

Bridgeway Community Church
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Beyond Apologies

Addressing Offenses

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THERE ARE TIMES WHEN APOLOGIES ARE NOT ENOUGH

“Now, I don’t know how often or under what circumstances it’s actually too late to apologize, but what I do know is that it’s often not enough to apologize.”

Because there are times when apologies are simply not enough. Maybe you’ve been there. You offered an apology, but it just didn’t work. Didn’t resolve the issue. Didn’t repair the relationship. Or maybe that’s where you find yourself today. Or perhaps tomorrow. If so, this message is for you.

When apologies are not enough, what else do we need? What’s missing? I hope these messages will give you some divine insight into how to go beyond apologies to bring about real change in yourself and in your relationships. This week we’re going to look at “Beyond Apologies: Addressing Offenses.” And next week we’ll look at “Beyond Apologies: Redressing Offenses.”

“But before we can talk about how to go beyond apologies, we need to spend a moment thinking about why apologies are often insufficient. And the basic problem is that apologies may not address the real offense.”

“Think about it. We say “I’m sorry” for all kinds of things, even when we haven’t done anything wrong.”

“...what sounds like an apology is really just an expression of empathy.”

“But even when we’re offering an apology in response to an actual offense, saying “I’m sorry,” or “I apologize” is not necessarily an admission of guilt.”

“Possibly the worst sort of insincere apology is the “I’m sorry, but...” apology, which then goes on to place the actual blame either on circumstances beyond anyone’s control or, even worse, on the other person. ‘I’m sorry, but, you know, you kind of pushed me over the edge.’ ”

“So, when someone apologizes, how do you know that they actually “get” it?”

APOLOGIES AND THE BIBLE

“Not only are apologies often insufficient from a relational point of view; they’re often insufficient from a scriptural point of view.”

I’ve made what I think is an exhaustive study of the biblical admonitions to offer an apology.

...there aren’t any. No biblical admonitions to apologize. Zero, zip, nada. Sorry.”

But what about a passage like Mt. 5:23-24, in which Jesus tells us that if we are on our way to worship and remember that a brother or sister has something against us, we must first go and be reconciled with that person before continuing with our worship? Doesn’t that call for an apology?

Matthew 5:23-24 NIV84

[Jesus speaking] “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

“...lackluster apologies are unlikely to lead to real reconciliation, which is, after all, the goal Jesus has in mind.”

“An apology, you see, is essentially an expression of remorse...it’s the reason we feel that remorse and our reaction to that remorse that determine the value of the apology. That’s what matters to God.

“...we are not commanded to apologize—we are commanded to confess and to repent.”

CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

CONFESSION

Book: Susan Wise Bauer, The Art of the Public Grovel

“Apology and confession are not the same. An apology is an expression of regret: I am sorry. A confession is an admission of fault: I am sorry because I did wrong. I sinned.”

“...we’re sometimes less inclined to own up to our sins in front of the people who are affected by them.”

“But, for whatever reason, we try to wiggle out of it, don’t we?”

“Bad idea,” says the wise man. King Solomon observed in

Proverbs 28:13 NIV

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

James 5:16 NIV

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

“...it seems to me that this command to confess to others doesn’t mean much if it doesn’t at least include the people we’ve offended.”

“... in order for that reconciliation to be authentic, there must first be a common understanding about the nature of the problem.”

“You see, apologies are often driven by sentiment, but confession requires us to confront the truth—the truth about who we are, about what we did, and about how it affected others.”

“In fact, the Greek word, *homologia*, which is translated as confession in our English versions of the Bible, is a compound word made up of homo, which means same, and logia, or words. To confess is to ‘to say the same thing, to agree.’ “

South Africa - Truth and Reconciliation Commission chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

“If everyone had been allowed to have their own version of the facts and (maybe) apologize and move on, that kind of sweeping things under the rug was not going to lead to reconciliation.”

“When we confess to God, we are agreeing with what he knows to be true. And when we confess to others, we must also agree with what they know to be true—which is how that thing we said or did landed in their world. Not what we intended, but what they experienced.”

“...it’s not enough to simply acknowledge that common truth; you have to appreciate that truth as well.”

“What I’m trying to say here is that for our confession to be therapeutic, for it to bring healing, it can’t be just a grudging agreement with those we have offended. That agreement must be empathetic....We must appreciate it, feel it, and come to grips with that reality as they have experienced.”

“It’s true that confession is good for the soul. But that doesn’t mean it’s comfortable. Because it isn’t....with confession there’s no hiding behind alternative narratives about what really happened. There’s no pretending that we’re not really the sort of person who would do the kind of thing that, in fact, we did.”

“Once we agree with the person we’ve offended that what we did was wrong, it often takes the wind out of the sails of their animosity...That affirms the other person’s feelings and at least begins to relax the relational tension.”

“...when you mess up, you gotta ‘fess up. Not only is it the morally responsible thing to do; it’s a great way to de-escalate a situation.”

And that keeps the door open to eventual reconciliation.

REPENTANCE

“...she [Cindi] committed herself to a better pathway going forward. “That’s not the kind of person I want to be,” she said. And she thanked the woman for having the courage to say something, so that Cindi wouldn’t do the same thing again.

“This commitment to change is called repentance. Repentance goes beyond an admission of wrong to an actual rejection of that behavior and a commitment to a new and improved way forward—one that conforms to God’s righteous standard.”

“You see, sometimes, when apologies are not enough, even confession is not enough. Yes, you’ve admitted doing wrong, and you may be genuinely remorseful. But the other person is still suspicious, wondering if you’ve really changed and what’s going to happen the next time.”

Proverbs 28:13 NIV

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

“Every time we confess a sin to God, we should also renounce it, forsake it, turn from it. But, if you’re like me, you have some sins that you’ve confessed to God over and over, because, guess what? You haven’t actually changed your pattern of behavior.”

“...confession and repentance are related, they are not the same.”

“Repentance is not just turning away from our sinful ways; it is turning toward, adopting, embracing a new pattern of behavior that pleases God.”

“When you explicitly turn from the behavior that damaged your relationship, people are much more likely to give you a second chance.”

“Reconciliation, all of a sudden, looks a lot more inviting, because the future doesn’t look so much like the past.”

Question: Are you willing to do whatever it takes to restore that damaged relationship?

How do you know when you need to go beyond apologies?

EXAMINE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Is there someone in our life to whom you did or said something that drove a wedge between you, built up a relational wall, and left you more or less estranged?

This may be one of those times when apologies are not enough...often some further evidence of repentance may be necessary as well.

“...even when you do everything God requires, there are no guarantees that you will turn the heart of another person. Even Jesus had his Judas.”

“Just do what God has calling you to do, and let God do the things that only God can do.”

Our God is all about reconciliation. He’s concerned not only with reconciling you to him but with bringing about relational healing in this world. In your world. If you’ll dare to go beyond apologies.

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