

Rebuilding Relationships

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

How many times have we written people off because of some dispute in the distant past? Years pass and people change; yet we cling to our old ways of seeing them. Perhaps we never saw them very clearly in the first place! For some of us, making amends will include reviewing our relationships. We may need to change our estimation of some of those we've already judged.

Paul and Barnabas traveled together on a missionary journey taking John Mark along as their assistant. When things got tough, the young man deserted them and went home. Later, Barnabas wanted to give John Mark another chance, but Paul refused. "Their disagreement over this was so sharp that they separated." (Acts 15:39) Much later in his life, Paul was put in prison. During that time, he wrote to Timothy and asked for John Mark. He said, "He is useful to me for ministry."

(2 Timothy 4:11)

The Bible doesn't tell us how Paul came to change his opinion of John Mark. Perhaps he realized that he hadn't been completely fair. Maybe John Mark had changed over the years. At some point, though, they had reestablished their relationship and repaired the emotional damage done.

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." (1 Thes. 5:11)

Making amends includes going back and settling emotional accounts. When we've judged someone harshly, we need to

reexamine our relationship with that person. If we expect others to change how they look at us, we will need to do the same for others.

"Let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way."

(Romans 4:13)

Making amends helps release us from many of the resentments of our past. We achieve serenity in our lives by seeking forgiveness from those we have harmed and by making restitution where necessary. Without forgiveness, the resentments will continue to undermine our growth. Making amends releases us from guilt and promotes freedom and health in mind and body.

In order to complete Step Nine, we need to review our list from Step Eight and decide on the appropriate method to make each amend. Most situations will require direct contact, although some may be handled by simply changing our behaviour. Our amends may need to be done indirectly due to circumstances beyond our control. Whichever alternative we choose, it is important that the process of making amends be done when we are ready, and be as complete as possible.

By making amends, we become open to God's life-changing power.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. Who do I need to see in a new way?
2. What do I need to do to get ready to re-establish relationship and repair emotional damage done?

Excerpts from "The Twelve Steps – A Spiritual Journey", page 154-155, and *Life Recovery Devotional*, Step 9 – Day 3)