

MADE DIRECT AMENDS

Life With God In Recovery

STEP NINE: MADE DIRECT AMENDS



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

Step Nine is about the work of peace – seeking peace and making amends. Both the Bible and the program of AA call us to this work.

Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. (Romans 12:18, Matthew 5:9 NLT)

For the readiness to take the full consequences of our past acts, and to take responsibility for the well-being of others at the same time, is the very spirit of Step Nine. (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions p. 87)

Making amends is a responsibility we must take very seriously if we want to protect our sobriety. While making amends is not necessarily a comfortable process, it is necessary for our growth. If we don't try to sort out our part in what went wrong in our relationships in the past, there is a very good chance that we will make the same mistakes again. This familiar environment would likely trigger the embarrassment, shame and pain we experienced in the past, which could bring us to relapse. Step Nine requires that we be willing to go to any lengths to make amends.

Suppose you are offering your gift at the altar. And you remember that your brother or sister has something against you. Leave your gift in front of the altar. First go and make peace with them. Then come back and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24 NIRV)

Returning to make amends 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. How many times have we written people off because of some dispute in the distant past? Years pass and people mature and change; yet we cling to our old ways of seeing them. Events that took place have inflicted wounds which have festered for years or even decades. Sometimes, due to our painful memories, we were too afraid to approach the offender and communicate with them. Had we done so, we might have found that we didn't see the situation clearly in the first place. It's now time to take action and find God's perspective.

An amend is not simply an apology. It is a clear and purposeful act designed to clear up a problem from the past – an injury, insult, infidelity, an act of aggression or abandonment. It's important to write letters, make phone calls, schedule cups of coffee to have conversations with those we've harmed. We need to sincerely apologize and make restitution wherever possible. However, real amends are proved by a changed life. To make real amends, we now take the time to listen and to seek to understand the other person's point of view. It includes going back and reassessing an event or personal relationship with the intention of knowing truth, and settling emotional accounts. When we've judged someone harshly, we need to reexamine what actually happened with that person. If we expect others to change how they look at us, we will need to do the same for them. To make amends means that whatever we do, we must do it for the good of the person who was harmed. The intention is to lift them up and lighten their load.

Make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (Philippians 2:2-4 NLT)

For us to risk taking the first step in making amends with others would be impossible if God had not first demonstrated the way for us. Over and over again we failed to keep God's commandments and yet while we were still in rebellion God sent His Son Jesus into the world to atone for our sin, so that we could be reconciled to Him. God has completed the work necessary for us to know peace today and now He calls us to extend that peace to others in our circle of family and friends. God didn't wait for us to come to Him. He prepared in advance. He reached out to us with this wonderful gift of reconciliation when we didn't dare approach Him. As we begin the work of restoring our troubled relationships, we can reflect on God's way of reconciliation.

For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:19 NLT)

When we make amends under the guidance of our loving God, everyone is blessed. Confessing our wrong to someone means they no longer have to carry around the lingering excess baggage of the event. Resentments begin to disappear and we both experience more freedom. The more we put this step into practice the more our self-centeredness is replaced by a compassionate

awareness of other people. Where we were callous and uncaring, we now find ourselves becoming more understanding and flexible. Serenity grows as we take these steps to right wrongs and make restitution where necessary.

So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall. So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing. (Romans 14:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NLT)

God created us to live in loving relationship with Himself, and with each other, and to practice speaking the truth in love. When we approach someone to make amends with this in focus, we will experience increasing joy, freedom, and satisfaction. When we allow God into the process of interacting with others according to His will and plan, we can leave the outcome with Him.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How is the work of making amends in Step Nine a work of peace?
2. Why did the founders of AA tell us that we needed to take the making of amends seriously if we wanted to protect our sobriety?
3. How is making amends different from simply offering an apology?
4. What do the amends of "a changed life" look like for me?
5. How does God's generous and endless forgiveness of my wrongs help me approach making amends with others?
6. How has the practice of making amends and seeking forgiveness impacted my relationships, both past and present?
7. Where do I continue to feel challenged in sorting out problems in my relationships and making amends?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for your unending love and forgiveness. Thank you for Jesus who died on the cross for my sins so that I could be reconciled to You. I ask for wisdom and courage to humbly approach family members and friends and to make amends to them with a heart and mind that honours you. Give me eyes to see each circumstance as You do, rather than with the flawed perspective of my own memories. I ask for humility to take responsibility for my part in the event. Where necessary, I graciously offer forgiveness as I live in gratitude of the forgiveness I have received from you. Help me to remember that I am dealing with the log in my own eye as compared to a splinter in the other person's eye. I am forever grateful that you care for me. Amen