

Taking Responsibility A Place To Begin

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

While in recovery, we learn to accept responsibility for our actions, even when we're powerless over our addictions. We come to realize that all our actions yield consequences. Some of us may have deceived ourselves into thinking we could escape the consequences of the things we did. We may have humiliated our families in a variety of ways. We may have caused loved one great stress and shame because we haven't provided for their needs. We may have caused them to lose respect for us or trust in us. Sometimes we end up hurting innocent victims. It is important for us to think about how our irresponsibility has affected others.

Don't be misled. Remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it. You will always reap what you sow! Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. (Galatians 6:7-8)

The law of sowing and reaping can work FOR us as well. God says we will always reap what we've sown. Making our list of those we've harmed is a step toward planting good seeds. In time we'll see a good crop begin to grow.

God says, "Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will harvest a crop of my love. Plow up the hard ground of your hearts, for now is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and shower righteousness upon you". (Hosea 10:12)

One motivation for preparing our list and making amends with the people we've hurt is the hope of having a clear conscience. We have lived with self-condemnation and probably hope that making amends will help us find forgiveness. The Bible teaches us to go to God for forgiveness. The purpose for making amends is to take personal responsibility for our behavior and the effect it has had on others. If those people respond by offering forgiveness, that is a nice bonus.

You were dead because of your sins and then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins. He cancelled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to

Christ's cross. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. (Excerpts from Colossians 2, John 3)

We may feel discouraged when we think of all the people we have hurt. We recognize that even though we are willing to make amends, we won't be able to undo all the damage we've done. But, there's still good reason to be encouraged. Our hope lies in seeing how God can bring about good, even through our worst sins.

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. (Romans 8:28)

We may worry that we won't be able to remember everyone we've hurt. Or, we may hesitate fearing that our introspection will cause us to condemn ourselves too strongly. But we need not worry; we have a helper to help us handle these problems. We can ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us all the names of those we have hurt. He will do it. We don't need to worry about leaving someone off the list. When the time is right the Holy Spirit will remind us about them later. We don't need to fear condemnation. The Holy Spirit is given to remind us of God's goodness. Each time we experience a pang of guilt it can be given over to God for forgiveness and healing. We can leave God's work with God and focus on our part – writing down everyone who comes to mind and asking God to give us the willingness to make amends. God is committed to helping us do and understand everything necessary to continue the good work that He has begun in us.

Jesus said, "And I will ask the father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. And when he comes, he will convince the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again. (Excerpts from John 14, 16, Philippians 1)

Questions For Discussion & Reflection

1. What does it mean to make an amends?
2. What does "taking responsibility" look like?
3. Where does God fit into this process in my life?