the slippery slope of idolatry when we elevate a fear, desire, or trust into a demand. When expectations are not met, frustration increases. We judge those who will not give us what we want and we punish them. Left unchecked, idolatry results in destruction or death of the idol and/or the person worshipping it. In other words, idolatry leads to death. (James 1:14-15)

Guidelines for Confession

Confession and forgiveness lead to life (2 Corinthians 7:10). Expressing godly sorrow in confession reflects true contrition which is a result of repentance. (James 5:16)

Go as a beggar. (Matthew 5:23-24; Luke 15:19; Luke 18:13-14)

Own your sin. (Numbers 5:5-7; Psalm 32:3-5; Psalm 51:3-4)

"I sinned against God and you when I . . ."

"I was wrong . . ."

Identify your sins according to God's Word. (Exodus 20:1-17)

Sinful thoughts, words, and actions. (Matthew 15:19; Ephesians 4:29; Galatians 5:19-21)

Sins of omission (e.g., failing to love, as in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Express sorrow for hurt your sin has caused. (Luke 15:21)

"I am sorry for how my actions hurt you when..."

If unsure how you hurt, ask! ("Can you help me understand how my actions hurt you?")

Commit to changing your behavior with God's help.

(Matthew 3:8)

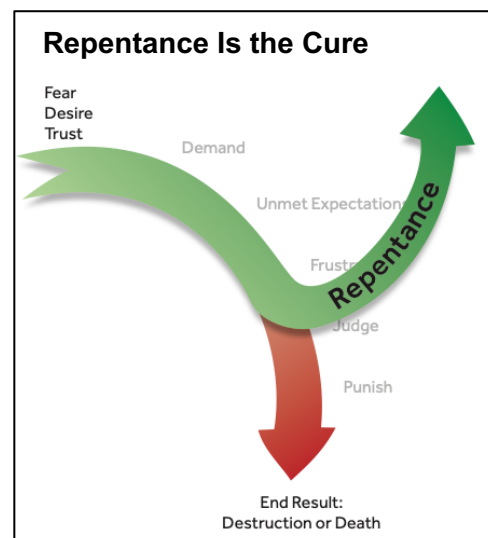
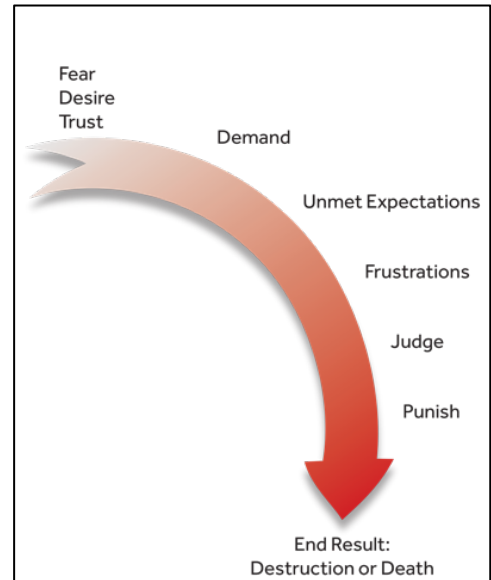
"With God's help, I will not do this again."

Be willing to bear the consequences. (Luke 15:21; 19:8)

Ask for forgiveness. (Genesis 50:17; Psalm 32:5; Luke 18:13)

Trust in Christ's forgiveness. (Colossians 1:13-14; Ephesians 1:7-10)

Regardless if the other person forgives, trust in Christ's forgiveness.



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The Confession

Confession of sin is a private matter. A Christian hearing a confession and proclaiming God's forgiveness is obligated to respect the confidential nature of a confession.

When confessing, you may prepare by meditating on the Ten Commandments and by praying Psalm 6, 7, 13, 15, 51, 121, or 130. If you are not burdened with particular sins, do not torture yourself to search for or invent other sins. However, if particular sins trouble you, naming them out loud will help you own your sins. Moreover, it will help comfort you for those specific sins as God's forgiveness proclaimed to you.

NOTE: *When confessing sin, it is not necessary to use any specific rite or prepared words. However, some may find it helpful to use the following:*

The person hearing the confession begins:

Since Adam and Eve sinned, all people have been born in sin. We sin against God by disobeying his commandments, and we also sin against others around us. Nevertheless, God promises in the Bible to forgive us when we confess our sins because Jesus died for all our sins (see Psalm 32:2-5 or 1 John 1:8-9). Thus, you are invited to confess your sins so that you can hear God's forgiveness proclaimed for you.

The person confessing prays:

Heavenly Father,

I know that you created me and love me.

You have taught me in the Bible how to live as your child.

But I was born a sinner.

And I have sinned against you and others around me,

by what I have done, and by what I haven't done.

I deserve your wrath and eternal punishment.

I am sorry for my sin, known and unknown.

(optional) **I am especially sorry for ...** [mention specific sins that trouble your conscience]

Have mercy on me.

Please forgive me for Jesus' sake.

Help me to live in the way that you teach me.

(optional – you may pray additional thoughts to God.)

In Jesus' name. Amen.

If you sinned against the one hearing your confession, you may also say:

I have also sinned against you, and I ask you for forgiveness, too.

Fellow Christian Proclaiming Forgiveness

(Pastors may provide another form for individual confession and forgiveness.)

Upon hearing a person's confession, a fellow Christian announces God's forgiveness:

God loves you. He promises to be merciful to you and strengthen your faith. Do you believe that God's promises of forgiveness given in the Bible are written for all God's children, including you?

I do.

Then hear and believe what God's Word promises you (*use one or more Bible verses, including those on the following page*).

In 1 John 1:9 God promises: "If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Through Romans 8:1, the Lord declares: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

In 1 Peter 2:24, God assures us: "[Christ] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."

Therefore, _____ [name], believe this Good News: For Jesus' sake, God forgives you all your sins.

Amen.

If the person confessing has also asked for forgiveness from the one hearing the confession, these words should also be spoken:

As God through Christ has forgiven both you and me, I also forgive you your sins against me.

Amen.

May the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

A prayer of thanksgiving may follow. Psalms 30, 31, 32, 34, 103, and 118 are also appropriate. The one hearing confession may know additional Scripture passages with which to comfort and strengthen the faith of those who have great burdens of conscience or are sorrowful and distressed. He may include some of the passages listed under "God's Word Proclaiming Forgiveness" from the following page.

God's Word Proclaiming Forgiveness

When proclaiming God's forgiveness, comfort the person with the assurance of God's love by reading Bible passages that proclaim God's grace. Personalize the promise by inserting in the verse the person's name and personal pronouns as noted in the brackets below.

Blessed is [Name] whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is [Name,] against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit (Psalm 32:1-2).

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward [Name] who fears him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove [your] transgressions from [you] (Psalm 103:11-12).

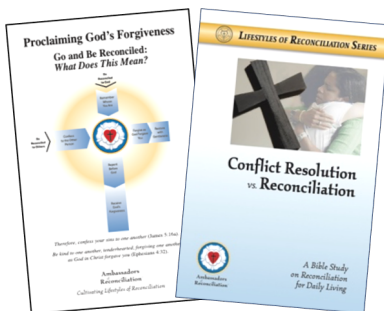
[Jesus] was delivered up for our trespasses and was raised for our justification. Therefore, [Name,] since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the glory of God (Romans 4:25-5:2).

There is therefore now no condemnation for [Name] who [is] in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

[Name,] for our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [you] might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

[Name,] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds [Name,] you have been healed (1 Peter 2:24).

[Name], the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses [you] from all sin (1 John 1:7).



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