

Grace-Filled Living

Step Eight: We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Most of us probably have relationships in which we are holding grudges. Sure, we've hurt them, but they've hurt us, too. We become like children quarreling back and forth: "You hit me first!" "I did not!" Somehow, it just doesn't seem fair to let them off the hook! Now, we're supposed to become willing to make amends to everyone? Even those who have wronged us? How?

The Bible gives us the following advice:

¹⁷ Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸ Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible. ¹⁹ Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God. For it is written, "I will take vengeance; I will repay those who deserve it," says the Lord. ²⁰ Instead, do what the Scriptures say: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink, and they will be ashamed of what they have done to you." ²¹ Don't let evil get the best of you, but conquer evil by doing good.

This is difficult but not impossible. We are not called to create peace, only to be at peace "as much as possible." We are not required to say that others don't deserve punishment, only to turn the job over to God. We don't give up a quarrel because someone else is necessarily right, but for the sake of our recovery and our peace with ourselves and God. We can't change other people but we can ask God for the courage to change ourselves.

God teaches us that if our actions towards another person are anything but blessing, we are wrong and are in need of making amends. No matter how difficult and wrong another has been we are clearly shown that it is not God's will to do evil in return. God emphasizes the point by instructing us to give food and drink to our enemies. God's way is to overcome evil with good.

This may seem all backwards, but God's ways are not our ways. As we turn our will and our lives over to God, we will learn that His ways do work.

If we've really experienced God's grace, we'll want to pass it on to others. Who is on my list of people I've responded to that God would say was, "paying back evil for evil?" How do I need to repent before God and then list those to whom I now realize I need to make amends?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. When is it fairly easy for me to forgive someone?
2. In what kind of circumstances does it seem difficult or even "wrong" to forgive?
3. How have I been forgiven?
4. What does God promise if I "clean up my side of the street" and leave others to Him?
5. How are we to go about living in peace with everyone?