

# Restitution: Ending the Cycle of Relational Distance and Failures

The Ministry of Restitution – If our actions or attitudes have brought hurt to another person, there may be a need to go to that person and make right any wrong to break the destructive patterns in our relationships. God has forgiven us for the wrong the first time we ask.. But to break the cycle of reaping from what we have sown and to begin restoring trust, it is often necessary to make every effort to bring healing to others and to seek to restore the fractured relationship. Even if we feel the other person is 98% wrong and we are only 2% wrong, we are 100% responsible to walk in forgiveness and repentance for our 2%. (See Matthew 5:22-26; Psalm 109:17-19, 29)

It is not enough for a forgiving person to forgive you. You may still carry unconscious guilt or shame for the offense and have a need to ask for forgiveness to be free. There can also be a block in the relationship until you acknowledge to them that you have wronged them. The other person may have forgiven you but trust has been violated. Until you acknowledge your offense, it is difficult for them to trust you again because forgiveness and trust are two different things. You will then either respond with self pity (feelings of sorrow over our suffering) or repentance in action that begins to rebuilt trust with those who were offended. (2 Corinthians 7:9-11)

Self- Pity seldom leads to transformed behavior or restored relationships.

- It diminishes, in our eyes, the gravity of each sin we commit against love and honor towards others.
- It hinders godly repentance by feeling that life has not been fair with us and believing that others are the cause of our frustrations. Thus we do not look to God ut people to meet our need.
- It places the primary fault upon others for relational conflicts because we feel that we have been treated unfairly. If they would not have do that to me. . . Or, If only they would have done this for me, then life would be better and I would not be forced to act in such a way!
- It excuses our negative attitudes by seeing the weaknesses in others and feeling that our rightness justifies our judgmentalism or actions.
- It tries to get others to feel sorry for us and to get them to feel that we have been treated unfairly (defilement) thus strengthening the stronghold of self-pity within.
- It may try to compensate for our relational failures with increased hyper-religious activity, aggressively striving to earn self-worth or acceptance, or we may take on a false sense of responsibility and place all the blame upon ourselves for relational conflicts thus denying other the opportunity to deal with their own issues.
- It often leads to others feeling manipulated or demeaned by closing our heart to those that will not come into agreement with our self-pity, thus leaving others feeling that they have little value or honor in our presence.
- It may result in hidden anger at our feelings of loss or unmet expectations. This increases our blame towards others and results in deeper feelings of anger, insecurity, shame, isolation, self-condemnation, addictive compulsive behavior and/or depression.
- It leaves us dissatisfied at work, church, and at home and we want to escape to a place where we can find rest.

On the other hand, Godly Repentance always involves action.

- It is not just emotions and tears. It is to be so grieved at the wounding and stress that our actions and attitudes have brought to others that now we are willing to humble ourselves and do whatever it takes to restore healthy relationships.
- It comes to hate the destructive habit patters that have misrepresented God's love and grace to others.
- It becomes more concerned with others' needs than our own pride and walls of self-protection.
- It is willing to lay down the need to be right in order to see healing in those whom we have hurt or offended.
- It chooses to walk in openness and transparency, and willingly comes forward and acknowledges our sin against love and how we have hurt or offended others.
- It does not seek to make excuses, seek to put the blame on others, or diminish the depth of our self-deception or fear of intimacy with which we have struggles.
- It takes the focus off of ourselves (self-pity) and begins to focus our energy upon humility, confession, forgiveness, repentance, and healing the pain that we have caused others.

## Practicing the Ministry of Restitution

1. Ask God to reveal to you each way you have brought hurt or offense to others. (See Psalm 139:23,24)
  - As the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the names of people that you have offended.
  - What is the basic offense? How did you demean, devalue, or dishonor each person?
  - As the Holy Spirit to bring conviction and repentance to each individual issue. (See John 15:26, 16:7-8, Romans 2:4)
2. Ask mature spiritual leaders who know you personally to speak admonition into your blind spots.