

LONG-AWAITED HEALING

STEP 9 - We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Returning to someone we've hurt is a scary thing. The passing years, lack of communication, and memories of the anger and hateful emotional exchanges can all create tremendous anxiety. Even though we may make some contact through a third party, there will still be tension until we see the person face-to-face.

This was the case for Jacob upon returning to see Esau. *"Then, in the distance, Jacob saw Esau coming with his 400 men...Then Jacob went on ahead...Esau ran to meet him and embraced him affectionately and kissed him. Both of them were in tears." After being introduced to Jacob's family, Esau asked, "And what were all the flocks and herds I met as I came?..."Jacob replied, 'They are gifts, my lord, to ensure your goodwill.' 'Brother, I have plenty,' Esau answered. 'Keep what you have.' 'No, please accept them,' Jacob said, 'for what a relief it is to see your friendly smile. It is like seeing the smile of God! Please take my gifts, for God has been very generous to me. I have more than enough.' Jacob continued to insist, so Esau finally accepted them" (Genesis 33:1, 3-4, 8-11).*

Jacob's tremendous fear gave way to relief. The last time Jacob had seen Esau, Jacob was in fear for his life. With the passing of time, both of them had changed. When Jacob faced his brother, he found that there was still affection, even though they both remembered the pain.

One of the surprise benefits we may experience from making amends is that it may not be as hard as we expect. In some cases, people will be thrilled to see us. They will embrace us, forgiving all the harm we've done in the past. These positive experiences can help us face the more painful and difficult ones.

Unfortunately some people may refuse to be reconciled, even when we do our best to make amends. This may leave us feeling like a victim. Once again, we're stuck with the pain of unresolved issues. Negative feelings may continue to surface. What can we do in these situations?

Jesus said: *"Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for the happiness of those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you...Do for others as you would like them to do for you...Love your enemies. Do good to them!...Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High...You must be compassionate as your Father is compassionate" (Luke 6:27-36).*

Even when we've done our best to make amends for the wrongs we've done, the situation may not change. But we do not have to be held captive by our feelings or the feelings of others. We can choose to act in a loving way. As we do, our feelings will follow in time. Our recovery is not decided by the responses of others; it is in God's hands alone and all He asks is that we clean up our side of the street.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What does it mean to make amends?
2. What are some ways to make amends?
3. How do I know what kinds of amends are appropriate?
4. How do I feel about praying for my enemies?