

# The Fulfillment of the Promise

Step Nine: We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

*God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. So then, let us aim for harmony ... and try to build each other up. I pray that your love for each other will overflow more and more and that you will keep on growing in your knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters; so that you may live pure and blameless lives. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation - those good things that are produced in your life by Jesus Christ - for this will bring much glory and praise to God. (From Matthew 5, Romans 14, Philippians 1)*

Step 9 is an action step in which we become willing enough to verbalize our regrets, if appropriate, to the people we have harmed. When all of the persons we have harmed are listed, the task of making amends may seem overwhelming. To make it manageable, we approach one person at a time and one event at a time. In making an amend, we state our errors, our role in the incident, and that we will correct our behaviour.

*There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was one of the most influential Jews in the Roman tax-collecting business, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowds. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree beside the road, so he could watch from there.*

*When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! For I must be a guest in your home today."*

*Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the crowds were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.*

*Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "I will give half my wealth to the*

*poor, Lord, and if I have overcharged people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!" Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a son of Abraham. And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those like him who are lost." (From Luke 19)*

When we are feeding our addictions, it is easy to become consumed by our own wants or needs. Nothing matters except getting what we crave so desperately. We may have to lie, cheat, kill, or steal; but that doesn't stop us. Within our families and community we become known as "takers", trampling over the unseen needs of others. Zacchaeus had the same problem. His hunger for riches drove him to betray his own people by collecting taxes for the oppressive roman government. He was hated by his own people as a thief, an extortioner, and a traitor.

But when Jesus reached out to him, he changed dramatically. Zacchaeus went beyond just paying back what he had taken. For the first time in a long time, he saw the needs of others and wanted to be a "giver." Making amends includes paying back what we have taken whenever possible. It means changing our behaviour in other circumstances. Sometimes a changed attitude is what is most effective. In many cases, our changed behaviour is a stronger amends than any words offered. Some of us may even seize the opportunity to go even further, giving even more. We make a choice to begin to see the needs of others and to respond to those needs. As we do so, our own self-esteem will rise. We will begin to realize that we can give to others instead of just being a burden. Making amends is the first step to becoming a "giver."

## Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What are my motives for making amends?
2. What is God's motive in having us make amends?
3. What amends are needed for things I have failed to do and ways I have not considered the needs of others?
4. What behaviour and attitude changes am I making as part of this process of "making amends"?
5. How am I moving from being a "taker" to becoming a "giver"?