

Takers and Givers

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

When we are feeding our addictions, it is easy to become consumed by our own needs. Nothing matters except getting what we crave so desperately. We may have to lie, cheat, or steal but that doesn't stop us. We may have to blame, complain, or manipulate. We thought only of ourselves, failing to show any consideration for others. Within our family and community we become known as "takers" trampling over the unseen needs of others.

Making amends includes paying back what we have taken whenever possible. Some of us may even seize the opportunity to go further, giving even more. As we begin to see the needs of others, and respond by choice, our self-esteem will rise. We will begin to realize that we can give to others, instead of just being a burden.

Luke 19:1-10 As Jesus was passing through Jericho, a man named Zacchaeus, one of the most influential Jews in the Roman tax-collecting business (and, of course, a very rich man), tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowds. So he ran ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree beside the road, to 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 am going to be a guest in your home today." Zacchaeus hurriedly 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 before the Lord and said, "Sir, from now on I will give half my wealth to the poor, and if I find I have overcharged anyone on his taxes, I will penalize myself by giving him back four times as much.

Jesus told him, "This shows that salvation has come to this house today. This man was one of the lost sons of Abraham, and I, the Messiah, have come to search for and to save such souls as his.

We all suffer brokenness in our life, in our relationship with God, and in our relationships with others. Brokenness tends to weigh us down and can easily lead us back into our addictions. Sometimes we need to complete unfinished business before we can move forward toward new opportunities.

We can't assume forgiveness from people, although we can hope for it. In some cases we may be surprised to find

pardon and release from the bondage of our past. There may be situations in which we will suffer if we go back to make amends. This is part of the work of recovery.

2 Corinthians 7:10-11 For God sometimes uses sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek eternal life. We should never regret God's sending it. But the sorrow of a person who is not a Christian is not the sorrow of true repentance and does not prevent eternal death. Just see how much good this grief from the Lord did to you. You no longer shrugged your shoulders but became earnest and sincere and very anxious to get rid of the sin that I wrote you about... You went right to work on the problem and cleared it up. You have done everything you could to make it right.

God's desire for us is that we become people who bring healing and hope to every person we meet and in every relationship where we find ourselves. In amazing ways, God is able to turn our worst moments, our actions of greatest harm into experiences of immense healing for ourselves and others.

Making amends with others we have harmed is one way we live by faith in God, that God has actually given us a new way of life. We can speak the truth in love, even about our own failures, and expect that God will honor and bless that speaking and bring about healing and restoration in ways we can only dream about.

Making amends is honestly acknowledging that we have failed and that we are aware that we have fallen far short of the loving caring person we should have been. Making amends is living in a new way that seeks to bless and help and encourage and support others in whatever way actually helps them. We become people who listen and people who seek to understand more than to be understood, to love rather than to only look to be loved. It is with this new caring perspective that we approach those to whom we go to make amends.

God is longing to turn our hearts and minds from being people who always "need" something from someone else, to becoming people who give of ourselves without asking for anything in return. It is in this atmosphere of peace and generosity that God's blessing flows like a river and brings healing to all.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How am I moving from being a "taker" to becoming a "giver?"
2. What are the challenges in this process for me – both within myself and perhaps from the response of others?
3. We all long to be understood. How can we ever move from seeing that as the first need and instead make understanding the other person the first priority in our relationships?