

Principle 6

Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others.

"Happy are the merciful" (Matthew 5:7) "Happy are the peacemakers." (Matthew 5:9)

Lesson 16

Amends

Principle 6: Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others.

"Happy are the merciful." (Matthew 5:7)

"Happy are the peacemakers." (Matthew 5:9)

Step 8: We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

"Do to others as you would have them do to you." (Luke 6:31)

Introduction

This week, we are going to focus on Principle 6. In fact, we are going to spend the next two months on Principle 6. That's how important it is to our recovery. We will use some of the time for teaching and we will celebrate the Lord's Supper next week to help us really understand the true meaning of forgiveness, but I would like to use most of our time for testimonies from you. Please let me know if you would like to share your story of how Principle 6 has positively impacted your recovery and relationships.

Tonight, we are going to give an overview of Principle 6, which is all about making amends. "Forgive me as I learn to forgive" sums it up pretty well.

We started doing repair work on the *personal* side of our lives earlier in our recovery by admitting our powerlessness, turning our lives and wills over to God's care, doing our moral inventory, sharing our sins or wrongs with another, and admitting our shortcomings and asking God to remove them. But now we begin to do some repair work on the *relational* side of our lives. Making your amends is the beginning of the end of your isolation from God and others.

Still, some of us balk at making amends. We think, "If God has forgiven me, isn't that enough? Why should I drag up the past? After all, making amends doesn't sound natural."

The answer to that objection is simple: making amends is not about your *past* so much as it is about your *future*. Before you can have the healthy relationships that you desire, you need to clean out the guilt, shame, and pain that has caused many of your past relationships to fail.

So, in the words of Step 8, it is time to "make a list of persons that we have harmed and become *willing* to make amends to them all." At this point, you are only looking for the *willingness*. Step 8 only requires that we identify those to whom we need to make amends or offer forgiveness.

Luke 6:31 reminds us to treat others the way that you want to be treated. For some of you, that may be very difficult. You have been hurt very badly or abused. Many of you had nothing to do with the wrong committed against you.

Often I have counseled people on Principle 6 and on the critical importance of forgiveness, only to have them say, "Never will I forgive! Not after what was done to me!" In these cases, the wrong against the individual was often child molestation, sexual abuse, or adultery. Such sins are deep violations that leave painful wounds, but they also are the root of dysfunction that bring many people into recovery.

Forgiving the perpetrator of such wrongs, even after the one harmed has dealt with the emotional pain, seems impossible. We are going to deal specifically with this issue in the lesson

on the three types of forgiveness.

For now, listen to the way Celebrate Recovery rewords this step for those in the sexual/physical abuse groups:

Make a list of all persons who have harmed us and become willing to seek God's help in forgiving our perpetrators, as well as forgiving ourselves. Realize we've also harmed others and become willing to make amends to them.

Let's look at the second part of Principle 6: "... make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others."

Listen as I read Matthew 5:23–24: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

The first part of Principle 6 deals with being willing to consider forgiveness. The second part of Principle 6 calls us to action as we make our amends and offer our forgiveness. Going back to the garden metaphor, we need to pull out the dead weeds in our past broken relationships so that we can clear a place where our new relationships can be successfully planted or restored. That's why Principle 6 is so important.

In Participant's Guide 3, on page XX, you will find the "Amends" list.

Column 1 is where you list the persons to whom you need to be willing to make amends, those whom you have harmed. Column 2 is for the persons that you need to become willing to forgive. List them this week.

During the next two months, add to them as God reveals to you others to include on your list. Remember, all you are doing at this point is writing them down.

Amends

Let's look at tonight's acrostic and answer the question, How do I make AMENDS?

Admit the hurt and the harm

Make a list

Encourage one another

Not for them

Do it at the right time

Start living the promises of recovery

The *A* is ADMIT the hurt and the harm. Principle 4 showed us how important it is to open up to God and to others. Your feelings have been bottled up far, far too long, and that has interfered with all your important relationships. In this step of your recovery you need to once again face the hurts, resentments, and wrongs others have caused you or that you have caused to others. Holding on to resentments not only blocks your recovery, it blocks God's forgiveness in your life.

Luke 6:37 (GNB) tells us, "Do not judge others, and God will not judge you; do not condemn others, and God will not condemn you; forgive others, and God will forgive you."

The next letter in amends is *M*: MAKE a list.

In addition to the "Amends" worksheet in Participant's Guide 3, you will find the "Celebrate Recovery Inventory" in Participant's Guide 2. You can also use these sheets to help you make your amends list.

In column 1, on your inventory, you will find the list of people that you need to forgive. These are the people who have hurt you. In column 5, you will find the list of people to whom

you owe amends. These are the ones whom you have hurt.

If it has been a while since you did your inventory, God may have revealed others to you that you need to add to your list. That's why it's important to start off with the "Amends" worksheet.

When you are making your list, don't worry about the "how-tos" in making your amends. Don't ask questions like *How could I ever ask my dad for forgiveness? How could I ever forgive my brother for what he did?* Go ahead and put the person on your list anyway. "Treat others as you want them to treat you" (Luke 6:31, TLB).

The *E* in amends stands for ENCOURAGE one another.

It has been said that encouragement is oxygen to the soul. Before you make your amends or offer your forgiveness to others, meet with your accountability partner or sponsor, someone to encourage you and to provide a good "sounding board." That person's objective opinion is valuable to ensure that you make amends and offer forgiveness with the right motives.

Hebrews 10:24 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." If you are asked to be an encourager, an accountability partner, or a sponsor, be honored. And remember, you can't hold a torch to light another's path without brightening your own.

The *N* in amends is the reason for making the amends: NOT for them.

You need to approach those to whom you are offering your forgiveness or amends humbly, honestly, sincerely, and willingly. Don't offer excuses or attempt to justify your actions; focus only on your part.

In five words, here's the secret to making successful amends: *Do not expect anything back!* You are making your amends, not for a reward, but for freedom from your hurts, hang-ups,

and habits.

Principle 6 says that I am responsible to “make amends for harm I’ve done to others.” Jesus said, “Love your enemies and do good to them; lend and expect nothing back” (Luke 6:35, GNB). God loves us generously and graciously, even when we are at our worst. God is kind; we need to be kind!

Do you know that you can become addicted to your bitterness, hatred, and revenge, just as you can become addicted to alcohol, drugs, and relationships? A life characterized by bitterness, resentment, and anger will kill you emotionally and shrivel your soul. They will produce the “Three Ds”:

Depression

Despair

Discouragement

An unforgiving heart will cause you more pain and destruction than it will ever cause the person who hurt you.

Let’s move on to the *D* in amends: **DO** it at the right time.

This principle not only requires courage, good judgment, and willingness, but a careful sense of *timing*!

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (TLB) tells us, “There is a right time for everything.” There is a time to *let* things happen and a time to *make* things happen. There is a right time and a wrong time to offer forgiveness or to make amends.

Before making amends, you need to pray, asking Jesus Christ for His guidance, His direction, and His perfect timing.

Principle 6 goes on to say, “... except when to do so would harm them or others.”

Listen to Philippians 2:4: “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Don’t wait until you *feel* like making your amends or offering your forgiveness; living this principle takes an act of the will! Or perhaps I should say a *crisis* of the will. Making your amends is an act of obedience to Scripture and of personal survival.

The last letter in amends is *S*: START living the promises of recovery.

As we complete this principle, we will discover God’s gift of true freedom from our past. We will begin to find the peace and serenity that we have long been seeking. We will become ready to embrace God’s purpose for our lives.

God promises, “I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten” (Joel 2:25).

Wrap-up

Principle 6 offers you freedom—freedom from the chains of resentment, anger, and hurt; freedom, through your amends for the harm you caused others, to look them in the eye, knowing that you are working with God in cleaning up your side of the street.

In your small groups, I encourage those of you who have completed Principle 6 to share the freedom and the blessings that you have received.

Let’s pray.

Dear God, I pray for willingness—willingness to evaluate all my past and current relationships. Please show me the people who I have hurt, and help me become willing to offer my amends to them. Also, God, give me Your strength to become willing to offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me. I pray for Your perfect timing for taking the action that Principle 6 calls for. I ask all these things in Your Son’s name, Amen.

